

**Lisbon the first world  
global trade center**  
–the Portuguese Empire in the  
16th and 17th centuries





# Acknowledgements



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# Foreword

São Roque wishes to welcome you to TEFAF, and to this depository for Lisbon's *Rua Nova dos Mercadores* (New Merchants Street), where you can admire the precious treasures that have arrived in Portuguese caravels and carracks, from India, Japan, and other exotic faraway lands.

On arriving in Africa and the Far East, the Portuguese, firmly determined and commercially minded, focused on developing a complex network of diplomatic and trading relations, as well as a system of commercial outposts, that would ensure global control over the African, Far Eastern and South Atlantic maritime trade. Concurrently they promoted the development of scientific, cultural, aesthetic, and artistic synergies, that remain highly relevant in our 21st century.

Europe was suddenly flooded, for the first time in History, by fascinating products, and by remote and mutually unknown people that could see, touch, and communicate directly with each other.

In its conviction, 16th century Portugal pioneered countless civilizational interactions of unimaginable magnitude, which would be felt for centuries afterwards; it introduced firearms to Japan and astrolabes and green beans to China, engaged in the abhorrent Atlantic slave trade, took tea to England and pepper to the New World, brought Chinese silks, spices and Indian medicines to Europe, and even an elephant and a rhinoceros to be gifted to the Pope.

In this book, we look over its role in crossing plant species worldwide and in blending dietary practices, which would revolutionize flora, medicine, and global gastronomy. By linking the four continents, Portugal defined the characteristics of modern-day eating habits, altered global botanic and the planet's landscapes, and contributed unequivocally for the evolution of modern medical science.

The heightened instability gripping the world over the last years leads us to believe in São Roque's cross-cultural project growing relevance and urgency.

The convergence of diverse peoples, cultures, and religions, the 'fusion' we've extensively discussed and shared, is increasingly necessary. We hope that our approach to the world, emphasizing equality and globalization, can contribute to a profound reflection.

All different, but all equal! Every community has contributed to making the world what it is today, each in their own distinctive way. Let us promote, exalt, the tribute given by all throughout the centuries by uniting instead of destroying!

Welcome to this voyage through three hundred years of Portuguese Art. ✍

*Lisbon, March 12th, 1525 + 501*

# Portugal in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: the discovery of the sea route to India and the arrival to Japan

With the death of the king D. Fernando, the throne was claimed by the king of Castille, married to the only daughter of the Portuguese monarch and which provoked a crisis of disputed succession. The two countries entered into war, culminating in the defeat of the Castillians at the battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, and D. João I proclaimed as King of Portugal.

Due to the difficult relations with its neighbouring country after this, Portugal found itself isolated from the rest of Europe, struggling to find food and income necessary to develop and better the lives of its population. The outbreak of bubonic plague aggravated the already fragile situation, with agriculture suffering and the rise in unemployment.

Because national production was insufficient and Portugal effectively land-locked by their enemy Spain, the only alternative was to look westwards across the ocean, developing their trade links with the rest of Europe by sea. This was the first step in the great maritime expansion and the establishment of trade with Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The channel of communications and transport of goods coming from the Orient, was the Mediterranean Sea, dominated by the Italians. Much commerce was negotiated by the Arabs with Italy, but with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, trade with Genoa and Venice suffered drastically and it became imperative to find an alternative commercial route directly linking the regions of spice production to their established European markets. This immensely important and lucrative trade provided the majority of the revenue for the kingdom, and the power to control taxes levied on the sale of these imported goods was a major benefit to other absolute monarchs of the era.

Meanwhile, the discovery and development of the new lands was widely stimulated by the Church, in its desire to spread the Christian message and convert the indigenous peoples.

The need for expansion of the Portuguese territories, allied with the great maritime experience derived from its long Atlantic coast and the development of many navigational aids such as the astrolabe, compass, cross-staff and quadrant, as well as the development of the Nautical School of Sagres in the south, dedicated to the study of new forms of navigation, gave impetus to the innovation, design and construction of the first caravels and ships intended for use for much longer voyages, in sometimes unknown waters.

It is the figure of Infante D. Henrique, the young Prince Henry, with whom the epic poems of the Discoveries are most commonly associated. It was entirely his own initiative, without any intervention from the Crown, to make the first explorations of the African coast, and which drove the conquest of the Magreb in Ceuta in 1415, which is considered to be one of the first signs of the gradual process of Portuguese expansion, probably the most notable aspect of 15th century Portuguese history. The main objective was to curb the Muslim exploration and development of the African coast. With the defeat of Tangiers in 1437 the young Prince turned his attention to the south encouraging countless further voyages to the African coast.

Portugal was successful in the conquest of various lands in West Africa establishing trading posts and factories in the coastal ports, particularly Arguim and Mina, two places that controls the local trade and commerce in the Gulf of Arguim and Gulf of Guinea and were the principal reception centers for gold, ivory ambergris and slaves, from both the interior and coastal areas.

In 1483 Diogo Cão arrived in the mouth of the River Zaire, the first step in the growth of a relationship with the ancient Kingdom of Kongo. The reception was so enthusiastic that the king of Kongo send an ambassador to the Portuguese monarch, as he consider him as the most powerful man in the world. It was also a similar situation in the ancient kingdom of Benin in 1486, where the navigator João Aveiro was welcomed by Oba, for whom the Portuguese were powerful emissaries in possession of unknown and mysterious abilities, partly due to their firearms, which were still totally unknown in these lands, and were considered magical and which aided the cementing of the burgeoning friendship.

In 1488 Bartolomeu Dias succeeded in rounding the Cape of Torments, so named for its terrible dangers and fearsome storms, which in this voyage the experienced seafarers encountered again, but

came through safely. On hearing of the good news, the king, D. João II decreed that it should be renamed 'Boa Esperança', the Cape of Good Hope, and seeing that this connection between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans was indeed feasible, saw the realization of a long desired sea route to India.

In the reign of D. Manuel I, Vasco de Gama landed on the Island of Mozambique, where he was enthusiastically received, and from where he was escorted to Mombassa, where there was an already established Christian colony. On leaving Melinde, a Gujarrati Indian helped him in the crossing of the Indian Ocean as far as Calecut where he arrived in 1498. And so it was like this that the first successful passage of the maritime route to India was achieved, and ultimately the foundation for all further Portuguese exploration of the Orient.

In 1500 Pedro Alvares Cabral arrived in Calecut, after having deviated from his intended route and discovered Brazil. Five years later, the Portuguese State of India was founded to administrate the Portuguese territorial dependencies.

Six years later, the first contacts between Portugal and Ceylon were established resulting in friendly relationships with the king of Kotte, who later became a vassal to the Portuguese crown and in return paying tributes in cinnamon. This island, rich in ivory and precious stones had a great attraction for the crown, and Portuguese Ceylon was founded through the occupation of Kotte and the conquest of surrounding kingdoms.

The taking of Malacca by Afonso de Albuquerque was of major importance for the ambitious Portuguese. This important and cosmopolitan city, until then Muslim, was in control of all the maritime traffic between India and the Far East through the straits of Malacca. Being well aware of the ambitions Siam had towards Malacca, this Viceroy sent an emissary to Ayutthaya, establishing amicable relations between Siam and Portugal, which continue to this day.

In 1515 the same Viceroy conquered the island of Ormuz, taking control of the Persian Gulf.

This city, the third key in the Imperial lock held by Portugal on Asia, along with Goa and Malacca gave the Portuguese complete maritime control of the whole region and complete dominion of maritime trade between Europe and India.

An exploratory commercial expedition was sent to Canton in 1517. After several fruitless attempts at establishing commercial relations, and persecuted by local authorities, they set sail on a northerly course, reaching Liampo on the north of Fukien, where they made a base from where they could disembark for Japan.

Portugal had a crucial role as intermediary in the reestablishment of commercial relations between China and the Empire of the Rising Sun that had stalled for many years. It was only at this time that the Cantonese allowed the founding of the colony of Macao, in 1557.

It was from these explorers that Japan acquired gunpowder and firearms. The Xogum rapidly allied themselves to the Portuguese, and with their help, managing to install the Tokugawa dynasty in power. In a sign of gratitude they offered Nagasaki to the Jesuit missionaries who then established themselves there. Nagasaki today still has traces of Portuguese historic urban design and influence.

The Jesuits would gain the trust of the Xogum and the Daimyos, and started the work of catechism and conversion of the Japanese, including some important Daimios figures.

Nevertheless, the Catholic religion so radically different from the Buddhist and Shinto practices in the land of the Rising Sun, and the behavior of the *Nambam-Jin* (the barbarians from the south, as the Portuguese were called) threatened the traditions and customs of the Japanese, which resulted in the expulsion of the missionaries in 1614, the persecution of Japanese Christians and finally the expulsion of the Portuguese completely in 1639.

Macao was the final great conquest in the era of Portuguese expansionism. It was followed by a commercial success and ensuing economic prosperity enabled by the sea route through the Cape that connected India and Portugal, and the successful exploitation of Brazil from where exotic wood such as jacaranda and mahogany, sugar, gold and other precious metals, tobacco, cocoa and coffee arrived in the metropolis of Lisbon.

This was the great Portuguese Colonial Empire that would open the doors to the beginnings of Modern Age in Europe. ✍

# Lisbon, centre of the world trade



**FIG. 1 AND 2**  
*Rua Nova dos Mercadores* (Kelmescott Manor) ©The Society of Antiquaries of London

In the 16th century Lisbon becomes the main Renaissance global city, centre of a universal commercial empire linking west to east via Brazil and Africa, all the way to the Empire of the Rising Sun.

It is at Rua Nova, close to the banks of the river Tagus, that the treasures arriving from these distant lands are unloaded. Influenced by the various overseas cultures, Lisbon becomes the world's centre stage, its exotic taste defining fashions throughout the Old Continent, under a new decorative grammar that fuses remote paradigms with references from erudite European culture.

A rotating commercial platform, Lisbon circulates the most extravagant goods throughout the various European courts and as far as the New World. But goods from the Americas do also come into Lisbon on their way east, to be traded along Africa, in the Orient or as far as Japan.

Resulting from this extensive trading, Rua Nova dos Mercadores becomes the world's first shopping centre, a truly global market uniting a vast diversity of cultures and ethnic groups. As the Portuguese commercial networks expanded, Lisbon became increasingly more mixed and cosmopolitan, the place where people's from the entire world converge, resembling more of a modern city rather than a 16th century capital.

## **THE 'RUA NOVA DOS MERCADORES'**

These two paintings, originally a single canvas, are the portrait of this, for many unknown, world. Produced in the last quarter of the 16th century, they illustrate the seething life at *Rua Nova dos Mercadores*, Lisbon most important street and the city's vital force.

The trading area is defined by a fence running along the street. Under the arcades, benches for exclusive use of bankers and merchants are clearly discernible, the latter being mainly Sephardic Jews or foreigners.

The population diversity is clearly noticeable. As many as 10% of Lisbon's inhabitants in the 1500s were probably of sub-Saharan origin, many others coming from elsewhere in the Empire. Many trades and daily tasks were performed either by indigenous Portuguese or by these overseas residents of which many were slaves. In the paintings there are various African women, probably in the service of *Rua Nova* shops and homes. Some are carrying water containers over their heads, others baskets. It is possible to identify one selling rice and another possibly carrying lidded chamber pots to be emptied into the Tagus River. Portuguese women are only visible observing the scene from various building's windows.

An European trader sells wine—or more likely some type of brandy, that he serves from a glass bottle, a very expensive utensil at the time. Amongst the crowd an African tambourine player and some hauliers, both European and African, that carry goods to the river front. The men, from sub-Saharan or Eastern Africa, or Middle-Eastern territories such as Ormuz, dress mainly in their native attire, some being portrayed in turbans.

On the left, two barefoot children of probably mixed ethnicity, play with a cat, an important testimony of the reality of miscegenation that the Portuguese court, under particular conditions, sometimes encouraged.

### THE ‘CHAFARIZ D’EL REY’

This painting is an equally important record of a forgotten world, and once again its most surprising detail relates to the characters depicted. It is clear that approximately half of the people portrayed are Africans, and Lisbon was the only European city where, in the 16th century, this could happen.

Close to the Royal Palace the *Chafariz d’el Rei*, the Royal Water Fountain, is the main Renaissance Lisbon fountain. Built against the medieval city walls it provided the city’s inhabitants with a reliable drinking water supply. The fountain’s water was transported in containers that women carried over their heads and was also taken throughout the world in Portuguese vessels, thus assuming a powerful symbolic role.

Brought generally into Lisbon as slaves, a number of Africans were later freed and assimilated in the wider Lisbon population. Some ascended the social ladder attaining important social positions and adopting European custom.

The Africans weren’t the only enslaved 16th century inhabitants of Lisbon. There are also slaves from China, from Japan, from India and other parts of Asia and even Tupinambá people from Brazil. Beyond the water carriers—some Africans and some Europeans, it is also possible to identify a woman sitting at a portable table selling foodstuffs and two sailors, a European and an African, wearing stripped trousers.

Renaissance passion for music is illustrated by the presence of two fashionably dressed African musicians, one on a boat playing the tambourine for a courting couple and another within the fountain courtyard playing the lute, a fashionable string instrument and by the mixed dancing couple. Humorously, on the left, an African man empties a broken bucket over his head.

In the courtyard a chained water bearer slave, probably being punished for an attempted escape. On the left hand side corner two officials are arresting a man.

African people could belong to various social strata such as illustrated by the presence of a black knight riding a brown horse tacked up in gilt leather. This elegantly attired character wears a black velvet cape embroidered with a red cross, of the Order of Santiago, velvet hat adorned with ostrich feathers and baggy short trousers known as galligaskins.

Images of a bygone world, this was Lisbon, first capital of globalisation!<sup>1</sup> ↗



FIG. 3  
*Chafariz D’El Rey*, Lisbon ©Berardo collection

<sup>1</sup> GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan; LOWE, Kate, *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015.

# Precious knowledge? European espionage, oceanic pilots and Portuguese maritime itineraries (16th and 17th centuries)

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## INTRODUCTION

The earliest European kingdom to expand overseas in the 15th century, Portugal was, from the onset of this process, watched by its maritime rivals who, in their respective chronologies, sought the Portuguese knowledge of the main sea routes in order to be able to plan for their own maritime expeditions. In this active process, the understanding that the control of navigational itineraries was the foundation for preserving and consolidating overseas empires, drove an exponential escalation in espionage. Historically such phenomenon developed in a variety of ways: maritime espionage missions in Lisbon or elsewhere in the Portuguese empire; purchase or theft of nautical maps; and buying or kidnaping of pilots in Lisbon or in the open seas.

This brief outline of such occurrences attempts at analysing some of the better-known, but without being exhaustive in what is a fully encompassing topic.<sup>1</sup> It will nevertheless seek to demonstrate how the link between the flow of Portuguese maritime knowledge (the nautical knowledge held by the oceanic pilots as embodied by the route maps and nautical cartography employed in the great oceanic voyages), and major Spanish, French, English and Dutch exploration voyages, is easily documentable. Simultaneously it will attempt to demonstrate how such knowledge was fundamental to the inception and consolidation of Portugal's rivals' maritime empires and how Portuguese 'secrecy policies', in terms of maritime knowledge, did fail.<sup>2</sup>

## SPANISH CASE STUDY: FROM FERNÃO DE MAGALHÃES TO THE AMBASSADOR-SPY JUAN DE BORJA

Chronologically Spain was the second European power to undertake systematic overseas expansion and, as such, its attempts at recruiting Portuguese maritime pilots were constant. The Portuguese influence is evidenced forthwith in the foundation of Seville's Casa de la Contratación, an enterprise largely inspired by Lisbon's *Casa da Índia*,<sup>3</sup> which, from its launch, recruited Portuguese oceanic pilots. Furthermore, it is in this particular context that the 1517 arrival of Fernão de Magalhães (1480–1521) in Spain can be understood.

The renowned Portuguese explorer travelled to the court of Carlos I (r. 1516–1556), the Spanish monarch, to submit his proposal for what would become the first Earth's circumnavigation, whose command he would share with Spanish explorer Juan Sebastián Elcano (1476–1526). On the occasion, Magalhães put forward a voyage to the Moluccas Islands, known for the production of cloves, a highly valuable spice in Europe. The Portuguese explorer argued that, according to the Treaty signed in 1494 between Portugal and Spain at Tordesillas, which established the overseas hemispheres of influence for each of the two crowns, the Moluccas belonged to Spain. In order to corroborate this claim, Magalhães was accompanied by the brothers Rui and Francisco Faleiro, two of the expedition cosmographic advisers who, resorting to Portuguese cartography, demonstrated that the islands did indeed fall under Spanish controlled territory. He did also propose to sail along the South American coast, down to the straights that would take his name, following, as it is now known, information originally acquired in Portugal. Consequently, allegations that the Portuguese authorities wanted to murder him in order to prevent his voyage under the Spanish flag, would compel Magalhães to hire personal protection. Undoubtedly against his own country's interests, the expedition was, nonetheless, planned entirely with indispensable Portuguese maritime knowledge, as is evident from Jorge and Pedro Reinel presence in Seville during the

<sup>1</sup> For a more thorough version of the research herewith presented see: VILA-SANTA, Nuno, *Knowledge Exchanges Between Portugal and Europe: Maritime Diplomacy, Espionage, and Nautical Science in the Early Modern World (15th–17th centuries)*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2024. An extended version of this research will be published in 2026 by the Academia de Marinha (Navy Academy) under the title: *Portugal e a Europa: Diplomacia e Espionagem Marítima (Séculos XV–XVII). Estudos em homenagem de Avelino Teixeira da Mota*.

<sup>2</sup> On this topic see: CORTESÃO, Jaime, *A política de sigilo nos Descobrimientos*, Lisbon, INCM, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> SÁNCHEZ, Antonio, *La espada, la cruz y el Padrón. Soberanía, fe y representación cartográfica en el mundo ibérico bajo la Monarquía Hispánica, 1503–1598*, Madrid, CSIC, 2013, p. 87.

voyage cartographic setting up. On setting sail in 1519, Magalhães was also assisted by various Portuguese pilots who controlled the fundamental moments of this pioneering circumnavigation.

In the aftermath of his death in the Philippines, and the subsequent 1522 return of Elcano to Seville, a new controversy emerged between Portugal and Spain, as the former claimed to be the rightful owner of the Moluccas Archipelago. This claim led to a long diplomatic review and renegotiation of the Treaty signed at Tordesillas, that was eventually secured by the 1529 signing of the Treaty of Saragoza.

During this process, while both parts debated the Moluccas ownership, maritime espionage was decisive. While Portuguese ambassadors in Spain protested at each expedition being planned to the archipelago, and attempted by any means to sabotage its departure, their Spanish counterparts in Lisbon aimed at secretly recruiting reliable Portuguese pilots and cosmographers for the service of Carlos I. Such was the case of Ambassador Juan de Zuñiga in 1523–24, with Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, former Governor of Portuguese India, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, author of *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* and experienced Portuguese India commander, and Lopo Homem and Simão Fernandes, cartographer and astrologer respectively. All these Spanish endeavours did eventually fail<sup>4</sup> but, so did the attempts by King João III of Portugal for repatriating the pilots Estevão Gomes e Simão de Alcáçova, by then in the service of Carlos I.

In 1528, with the signing of the Treaty of Saragoza fast approaching, the Spanish Ambassador Lope Hurtado de Mendonza recognised in a letter to his King that for Spain to maintain expeditions to the Moluccas through the route opened by Magalhães, he would have to discreetly recruit Portuguese pilots in Lisbon. According to the Ambassador, they were the only with the necessary knowledge and experience.<sup>5</sup> Considering the numerous Portuguese maritime pilots recorded in Spanish expeditions, the statement would be equally true for the ensuing decades, not only in regards to the Straits of Magellan, but also to the River Plate, in modern day Uruguay and Argentina, the Caribbean, and even Florida and California.

The climax of Spanish maritime espionage in Portugal would however be attained in the reign of King Filipe II (r. 1556–1598). Between the 1550s and the 1570s, the king ordered his Ambassadors in Portugal to pursue a policy of secret sourcing and direct hiring, as was the case with Fernando de Oliveira, author of *Ars Nautica*, while simultaneously issuing arrest warrants to traitor Spanish pilots in Lisbon. It is thus unsurprising that, between 1570 and 1575, Filipe II would appoint Ambassador-spy Juan de Borja as his representative in Portugal. In his instructions to the Ambassador, the king noted that dissimulation and secrecy were paramount in obtaining all the available itinerary guides and maps. The same recommendation would be reiterated to Ambassador Juan de Silva, Borja's successor from 1576 to 1578.

Little versed in the nautical sciences, Borja confessed in one of his earliest letters that he was dedicating some daily hours to its learning, and also that he had recruited a spy, now identified as the Neapolitan Juan Baptista Gesio, for the purpose of acquiring Portuguese guides and maps.<sup>6</sup> Highly successful, Gesio managed to send Juan Lopez de Velasco, by then compiling the Chronicle of the Castilian Indies at Filipe II's request, the fundamental 'Rutter of the Indies' by Governor João de Castro, the unpublished manuscript for the *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* by Duarte Pacheco Pereira (Fig. 1), and also the 'Treaty on Brazil' by Pêro Magalhães de Gândavo. Together, Gesio and Borja would also orchestrate the 1579 escape of Luís Jorge Barbura, a prominent cartographer, to Spain.

All this intense espionage activity, as instructed by Filipe II, was also linked to the latest dispute between the two neighbouring countries. At stake was the Spanish settlement in the Philippines, as Portugal argued that according to the Treaty of Zaragoza, these Islands fell under its overseas hemisphere.

<sup>4</sup> GIL, Juan, *El exilio portugués en Sevilla. De los Braganza a Magallanes*, Sevilla, Fundación Cajasol, 2009, pp. 324–325.

<sup>5</sup> BRAGA, Isabel Maria Ribeiro Mendes Drumond, *Península Ibérica: um espaço, dois reinos. Interrelações na época de Carlos V*, polycopied PHD dissertation, Lisbon, Universidade Nova, 1996, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> Archivo General de Simancas, *Secretaria de Estado*, Legajo 387, docs. 16 e 24.

The upcoming 1580 aggregation of Portugal into the Spanish Crown, however, would render espionage obsolete. During the 60 years of Dynastic Union, terminated by the 1640 Restoration of Independence, Spanish recruiting of Portuguese maritime pilots became totally open, without any need for secrecy, espionage or classified negotiation. An analogous situation would occur with England.

#### **ENGLISH CASE STUDY: FROM THE SECRET RECRUITING OF PILOTS IN LISBON TO NUNO DA SILVA'S ABDUCTION BY FRANCIS DRAKE**

As acknowledged by recent British historiography, there was a tradition of Portuguese maritime pilots' recruitment for the 16th century English exploration voyages.<sup>7</sup> One such case, thoroughly documented, was the presence of the Portuguese João Gonçalves and Francisco Fernandes in João Canhoto maiden voyage to Newfoundland, presently in Canada, at the service of King Henry VII.<sup>8</sup>

Later, from the 1550s onwards, once England resumed its systematic overseas expansion by sending regular expeditions to the western coast of Africa, the resorting to Portuguese maritime pilots became once again a reality. The earliest of those voyages, by Thomas Wydham in 1553, was organised on the basis of a suggestion by António Rodrigues Pinteado, a London based defector pilot from Oporto, assisted by Francisco Rodrigues, another Portuguese residing in London. For the 1554 John Lok's voyage it is also recorded that its sponsoring London merchants dispatched one of their partners, Alexander Coles, to Lisbon, with the purpose of recruiting maritime pilots. Coles would however fail in his mission, as some official at the *Casa da Índia* alerted King João III of his purpose, and the monarch immediately demanded that all the pilots swore allegiance to him.<sup>9</sup> Such episodes ensued, as documented in correspondence from Spanish ambassadors in Lisbon, and the settling of Portuguese pilots in England would eventually increase in the following years.

Of the various known examples, one is of particular relevance for its association with the notorious triangular voyages between England, the western African coast and the Caribbean, headed by English explorer John Hawkins (1532–1595). In 1567, during the planning of the latter's third great expedition, the Portuguese defectors Antão Luís and Gaspar Caldeira escaped to London to offer their services to Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) as pilots in Hawkins's expedition, proposing to lead him to an alleged *Eldorado* on the African coast. Enthused by the prospect of finding gold, as it had happened to King Filipe II of Spain while employing the same two pilots, the English Queen ordered Hawkins to take them on.

Simultaneously, the two pilots were also being pursued by Portuguese diplomacy and intelligence, as they had, in 1566, piloted the French attack on Funchal, in Madeira Island.<sup>10</sup> A letter written by a Portuguese spy positioned in London, which reads as a 16th century police thriller, narrates how Luís and Caldeira were persecuted through the London streets, amidst treason allegations (Fig. 2). Both would confess to Hawkins the inexistence of the so-called *Eldorado* and flee England, later being captured and executed in Lisbon.

Their history became so widely known in Europe that other Portuguese pilots became more diligent. Such was the case with Bartolomeu Baião, who appears in London in 1570, proposing to serve under the English flag and to organise expeditions to the Straits of Magellan, the Caribbean, New Spain

<sup>7</sup> BARFORD, Megan, DEVOY, Louise, 'Using the Seas and Skies: Navigation in Early Modern England' in *Tudor & Stuart seafarers. The emergence of a maritime nation, 1485–1707*, Ed. James Davey, London, Adlard Coles/National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, 2018, pp. 106–107.

<sup>8</sup> FERNÁNDEZ-ARMESTO, Felipe, 'New Worlds: 1485–1505' in *Tudor & Stuart seafarers. The emergence of a maritime nation, 1485–1707*, Ed. James Davey, London, Adlard Coles/National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, 2018, pp. 30–32.

<sup>9</sup> Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Lisbon, *Colecção de São Vicente*, Vol. V, fl. 465.

<sup>10</sup> On these pilots' career see: BOURDON, León, *Deux aventuriers portugais: Gaspar Caldeira et Antão Luís (1564–1568)*, Lisbon, Livraria Bertrand, 1955.



and Florida. Albeit his questionable service record in Portugal and Spain, he was welcomed by both the Queen and John Hawkins, who got as far as to appoint him pilot on some voyages.<sup>11</sup>

It is likely that Baião got to meet Francis Drake who, between 1577 and 1580, would lead the first English circumnavigation of the Earth. For this enterprise Drake had visited Lisbon in 1575, to acquire Portuguese written guides as well as nautical charts.<sup>12</sup> During the expedition he did not hesitate to abduct the Portuguese pilot Nuno da Silva in Cape Verde, and to force him to navigate the journey between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans.<sup>13</sup> Silva's kidnapping is no more than a repetition of what had occurred with the French, but it is nonetheless illustrative of how Drake, even after acquiring his charts in Lisbon, was uncertain in sailing a route unknown to him. Such fact was confirmed by the Spanish head of the *Consejo de Indias*, who in 1577 stated that the English Armadas were invariably handled by Spanish, French, and, predominantly, Portuguese pilots.<sup>14</sup> Such appraisal did not account for the most relevant example in the entirety of the 16th century. The Portuguese pilot Simão Fernandes, who not only discovered North American territories for Queen Elizabeth I, but did also, in the 1570s and 1580s, serve directly under such English explorers as Richard Granville (1542–1541), Humphrey Gilbert (1539–83) and Walter Raleigh (1552–1618).<sup>15</sup>

#### FRENCH CASE STUDY: FROM PALMIER DE GONNEVILLE TO BARTOLOMEU BORGES ABDUCTION

As in England, maritime espionage and pilots' recruitment stories are widely documented in France. Dating back to the country's earliest expedition to Brazil, by Palmier de Gonneville, it must be noted that,

<sup>11</sup> On this topic see: VILA-SANTA, Nuno, "An effect of 'corrosive' globalization? Trading 'knowledges': the career of Bartolomeu Baião between Portugal, Spain and England (1564–1572)", *Terrae Incognitae*, 57–1, 2025, pp. 60–84.

<sup>12</sup> CROSS, Calvar, *La Batalla del Mar Océano: corpus documental de las hostilidades entre España e Inglaterra (1568–1604)*, Vol. I, Madrid, Turner, 1988, p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> On this topic see: MADRID, José María Moreno, SALOMONI, David, 'Nuno da Silva's third relation: an unknown report on Francis Drake voyage (1577–1580)', *Terra Incognitae*, 54 (2022), pp. 64–82.

<sup>14</sup> WATERS, David, *The Art of Navigation in England in Elizabethan and Early Stuart times*, London, Hollis and Carter, 1958, 82–83 e 101.

<sup>15</sup> On this topic see: QUINN, David, 'Simão Fernandes, a Portuguese Pilot in the English Service, circa 1573–1588' in *Actas do Congresso Internacional de História dos Descobrimentos*, Vol. III, Lisbon: Comissão para a Comemoração do V Centenário da morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1961.

FIG. 1 Duarte Pacheco Pereira and the *Esmeraldus de Situ Orbis* manuscript; Duarte Pacheco Pereira, renowned Portuguese traveller, sea captain and cosmographer, author of *Esmeraldus de Situ Orbis*, his early 16th century manuscript detailing the African coast geography and nautical route. Although only published in the 19th century, the manuscript version was, up until then, widely circulated in Spain. One of these manuscriptal versions, resulting from Gesio's espionage activity, is now at the Escorial Library.

FIG. 2 Gabriel Pereira letter (Torre do Tombo National Archives, Lisbon Corpo Cronológico, Parte I, mc. 108, doc. 74); 1567 letter from the Portuguese spy Gabriel Pereira to João Pereira Dantas, his boss and Portuguese Ambassador to Spain, in which he narrates the chasing, through the London streets, of traitor pilots Antão Luís and Gaspar Caldeira, who had offered their services for John Hawkins expedition. John Hawkins portrait, one of the explorers active during Queen Elizabeth I reign, who dealt with the Portuguese pilot Luís Caldeira and later with Bartolomeu Baião.

as recorded by the captain in his journey log, the 1502 voyage was only made possible by recruiting two Portuguese pilots in Lisbon ‘to assist in his own knowledge of the Route of Indies’.<sup>16</sup> As in the previous case studies, there are numerous references to Portuguese pilots who offered their services to French monarchs, particularly from the reign of King François I (1515–1547) onwards. Amongst the 16th century most famed is João Afonso, known in France as Jean Alphonse following from his naturalisation, a founder of Dieppe’s Cartography School, and pilot in the 1542 Jean François de Roberval (1500–1560) voyage to Canada.<sup>17</sup> Celebrated by the Pleaide members as a major explorer in his lifetime, his cosmographic works however, would only be published after his death.

Nonetheless, and similarly to Spain and England, there were occurrences of French espionage focused on the Portuguese maritime knowledge, the examples of Michel de Seure and Jean Nicot, French Ambassadors to Portugal between 1557 and 1561, being the most paradigmatic. The former was eventually deported from Portugal for espionage activities in the context of the 1557–1559 Franco-Spanish war, while the latter, active between 1559 and 1561, a period of declared peace, found the ideal grounds for acquiring the most relevant maritime knowledge.

In addition to dispatching pilots to navigate French missions to the Moluccas and Eastern Africa, and seamanship books by André Pires and Bernardo Rodrigues, featuring updated compilations of nautical itineraries (Fig. 3), he did also manage to entertain a range of major contacts within Lisbon’s intellectual establishment. Through these acquaintances Nicot amassed a range of geographical information that he forwarded to France, while simultaneously getting access to writings by cosmographer Pedro Nunes (1502–1578), which he suggested should be translated to French for the instruction of seafarers, as well as by his contemporaries Damião de Góis (1502–1574), João de Barros (1496–1574) and Fernando de Oliveira (1507–1581).

The information compiled by Nicot had considerable impact on planning of French expeditions led by Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1519–1572) and encouraged the latter to pursue the hiring of Portuguese cosmographic experts, from which stands out the 1567 recruitment of Bartolomeu Velho, and the attempted enlisting of Fernando de Oliveira. Amidst his anti-Spanish (in Florida, the Caribbean and New Spain), and anti-Portuguese (in Brazil, West Africa and Madeira) overseas activities, Coligny sponsored Portuguese pilots’ abduction missions, such as was the case of Bartolomeu Borges, captured by a French expedition devised by the Admiral, while in the service of Spain in the Caribbean. Taken to France, Borges was coerced, under the threat of beheading, into piloting Jean Ribault 1562 maiden voyage to Florida. As such he was presented to the *Conseil Privée*, in which Coligny had a seat, questioned about Florida’s Spanish occupation and compelled to share the region’s geographical and nautical itinerary details.

Bartolomeu Borges knowledge was fundamental to secure Coligny’s main plan; that Ribault would sail via a maritime route unknown to the Spanish, thus being able to reach Florida without facing opposition. On his return, realising that he would be forced to participate in Ribault next Florida trip, Borges sought the Portuguese Ambassador protection in order to be sent to Lisbon. Upon his arrival he would be contacted by the Spanish Ambassador Alonso de Tovar, who reported the narrative to Filipe II and arranged for the pilot to be reconducted in his service to the Hispanic crown.<sup>18</sup> Similarly to the English episodes however, Bartolomeu Borges was not the last Portuguese pilot to be abducted by the French at sea and, for his technical knowledge, forced to serve in the French navy.

<sup>16</sup> *Voyages au Canada avec les relations des voyages en Amérique de Gonneville, Verrazano et Roberval*, Paris, La Découverte, 1992, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup> On this topic see: LAROCHELLE, Dany, *Du ciel au bateau: la Cosmographie, 1544, du pilote Jean Alphonse et la construction du savoir géographique au XVIe siècle*, Ottawa, National Library of Canada, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> On this topic see: VILA-SANTA, Nuno, ‘The Untold Story of Oceanic Pilot Bartolomeu Borges who Guided Jean Ribault to Florida in 1562: Document Transcription and Translation, accompanied by an Historical Introduction’, in *Terrae Incognitae*, 55–1, 2023, pp. 82–102.



**A LANDING POINT. THE DUTCH CASE STUDY: JAN HUYGHEN VAN LINSCHOTEN, THE ACQUISITION OF PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH MARITIME KNOWLEDGE AND THE ITINERARY PUBLICATION**

From this angle the Dutch case study is unlike all the others for the specific accession of the Portuguese maritime knowledge. If in the previous instances the main featured characters were ambassadors, spies and pilots, in the Dutch case the leading figure was a traveller who ironically, after so many unsuccessful earlier attempts, was for the first time able to seize and publish a whole compilation of Portuguese and Spanish records. This traveller was Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563–1611), a major figure at the outset of Dutch Eastern overseas expansion. At the time of his 1579 departure from Enkhuizen, in the Low Countries Province, to Seville, the Dutch Republic had just been founded and was still fighting for its independence from Filipe II’s Spain. Van Linschoten followed various of his predecessors who had served in the Portuguese and Spanish empires and, upon his arrival in Seville he would, in 1580, move to Lisbon. In 1583, he was appointed to sail in the armada that transported Father Vicente da Fonseca, new Archbishop of Goa, to India.

In Goa, while in the archbishop’s service, firstly as accountant and later as secretary, van Linschoten encountered exceptional circumstances for compiling itineraries for the main Portuguese maritime routes in the East, including the main route between Lisbon and Goa, and subsequently all those that branched out from there, such as Goa—Malacca, Goa—Macao and so forth, as requested by his master, who intended to send King Filipe II an updated summary of his new realms as the newly acclaimed King of Portugal (r. 1580–1598).

While in the east, van Linschoten was in a privileged position to converse with captains and pilots, and to build a network of informers that allowed him to collect the data later published in the *Itinerary*. The archbishop’s and some of his relatives’ deaths, combined with news on the progress of Filipe II’s European wars, prompted van Linschoten to abandon Portuguese Asia, even though he had seriously considered settling there, had archbishop Fonseca lived. Thus being, in 1589 he returned to the Azores for two years, where he would come into contact with cartographer Luís Teixeira as well as with various

**FIG. 3** Jean Nicot and his manuscript copy of André Pires *Livro de Marinharia*; Jean Nicot, French Ambassador to Portugal between 1559 and 1561, who sent André Pires’s *Livro de Marinharia* to France. This book belonged to Nicot’s personal library as evidenced by the ownership mark and included various Portuguese nautical guides that its owner released in France.

Portuguese, English and Spanish seafarers. Simultaneously he would also acquire the Spanish maritime guides which he later published. Finally, in 1592, upon his return to Lisbon and finding out that Petrus Plancius (1552–1622), head of Dutch intelligence and reputed cosmographer, had sent two spies to Lisbon to obtain guides for the India Run with the purpose of preparing the first Dutch expedition to Asia, van Linschoten decided to return to his country.

By then, the book written but the archbishop dead, and with no other official Iberian patron, it would be unlikely that his work would ever be published. Conversely, in the young Dutch Republic publication would be certain, as Dutch merchants in Lisbon had just told him that the Portuguese and Spanish maritime guides in his possession were exactly what the Republic's leaders were missing to launch the first Dutch expedition to Asia via the Cape of Good Hope.

Thus being, van Linschoten had his full version *Itinerary* published in 1596. In 1595 however, the section containing the compilation of the Portuguese and Spanish route guides, the *Reys-Gheschrift* (fig. 4), was published separately for the purpose of providing Cornelis de Houtman (1565–1599), who that same year departed for Asia via the Cape Route, with vital data. The success of this expedition ensured that the Dutch vessels would repeat the journey for centuries to come.

Van Linschoten printed route guides, albeit readapted for a Dutch audience from their Iberian originals,<sup>19</sup> were promptly circulated, either by translations of the *Itinerary*, or by separate editions of the *Reys-Gheschrift*. The book earliest English version was published in 1598, the Latin in 1599, the German in 1600 and the French in 1610, followed by various reeditions throughout the 17th century.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, the Portuguese nautical guides were widely circulated and appropriated by the French and the English, who would employ them for the benefit of planning their overseas voyages. The *Itinerary* publication shut down any Portuguese or Spanish attempt at secrecy in relation to Iberian maritime knowledge which, from then on became the foundation for launching and consolidating the French, English and Dutch maritime empires in detriment of Iberian interests.

### CONCLUSION

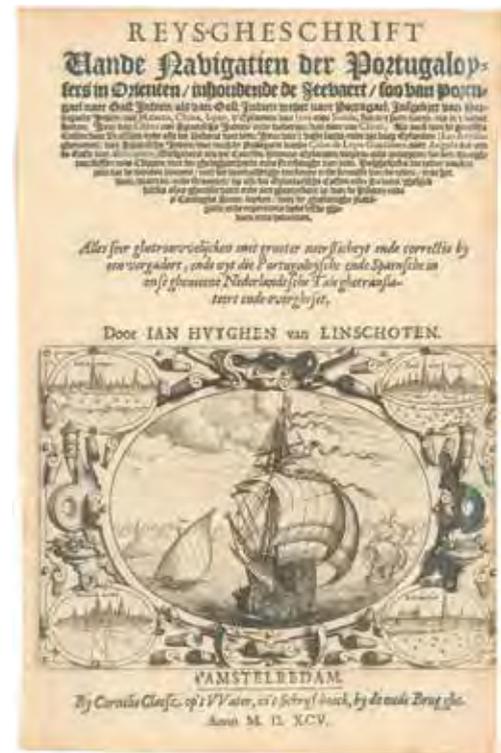
The case studies outlined illustrate two particular aspects. First of all, that Portuguese maritime mastery was intensely circulated through its various European rivals, having impacted them decisively in various key moments. And secondly, that despite Portuguese and Spanish attempts at preventing it, such circulation was outspread, either by formal (diplomacy and espionage), or informal means (circulating pilots and cosmographers). Nonetheless, in those attempts, often referred as 'secrecy policies'<sup>21</sup>, purpose and outcome must not be confused. Although it is undeniable that Portugal aimed at restricting the flow of its maritime knowledge due to an evident awareness of the danger of that knowledge reaching its competitors, on the other hand, it often failed in its purpose.

As noted in the first three case studies, Portuguese pilots either found their way to Spain, England or France, or were secretly recruited in Portugal, when not simply abducted for their expertise. In the Dutch case it became clear that it was during his service career in Portugal and Spain, as well as in their respective overseas empires, that van Linschoten managed to compile the material he later published, in spite of the surveillance exerted by the authorities. To some extent all the 'secrecy policy' attempts were doomed to fail. No Portuguese monarch could have total control over the movement of his pilots and cosmographers, and even less so over the espionage networks set by his competitors. Thereby, in

<sup>19</sup> On this subject see: VILA-SANTA, Nuno, 'Jan Huygen van Linschoten and the *Reys-gheschrift*: updating Iberian Science for the Dutch expansion', in *Historical Research*, vol. 95, issue 265, 2021, pp. 736–757.

<sup>20</sup> For accessing these reeditions of the *Itinerário* and the *Reys-gheschrift* see: <https://www.aseaofbooks.org/#linschotens-itinerario>

<sup>21</sup> See note 1.



most instances, what seems evident is the fact that such attempts were often overdue and consequently unsuccessful. This fact does not inhibit their existence, but in a rather less structured form than that generally ascribed to them.

In essence, the increase in Spanish, English, French and Dutch espionage for Portuguese maritime expertise was also an inevitable consequence of 16th century planetary globalisation. Accordingly, the volume of such occurrences would only grow and intensify in the 17th and 18th centuries as, even after Portugal's loss of ocean supremacy, its maritime expertise remained avidly coveted by its seafaring rivals. ➤

**FIG. 4** Portrait of Jan Huygen van Linschoten (from the *princeps* edition of his *Itinerario*), and the *Reys-gheschrift* 1595 original edition, published for Cornelis de Houtman first Dutch expedition to Asia. As one of the four sections of the *Itinerario* it had various 17th century reeditions and translations, as well as considerable impact in English and French overseas expansion projects.

# Botany and medicine in the Portuguese overseas expansion

**RUI MANUEL LOUREIRO**

*ISMAT, CHAM-NOVA/FCT*

The earliest exploration journeys along the African coast developed under the impetus of Prince Henry (1395–1460), prompted by a mix of geographic curiosity and material interests. By the mid-15th century, these expeditions, launched from Portuguese ports, had become immensely profitable following from the discovery of gold rich African regions and the development of the African slave trade. This early Portuguese contact with equatorial Africa, would have an impact of many consequences in most branches of knowledge, namely in the fields of botany and medicine.

Maritime expeditions were accompanied by significant written information, be it letters, informs or reports, describing the new geographic, natural, and human realities. As such, this documentation referred novel or little-known natural products, such as the kola nut, the dragon tree, the chili pepper, the long pepper, or the banana, that would become popular in Portugal and in other European regions, and which, beyond their evident dietary value, did also hold therapeutic properties. Early written reports also described unknown diseases that became responsible for increased mortality amongst Europeans, and whose more obvious symptoms were fevers or diarrhoeas. In attempting to restore physical balance, the incipient medical knowledge resorted mainly to bleedings and enemas, specific diets, and several pharmacological compounds prepared as pills, herbal infusions, or skin patches.

By 1475, when the Portuguese ships were regularly crossing the Gulf of Guinea, the intention of pursuing a maritime route to India bypassing the African continent, whose real dimension was still unknown, arose from amongst the cosmographic lobby close to the crown. On the one hand, Portugal's technical developments in terms of astronomical navigation enabled the maturing of that Indian project cherished by King João II (r. 1481–1495). On the other hand, rumours of the East's fabulous riches in terms of medicinal substances, spices and precious stones had reached the Kingdom, and the possibility of intervening in the traffic of those precious commodities was being considered. The subsequent discovery of the Maritime Route to India, in the reign of King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521), would finally enable the direct contact of with the East, up until then only known in Europe through seldom reports by individual travellers.

Following from Vasco da Gama's journey, the Portuguese State of India would progressively grow and develop, establishing operational outposts in western Indian ports, and in other strategic Asian regions of perceived trading potential. By the mid-16th century, from its headquarters in Goa, the Portuguese Empire had expanded its area of influence from the Island of Mozambique, in Africa's eastern coast, to the peninsula of Macao, in southern China, to the Moluccas, in the farther regions of the Malay archipelago, the fortresses of Ormuz, gateway to the Persian Gulf, and Malacca, the two most important bastions of the Imperial network, a whole group of possessions in the Hindustani coast such as Diu, Bassein, Cannanore, now Kannur, Kochi and several others, and a restrict number of fortresses in the island of Ceylon, present day Sri Lanka.

Annually, thousands of people travelled in Portuguese caravels and carracks in severely deficient hygienic conditions. Due to poor quality of drinking water, shortage of fresh fruits and vegetables, deterioration of onboard food supplies, lack of appropriated clothing for thermal amplitudes and forced coexistence in enclosed and poorly aired spaces, mortality rates could reach over half of the on-board population. The most common and mortal disease was scurvy, which would spread when the ships would lose sight of land for long periods of three or four months. Little could do the barbers or physicians that seldom travelled in the ships, to control the spreading diseases with the limited ship's apothecaries' resources. On arriving in India, many passengers had to seek assistance in one of the various hospitals that were progressively established in the main outposts, and in which practised physicians and surgeons arrived from Portugal.

While on the eastern coast of Africa, in ports such as Sofala, Mombasa or Malindi, the Portuguese had come across societies characterised by cultural traits that they could recognize, from previous con-

tacts with Morocco and western Africa, on the Indian coast, in Arabia, Persia, the Malay peninsula, China or Japan, they were confronted with an array of social and cultural behaviours that were unknown to Europeans. Early-16th century travellers accounts were teeming with new information from those mysterious worlds. All through the century, letters, and other handwritten accounts, as well as chronicles and printed treaties, transmitted detailed information on those regions' natural world, their prevalent illnesses, and the medical practices encountered.

The Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires, sent to India to supervise the quality of medicinal drugs and spices shipped in the India Route sea vessels, was one of the first to mention eastern botany and medicine. In 1516 Pires wrote a long letter to the king, containing a detailed list of natural components of therapeutic use that could be obtained in Goa, including worm bush, for the treatment of intestinal parasites; opium, of sedative properties; bindweed, a purgative; fynbus aloe, from the island of Socotra, used for dermatological ailments; sodium borate, of antiseptic and antifungal properties; sweet gum, a balm; and the rhubarb, of laxative properties. This information would be broadly expanded in the *Suma Oriental* manuscript, a comprehensive description of the Asian world, completed by Tomé Pires in 1516, and forwarded to the Portuguese monarch.

In the following decades, as they settled in the eastern African and Asian coasts, the Portuguese deepened their knowledge of, and attempted to adapt to the various societies, albeit maintaining most of their original social and cultural behaviours. The fever outbreaks, the diarrhoeas, the illnesses, the inflammations, as well as the injuries resulting from frequent military conflict, continued to be dealt with by physicians and surgeons following western medicine traditions. Nonetheless, some growing phenomena of cultural miscegenation would eventually become apparent in medical practices, with European physicians increasingly resorting to their eastern counterpart's local knowledge. Extant Portuguese apothecaries lists from those territories, attest to the increasing use of local products in the compositions of distilled waters, antidotes, purifiers, skin patches, ointments, oils, and electuaries.

It was also not uncommon that in Goa the Europeans would resort to Hindu doctors, followers of ayurvedic principles based on diets, oils, massages, and meditation exercises. In other territories, such as Macao, they would appeal to traditional Chinese medicine, whose practitioners worked with acupuncture, massages, moxibustion and herbal therapy. The China root, a Chinese autochthonous climbing plant of therapeutic properties, was circulated through the Portuguese networks, eventually arriving in Europe together with its reputation in the treatment of sexually transmitted infections. And the tea herb, con-



FIG. 1 Portuguese fleet in India, from the *Memória das Armadas* (c. 1570)

sumed by the Chinese, had also some diffusion amongst the Portuguese as a tonic and stimulant. In Japan, reached in the 1540s, the symbiotic process seems to have been inverted, as were the Japanese that assimilated some European medical practices that were disseminated by missionaries, namely in surgery. A Jesuit medical doctor, Luís de Almeida, who founded a western hospital in a southern Nippon potentate, was a major contributor in the spreading of *Namban-jin*, or ‘southern barbarians’, medicine.

Although Brazil was first reached in 1500, the south American coast would only be colonised rather intensely, much later. Those lands, nonetheless, would soon reveal their riches, in terms of so far unknown natural produce such as avocados, peanuts, pineapples, sweet potatoes, cashews, sunflowers, guava, yucca, maize, papaya or tomato. Well beyond their dietary and nutritional value, many of these vegetable novelties were also used in making remedies, that were gradually divulged by the Portuguese in other continents. If the colonisers were able to extract considerable benefits from their encounter with Brazil, the opposite was considerably more tragic, as the dissemination of diseases yet unknown in the New World, such as smallpox, would be catastrophic for Amerindian peoples.

Another American plant that spread quite rapidly through the maritime trade was tobacco, considered a real panacea. On stressing this plant’s narcotic effects, the humanist Damião de Góis, in a passage of his book *Crónica do felicíssimo rei D. Manuel*, published in Lisbon in 1566–1567, also alludes to its therapeutic potential, referring that in Brazil there were ‘many fragrant and medicinal herbs, different from ours, amongst which is the one we call smoking, but that I would call holy-herb, [...] of which virtue I could insert here miraculous things, that I have seen myself, mainly in desperate cases of ulcerous abscesses, fistulae, cancer, polyps, inflammations, and many other cases’ (pt. I, cap. 56).

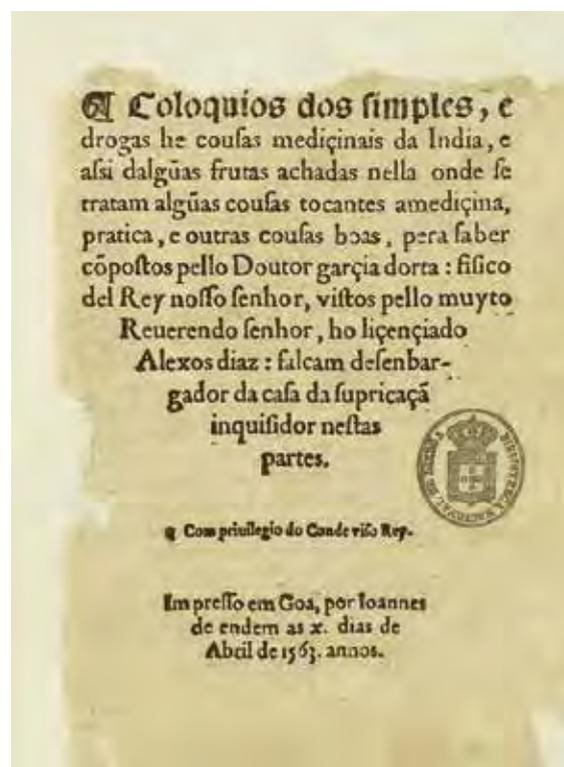
In terms of eastern medical practices and natural world, the more thorough and informative printed work was undoubtedly the monumental treaty ‘*Colóquios dos simples, drogas e coisas medicinais da Índia*’, published by Garcia de Orta in Goa, in 1563. By then, this Portuguese physician had lived in Goa for 30 years, dedicating his time to medicine and to trading Asian natural products. In addition to his clinical experience, Orta took care to maintain regular contacts with indigenous physicians, with whom he compared means of diagnostic and remedies for the many endemic diseases that afflicted the expatriate communities.

As such, his work introduced an encyclopaedic panorama on the medicinal commodities widely available in the Orient, with detailed information on their names, origins, main characteristics, therapeutic uses, and commercial value. In parallel, the *Colóquios dos simples*, included numerous clinical cases that identified the main diseases and their most common treatments.

In the work’s index it is possible to highlight many natural products that are analysed by this naturalist in subsequent chapters, or ‘*colóquios*’, and which had some therapeutic property that is always listed, as for example: ambergris, used as cordial and aphrodisiac; the asafoetida, for increasing appetite and for stomach afflictions; the cannabis, a powerful narcotic; the Borneo camphor, cicatrizing and anti-inflammatory; cloves, of analgesic properties; the datura, a pain reliever; coral swirl, an anti-diarrheal; bezoar, anti-poisons; and so on. As such, the reader would be equipped with a sort of treatment guide for infirmities that were prevalent in the Orient, in which were also duly highlighted any indigenous remedial novelties.

One of the novelties spread by Garcia de Orta, was the description of symptoms and treatment of cholera, the mention included in the work’s index, a clear paradigm of his methodology: ‘*Colerica passio*, known in Índia as *morxi*, kills in 24 hours; includes the symptoms, and the Indians and our treatments; and the cases that happened to the author’ (fl. 241v).

As such, in relation to many of the described infirmities as to the natural medicines listed, the ‘*Colóquios dos simples*’ features side by side in the western and the eastern views, leaving the reader the possibility of choosing between them, or sometimes even recommending specific Asian procedures or ingredients.



In the century and a half that elapsed between the 1415 Portuguese expedition to Ceuta, and the 1563 publication of Garcia de Orta's work, the Portuguese maritime epic performed a decisive role in the opening of the world, bringing into direct and regular contact regions and peoples that were previously isolated or mutually unknown. This first globalization process was characterized by the intense circulation of caravels, carracks, and galleons along new maritime routes, and by the many diverse folk carrying animals, natural produce, artefacts, techniques, and ideas, as well as diseases and the knowledge to treat them, that travelled aboard those ships. In terms of botany and medicine, the Portuguese overseas expansion had indelible effects that contributed decisively to changing the world's configuration in the first modernity. And the '*Colóquios dos simples*', that in the 16th century was widely circulated in Europe in successive synopses and translations, represents a Portuguese most valuable contribute to that early globalization exercise. ✍

**FIG. 2**  
Engraving of Chinese wood, *Tratado de las drogas y medicinas de las Indias Orientales*, Cristóvão da Costa (Burgos, 1578)

**FIG. 3**  
Front page of the 1st edition of the *Colóquios dos simples e Drogas da Índia* (Goa, 1563)

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# Food for thought. Plant exchange and global foodways in the early modern world

**ANDRÉ GUILHERME MAGALHÃES**  
NOVA/FCT

The exploration of the western African coast, set in motion by the Portuguese with the conquest, in 1415, of the Moroccan city of Ceuta, was the starting point for a new trading enterprise, that included the global exchange of foodstuffs and condiments.

Recently, Professor José Eduardo Ferrão published a work, titled '*A Aventura das Plantas e Os Descobrimentos Portugueses*',<sup>1</sup> that emphasises the major role of Portuguese seafarers and explorers in that unique process. Ferrão argues that, considering the handling of the expansion and colonization policies, and their patterns in the 16th and 17th centuries, Portugal's role was considerably more relevant than that of neighbouring Spain.

Contrarily to Spanish colonization, during that period essentially centred in the New World, Portugal explored not only the Americas, but also the African and Asian continents. It was that geographic reach that turned it into the main player in this exchange.

The fact that Portugal took control of various Atlantic islands, such as the archipelagos of Madeira, the Azores and Cape Verde, was a determining factor to enable the movement of plants, as these islands temperate and semi-tropical climates, permitted the acclimatization of many species before their transfer to continental Portugal, operating as 'Botanic Laboratories' in the Europeanizing of the foodstuffs from Africa, Asia, or the Americas.

This vast interchange network represented a fundamental shift in gastronomy's global history, and Portugal's contribute should be better known and recognized. Well before Columbus, the navigators at the service of King João I of Portugal, understood that, if the main motivation for the 'Maritime Expansion' was the enrichment of the Crown's treasury, that could only be achieved by the establishment of precisely located outposts along the coast, and on the Macaronesia islands, that could secure strategic advantages, as well as access to drinking water and food.

As such, lets see who the main players were, in this true epic of foodstuffs and flavours.

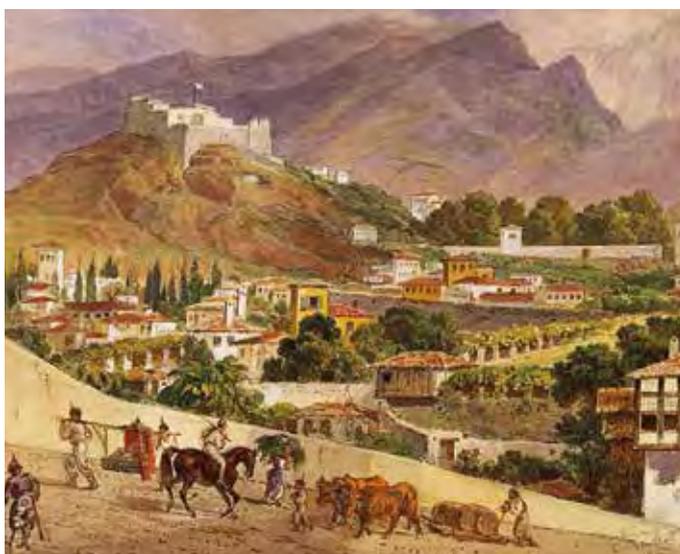
## **THE MADEIRA ARCHIPELAGO**

In 1418, João Gonçalves Zarco and Tristão Vaz, discover the Porto Santo Island and in the following year, they land on the larger island of Madeira. Soon after the early settling of Madeira, a prosperous cycle of wheat production begins, introduced to the island by those pioneers. Production surplus was exported to Portugal and to the newly set trading outposts on the African coast. This period lasted between 1430 and 1460, but population growth and the introduction of a new and more profitable crop, sugar cane, caused the general decline of wheat production.

Although there is evidence of sugar cane production in the Algarve since the al-Andaluz period, the first plants introduced into Madeira, where imported from Sicily at the behest of Prince Henry. The focus on this crop, with the purpose of producing sugar, then considered a spice, and a valued and expensive commodity in Europe, contributed greatly for the island's wealth. It was also in Madeira, in the context of sugar cane cultivation, that slave labour was first employed in the Portuguese colonial context. As Ferrão states, 'sugar cane and sugar production were the main source for financing the Portuguese expansion, at least until the crossing of the Cape of Good Hope'.

By 1500 Madeira was the main worldwide sugar exporter. Its sugar was considered of superior quality and much valued in the Portuguese court, in England and in Flanders. Madeiran production was highly competitive in relation to the Mediterranean sugar that was produced in Sicily, in Morocco or in Egypt. Flemish merchants particularly, exchanged sugar for Flemish art, such as the altar piece

<sup>1</sup> FERRÃO, José E. Mendes, *A Aventura das Plantas e Os Descobrimentos Portugueses*, Lisbon: Chaves Ferreira Publicações, 2005.



and the painted ceiling of Funchal's Cathedral, as well as many other artworks now in the collection of the city's Museum of Sacred Art.<sup>2</sup>

The second half of the 15th century witnesses an increasing development in the production of confectionary and fruit preserves, which will also become of crucial importance for the island's economy. The reputation of Madeiran confectionary spread throughout Europe, reaching its highest point with the 1579 embassy sent to Pope Leo X, which carried preserves and a sugary hardened paste, known as *alfenim*<sup>3</sup>, as gifts to the pontiff.

All through the 'Maritime Expansion' period, for its geographic position, soil characteristics and climatic conditions, the archipelago maintained an important role in the interchanging of plants, particularly fruit-bearing, from Africa, South America, and Asia.

Even nowadays in Madeira's markets, particularly in Funchal's farmers market, it is possible to measure the abundance of exotic fruits, by the profusion of Madeiran bananas, mangoes and loquats from southwest Asia, cherimoyas, guavas, papayas, avocados, pitangas and various types of passion fruits from southern America, and grapes, cherries, pears, apples, citron, and chestnuts, introduced from continental Portugal.

One other product that endures in Madeira's cuisine from the early days of expansion, is the cuscus, made from durum wheat flour, that arrived with the early Muslim slaves. Even today, its artisanal preparation is very similar to the one that is still documented in northern Africa.

## THE AZORES

In 1427, Diogo de Silves, discovers the western and central Azorean islands. Pioneered in the 15th century, particularly in relation to Madeira and the Azores, the exchange of plants between the various

FIG. 1  
Karl Briullov, *Madeira Landscape*

FIG. 2  
Caspar Schmalkalden, *Ribeira Grande, Santiago, Cape Verde*

<sup>2</sup> NUNES, Naidea, *Palavras Doces, Terminologia e Tecnologia Históricas e Actuais da Cultura Açucareira*, Funchal: Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> VIEIRA, Alberto, *Alfenim da Madeira para o mundo, Funchal: Cadernos de divulgação do CEHA*, no. 8, 2015; NUNES, Naidea, *O açúcar de cana na ilha da Madeira: do Mediterrâneo ao Atlântico Terminologia e tecnologia históricas e actuais da cultura açucareira*, Funchal: Universidade da Madeira, PhD Dissertation, 2002.

world regions, saw considerable increase during the following century, with the Portuguese settlement in India and Brazil.<sup>4</sup>

The Azores first economic cycle, starting from the last quarter of the 15th century, was characterized by cereal production and exporting, and referred to as the ‘Wheat Cycle’. The islands emerge as the kingdom’s provision granary, also supplying the African trading outposts, Madeira, and the trade with the Canary Islands.

In a privileged geographic position, in the path to both the east and the west Indies, the Azores islands, and particularly the Bay of Angra, became a strategic stopover for reprovisioning of ships. As such, the needs for ever increasing quantities of hard tack, justified the focus on cereal production, developed in almost all the larger islands. Another essential supply for ships was wine, a product that will define another highly prosperous period, the ‘Wine Cycle’, that will eventually last all the way through to the mid-19th century.

Soon, exotic produce started to arrive from the most remote origins, namely the spices, which rapidly entered local recipe books. Even today, the Azorean meat sausages are higher rated than those from the continent, the rumps are spicy, and the salted and hot pepper paste, is a ubiquitous seasoning. The cuscus is also a delicacy in Santa Maria, the island that absorbed more Moorish elements during the peopling of the archipelago.

It was also during that period that bitter oranges were introduced by the early settlers. Originally taken into Portugal during the golden years of the Northern African and Peninsular Caliphate, in the 11th century, their seeds were used for obtaining rootstocks, the juice as condiment, and the peels for making marmalade. The first sweet oranges will eventually also arrive from India in the early-16th century.

In the 18th century oranges were exported to England and to France, and from the island of Faial to north America. But it was in the 19th century that the cultivation and exporting of oranges became of major importance for some of the island’s economy, upstaging traditional exports of cereals and wine, and kickstarting the new ‘Oranges Cycle’.

Other exotic crops did also experience virtuous cycles in the Azores, such as tobacco, sweet potato, pineapple, and even tea, introduced in the early-19th century by Chinese experts recruited to instruct the islanders from northern São Miguel, in the technique of tea cultivation.

### THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

Diogo Gomes and the Italian Antonio de Noli, reach the Cape Verde archipelago in 1460, not detecting any trace of previous human occupation.

For their strategic location, the islands soon became an important trade and provisioning outpost. Right at the intersection of the maritime routes, that were determined by the dominant Atlantic winds, Cape Verde was the point that all the Crown fleet ships had to cross.

To ensure the full supply of the vessels that crossed from the kingdom to the tropics, or of those that returned from the long and dangerous journeys, the Portuguese, according to João de Barros, introduced ‘all the seeds and plants and other things with which they planned to people and to settle the land’.<sup>5</sup> They also introduced feral goats, which multiplied in such a manner that hides were exported to Europe. Later, all the feral goats in the Island of Boavista had to be slaughtered, as they destroyed the cotton plantations.

On their return from America, expeditions would leave propagules, plants, and seeds in the archipelago, which would be preserved and reproduced, and eventually taken to continental Africa and

<sup>4</sup> ALMEIDA, Luís Ferrand de, *Aclimação de plantas do Oriente no Brasil durante os séculos XVII e XVIII*, Coimbra: Revista Portuguesa de História, Tomo XV, 1975.

<sup>5</sup> BARROS, João de, *Asia*, Lisbon, 1552.

the Orient, by other passing fleets. These moves explain the fact that, although semiarid and of limited agricultural potential, the Cape Verde Inlands are endowed with extremely rich and widely varied flora.

From Europe, the Portuguese did also carry a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, that were acclimatised and took root up to the present day. Gaspar Frutuoso, a 16th century Azorean priest and historian, wrote that in Cape Verde, he had found 'many citrines and other fruits, pears, figs, melons, grapes that last all year round' and even 'many banana trees that grow figs similar to cucumbers called bananas'. Frutuoso does also refer that, in the Island of Santiago there are 'many palm trees that grow coconuts', that is 'Indian nuts'. Later, the introduction of the coconut into Bahia, in Brazil, will have a determinant role in forming the Brazilian cuisine identity.

Cape-Verdean merchants had also strong influence in commercial activities along the African coast, mainly in the Senegambia region, contributing determinately for the transatlantic interchange of vegetal species, that would change the dietary habits of people on both sides of the Atlantic: maize arrives in Cape Verde from Salvador of Bahia in 1550, becoming a major crop in most islands.

Circa 1600, merchant islanders began selling maize surpluses along the western African coast, from Senegambia to the Coast of Elmina. Today, maize is the most widespread cereal in the African continent. Contrasting with more industrialised world regions, in which most of maize crops are destined to become animal feed or industrial raw material, in Africa, 95% of maize production is destined to human consumption and, in Cape Verde is the main ingredient to the national dish, *Cachupa*.

From the various tropical fruits grown in the archipelago, the papaya is undoubtedly the most characteristic, and no visitor to the country is unfamiliar with the dessert of Papaya with goats' cheese. Possibly the most widespread fruit tree in the tropical world, the papaya grows fruit all year round, and there is no yard or patch in Cape Verde without such a tree.

### **THE CHILLI PEPPER COAST**

As they sailed along the African coast, the navigators baptized the various regions, and the natural features they encountered, according to their specific interest. As such, navigation reference points were named Gold River, in western Sahara, Cape Blanc, in Mauretania, Cape Verde, on the coast of Senegal, or Cape Three Points in present day Ghana. Similarly, food producing regions became known as the Rice Coast, between Senegal and Liberia, close to the Banana Islands in Sierra Leone, and the Chilli Coast.<sup>6</sup>

Commonly, the term 'chilli', or '*malagueta*' in Portuguese, refers to a specific variety of *Capsicum frutescens*, a slender elongated pepper, that can vary in size and in hot peppery qualities, used as condiment. Already traded by the Portuguese, '*malaguetas*', or 'paradise grains' for the Italians who believed in its aphrodisiac properties, arrived via the Saharan routes, and were listed as products with benefits granted to the Portuguese merchants by King Edward I, in the 1303 *Carta Mercatoria*, that regulated England's foreign trade.

Being a valued commodity, it immediately attracted the Crown's attention and, from 1462, the Portuguese imposed certain routes to the caravans that carried this spice from Timbuktu, in modern day Mali, to the region between Sierra Leone and the Gulf of Guinea, which would become known as '*Malagueta*' Coast.

### **THE ELMINA COAST**

In 1469, King Afonso V agreed the leasing of the Guinean and chilli trade monopoly to the Lisbon merchant Fernão Gomes, imposing in return the exploration of 100 leagues of coast per year, the crown reserving the gold trade rights at the Arguim outpost, as well as those for the sale of ivory. The Portuguese reached Cape Saint Catherine, just south of the Equator, and Fernão Pó, Annobón, and both Saint Tomé and Saint Antão Islands, the latter eventually becoming the Island of Príncipe.

<sup>6</sup> FICALHO, Conde de, *Memória sobre a Malagueta*. Lisbon: Agência Geral das Colónias, 1945.

In addition to the prosperous gold trade, the region produced wine and palm oil, kola nuts, guinea plums and rice, probably of the species *Oryza glaberrima*.

The gold trade reaching substantial figures rather rapidly, King João II ordered the building of Elmina Castle, on the Gold Coast, to protect this valuable commodity, and to secure the crown monopoly over the Guinean trade, that the 1497 Treaty of Alcáçovas, would entrench.<sup>7</sup>

Saint Jorge of Elmina, Arguim, Cape Verde and Saint Tomé, represented the four fundamental nuclei of the Portuguese presence on the western coast of Africa. From Saint Tomé, arrived in Elmina, now on the Ghana coast, many varieties of fruits and vegetables from the Americas and the Orient, which still endure in Ghana's rural landscape and define the country's cuisine as one of the more exuberant in Africa.

### **SAINT TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE**

The islands recipients and king's vassals, took groups of settlers, formed by the children of Castilian Jews, that were not allowed to remain in the kingdom beyond their transit period, artisans, some noblemen, and convicts, as well as slaves from the African continent, the only people seemingly capable of adapting to the harsh equatorial climate. Humid and hot, ridden with unknown tropical diseases, the islands would decimate most of these early populations.

With the introduction of sugar cane and cattle farming, the islands prospered rapidly, becoming the largest African sugar exporter in the 16th century. For its geographical location it would also become a major trading outpost in the route between the Africa and Brazil.

Plants, fruits, and seeds arrived from the African continent and from Europe. Exotic species from Asia and the Americas, grow and propagate in the islands fertile soils. All that is planted or sown, grows fast and in quantity. The African yam, the Brazilian cassava or the Asian yam become 'strength food' for the African populations. From India arrived the jackfruit, a verdant tree of enormous and highly nutritious fruits, that immediately entered local dietary habits. From these islands it was taken to Brazil where it became a popular delicacy.

It was also here that the earliest attempts at transplanting spices from India, Ceylon and the Moluccas took place, in addition to the various species of African peppers. Cinnamon, pepper, and ginger flourished, but its cultivation was forbidden by the Crown as it presented a threat to the Indian spices' monopoly.

With the end of the 'Sugar Cycle', and the production transfer to Brazil, an interregnum of approximately 200 years would cause a tremendous economic decline of severe consequences for the lives of the local populations.<sup>8</sup> The 19th century introduction of coffee and cocoa from Brazil would open new opportunities for the archipelago, boosted by the influx of Portuguese migrants and the exclusion of freed slaves.

Saint Tomé and Príncipe would reach the apex of its development for a short time in the years before World War I, becoming the largest worldwide cacao producer. From that period of plenty, remain ruins of splendid colonial manors and abandoned cocoa fields, but also a natural nursery with unique natural life, that preserves specimens of most edible plants, fruits, and spices.

### **THE KINGDOMS OF KONGO AND ANGOLA**

In August 1482, Diogo Cão reaches the mouth of the River Zaire. Following instructions from his King, he sent a gift to the *Manicongo*, the local leader, accompanied by a peace message. He thereby manages to develop close relations with the King of Kongo, who soon wished to forge strong friendship ties with King of

<sup>7</sup> See: FREUDENTHAL, Aida, *Património de Influência Portuguesa. Elmina [São Jorge da Mina]*, Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> See: SEIBERT, Gerhard, *Colonialismo em São Tomé e Príncipe: hierarquização, classificação e segregação da vida social*, Anuário Antropológico, vol. 40 no. 2, 2015.

Portugal, by having himself baptized, and by taking the name João (of Kongo). He will also allow the settling of the priests that were necessary for the conversion of his subjects. One of his sons, who would succeed him on the throne, was also baptized with the name Afonso, in honour to the heir to the Portuguese crown.

With Kongo a Portuguese protectorate, commercial trade maintained a significant evenness for the first decades of the 16th century, the most profitable being copper, ivory and slaves, who were exchanged for goods arriving from Portugal, from other points in the African coast, and from Brazil, including maize, and later cassava, peanuts, and sweet potatoes.

Later, believing that that territory was rich in silver deposits, the Portuguese opened negotiations with the *Ngola*, ruler of the Kingdom of Dongo, to the south, and tributary of the Kingdom of Kongo. On arriving in Loanda, they introduced themselves to King N'gola Kiluanje, the kingdom becoming known as Angola—N'Dongo.

Soon, the Angolan coast would become a strategic reference in commercial trade routes, either eastern or western. In 1575, Paulo Dias de Novaes landed in the so-called Island of Goats, nowadays the Island of Luanda. On arrival, King Kiluanji Kia Samba, allowed him to occupy a hilltop on which he built a fortress, hence founding the settlement and the captaincy of Saint Paulo of Loanda, the de facto earliest European colony in Africa.

Luanda would become an enormous outpost, generating immense wealth that spawn the greed of rival powers, such as Holland, who eventually occupied the city for a seven-year period, with the purpose of exporting slaves to the Brazilian northeast, a region they had occupied since 1630.

Portuguese influence would spread inland via successful trade routes, which also promoted the exchange of plants and seeds from other continents, determinant impacting the dietary habits of African peoples.

To the Angolan coast arrived maize and cassava to make *funge*, the peanuts for *moamba de ginguba* and *paracuca*, the indispensable *jindungo*, soul of all Angolan dishes, the tomato, and the peppers from Brazil. But also the pineapple, the pitanga, the guava, the juicy cashew, the papayas, the passion fruits, the avocado, and the cherimoya. From Goa came the banana trees, the mangoes and the coconuts, ginger, and lemon grass.

From Angola to Brazil, went the oil palm, the black-eyed beans and the okra, the essential ingredient for *caruru*. For all this diversity, Angola is today one of the more culturally diverse countries in Africa, and one that is proud of its ethnographic heritage and gastronomic distinctiveness.

## **BRAZIL**

The 1500 arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral fleet would permanently change the reality of a territory up until then undisturbed by outer impact. Brazilian nature was so generous and fertile, and its inhabitants so peaceful, that very rapidly, land occupation and colonization reached proportions never seen in the Old World.

Portuguese settlers had by then considerable experience in the cultivation of sugar cane, first in the Atlantic Islands, and later in Saint Tomé, where they developed and perfected the plantation model tested in Madeira. Brazil's fertile lands, however, would allow for much larger plantation areas. To the sugar cane will be added other crops that had much demand in Europe, such as coffee and cocoa, which, when consumed required sugar.

To Brazil arrive settlers and adventurers from all corners of the world, and its first capital city, *São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos*, becomes one of the most modern and cosmopolitan cities in the world, truly the first American metropolis.

Salvador is the earliest melting pot in the New World, the crucible of a new cuisine that mixed the best of three different worlds: the culinary techniques and traditions of Europe, the New World

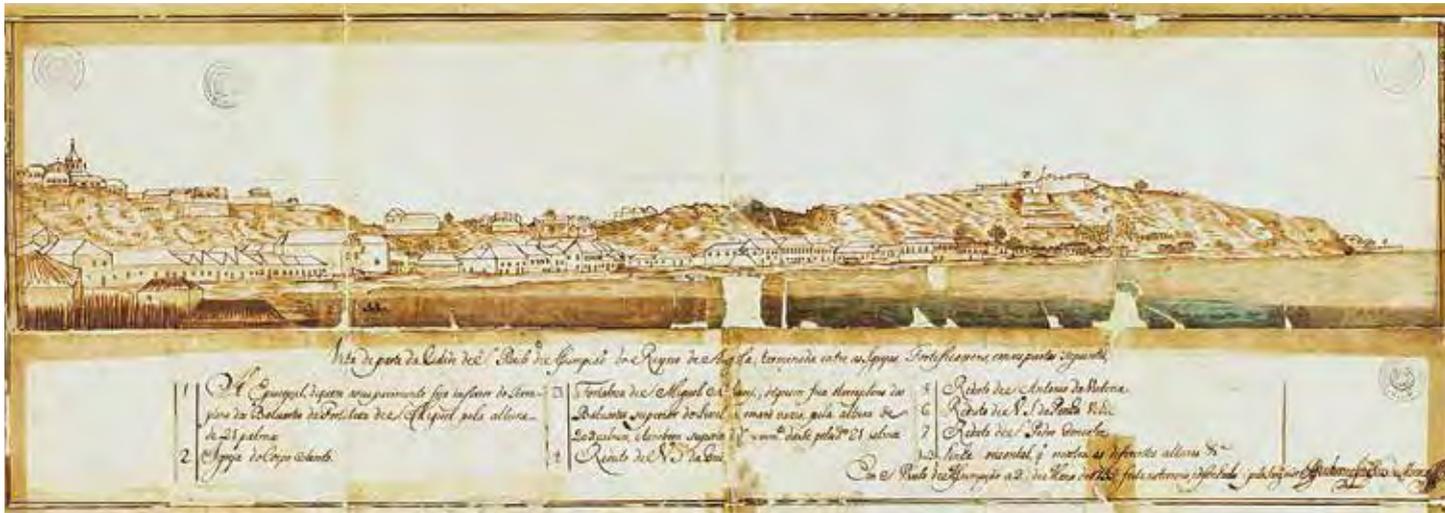


FIG. 3  
Guilherme Paes deMenezes, *Cidade de São Paulo da assumpção de Loanda*, 1755

produce, and the empiric knowledge of the African slave women. From this fusion emerged the Bahia cuisine, complex, sophisticated, and delicious, and so unique that today has been raised to the status of intangible cultural heritage. And from it will surface all the others, developing their own identity as, progressively, men break new ground and tame nature.<sup>9</sup>

From Africa the Terra Brasilis will receive the slaves, foundation of the monumental construction that still is the Brazilian nation, but also the oil palm, the Angolan or Guinean fowl that will spread through the hinterland, the okra, the hibiscus, the smoked and sun-dried fish and shrimp, the black-eyed beans, the soghum, the watermelon and the scarlet eggplant. 'The coconut palm would have arrived second-hand from eastern Africa, Sofala, Quelimane, Mozambique, Zanzibar, Mombasa'. Second-hand because originally it had come from Goa, with the mangoes, the ginger, the turmeric, the pepper, the cloves, and the cinnamon, but whose cultivation the Crown had forbidden.

To Africa went pineapples, papayas, the essential cassava, peanuts, guava and strawberry guava, and the cashew that expands in both coasts.

Brazil becomes the greatest jewel in the Portuguese Empire, to where people from all over the world converge; settlers, convicts, adventurers, noblemen, philosophical travellers; and where all exotic commodities abound; precious stones, gold, the most refined wares, the whitest linens, a true tropical splendour where a very particular identity is forged, a *modus vivendi* that crosses all social layers, that emanates from the kitchens, that is enjoyed at the most refined tables, or across a Bahian stall.

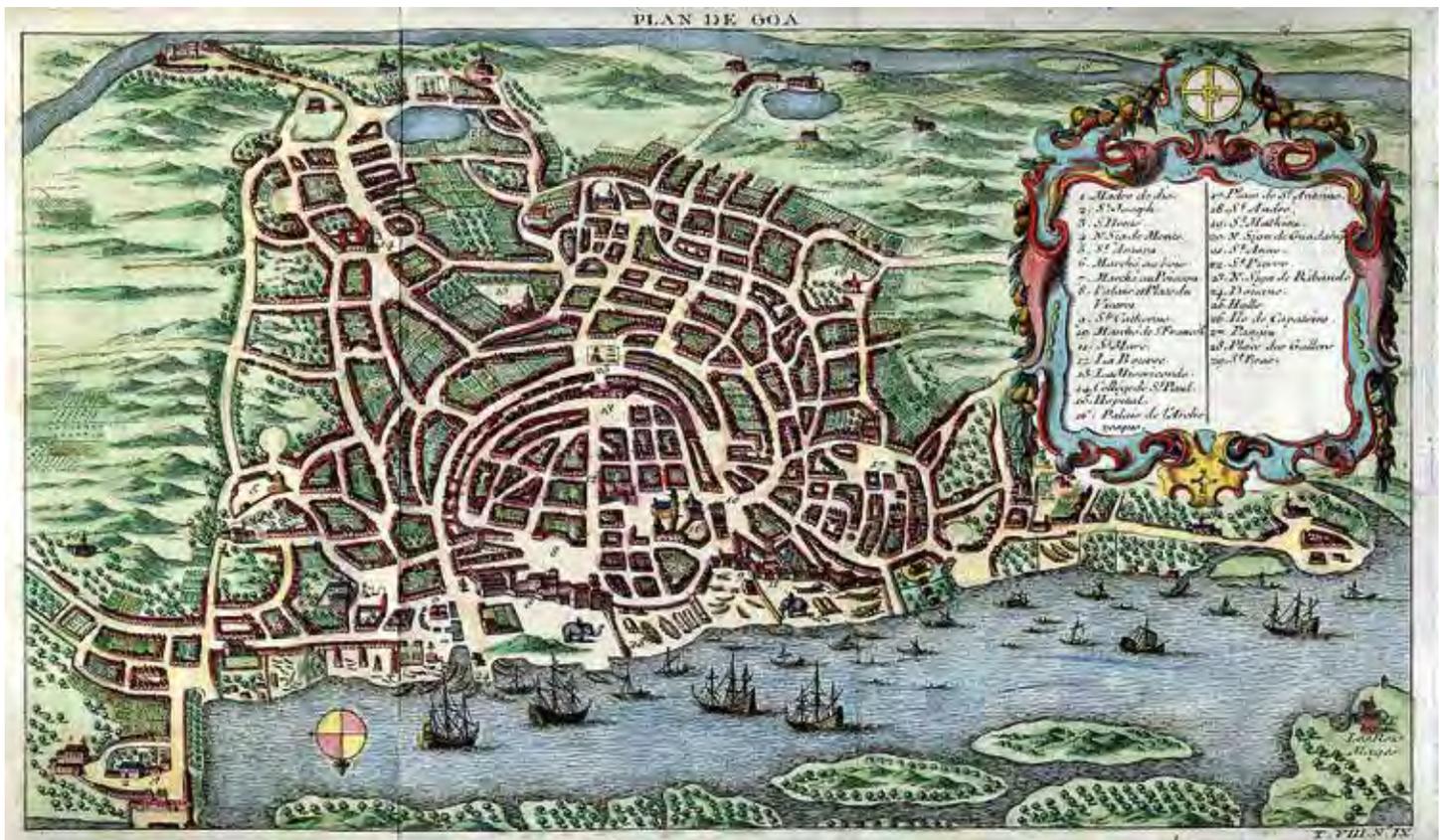
### MOZAMBIQUE

Sailing along the eastern coast of Africa, Vasco da Gama lands at the Island of Mozambique in 1498, upon crossing the Cape of Good Hope and entering the Indian Ocean for the first time. The Island was visited by Arab merchants carrying their centuries old trade with the Red Sea, Persia, India, and the Indian Ocean Islands. Recognising its strategic role as a navigation stopover and its potential as a trading outpost, in 1507 the Portuguese set a captaincy and a fortress, the territory becoming dependant from the State of India until 1752.

Indigenous populations, for centuries exposed to eastern merchants, who brought with them Indian fruits and spices, benefit from the arrival of new foodstuffs, such as cassava, introduced predominantly for feeding the African workforce. When the explorer Lacerda e Almeida is appointed Governor of Rivers of Sena, in Zambezia, he comes across plantations of peanuts, potatoes, cashews, guavas, a true emotional experience for his western eyes.

Nowadays Mozambican gastronomy is a mixture of Portuguese influences, Moorish, and Swahili tastes with sprinkles of Indian, mainly Goan, cooking, African, and unequalled in the preparation of inimitable fish and seafood dishes.

<sup>9</sup> See: CASCUDO, Luís da Câmara, *Antologia da Alimentação no Brasil*, São Paulo: Global Editora, 2008.



## GOA

The pearl of the Orient. It was not for the natural beauty, nor even for its spices, main reason in the searching of the maritime route to India, that Afonso de Albuquerque wanted Goa, as the capital of the Portuguese Empire in Asia. It was for the location of the citadel, accessible via five crossings, protected by the River Mandovi estuary, and above all, because it was by then a trading emporium open to the world, and attended by merchants from Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Egypt, Persia, and Turkey, and inhabited by an advanced, cultivated, organized and hardworking community.

Conquered Goa, Portugal imposes the system of ‘banners’ granting the monopoly of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean; all the ships that intended to sail and trade, should have a safe conduct issued by the authorities to its allies, and to all that paid tribute. This ‘banner’ should be visible in every ship, or otherwise it could be attacked. The system ensured that the merchants paid tax in the Portuguese outposts, forcing them to pass the Goa, Malacca, and Ormuz trading factories, and imposing the *mare clausum* policy that safeguarded the spice, and other commodities, monopoly.<sup>10</sup>

Goa becomes the kingdom second city, and to its shores arrive, amongst many other goods, food-stuffs from the whole world, that are subsequently distributed across the Indian subcontinent and Asia.

A cultural and costumes dialogue is also set, and one that will impact in the daily lives of both westerners and easterners and starts a gastronomic revolution. To Goa will arrive plants, seeds and roots that produce never seen fruits and vegetables: potatoes, tomatoes, pumpkins, aubergines, peppers and chillies, papaya, passion fruit, guavas, pineapples, and cashews, nowadays emblematic of Goa, or the coriander that flavours all Hindu cuisine.

Potatoes were immediately adopted, spreading to the whole of India, while maintaining its Portuguese name in almost all regions. The same happened with the tomato. The Portuguese did also introduce wheat, teaching the Goans how to make the bread that is now conspicuous on every Goan table.

FIG. 4  
Victor Couto, *Map of Goa*, ca. 1750

<sup>10</sup> See: AHMAD, Afzal, *Goa based Portuguese xport trade in the early 17th century (1611–1626)*, India: Indian History Congress, vol. 41, 1980 (pp. 349–356).

Goan baker's (*podér*) became famous, eventually opening bakeries in Mumbai, from where bread spread all over India. Pav, the Portuguese type of bread, is the base for much street food in India. In Mumbai the most famous is the *Batata Vada Pav*, a sandwich of fried potato cakes.

### MALACCA

When the Portuguese arrived at the Asian seas, Malacca was a thriving commercial outpost for the sale and shipping of spices. The city was governed by a Muslim sultan that exerted his authority over the whole of the Malay Peninsula. The city's port was visited by ships and merchants from Arabia, Persia, China, India, Japan, Indonesia, Ceylon, and Bengal. All Eastern spices and luxury goods were stored and sold from there: pepper, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, sandal, and other precious timbers, but, above all Chinese silks and ceramics.

As such, the Portuguese *mare clausum* strategy depended on the conquest of the great port. Defeating Sultan Mahmud Syah in 1511, Afonso de Albuquerque conquers the city and orders the construction of an imposing fortress that would become known as 'The Famous'. The city would remain under Portuguese Crown control for 130 years, until it was taken by the Dutch. The 'Venice of Asia' prospered under Lusitanian rule, and many 'married' from Goa and elsewhere—artisans, farmers and even fishermen—settled there. A hospital was built, as well as schools, various churches and a cathedral, the Christian population eventually reaching seven thousand.

The Portuguese inheritance endures in Malacca, not only in the architectural heritage, but above all for the Kristang community, composed of descendants that maintain a Portuguese creole language, practice the cult of the Virgin of Fatima, and celebrate popular Saints.

In the Portuguese town there are restaurants and stalls that serve *Kristang* food, one of five identity cuisines in the Malay Peninsula. Most of the dishes preserve cooking techniques and names related to an archaic Portuguese cuisine, albeit using local ingredients.

Grilled fish is popular, and many fish names are identical; *Cari Seccu* (dry curry), *Caldu Pescador* (fisherman's soup), *Sambal Chili Bedri* (green pepper sambal), *Soja Limang Terung* (fried aubergine with soya sauce and lemon), *Porku Tambrinyu* (pork with tamarind), *Achar Pesi* (fish in vinegar) and *Bolo Koku*.

### THE MANILLA GALLEON

This expression refers a commercial route established by the Spanish between Manilla and Acapulco, which lasted from 1565 to 1815. The crossing of the Pacific Ocean was the longest nonstop voyage ever known, and the Manilla Galleon carried porcelain, silk, spices, and many other oriental products. In exchange, the return trip was loaded with silver from the Americas, but also with other goods from the New World.

It was a complex route, as the merchandise was taken from the Philippines to Acapulco, in the viceroyalty of New Spain, and then transported overland to the east coast, to be loaded onto another ship in Veracruz, which would then follow the 'Silver Route' destined to Seville and Cadiz, in Spain.

Contrary to what it seems, the main factor for this route, were not the spices, but instead the high value of silver in 16th and 17th century China, exacerbated by the decline in Japanese silver production. The main exchange currency in this trade being the Chinese silk fabrics and porcelains.

Their late arrival to southeast Asia and the lack of prior relations with China, left the Spanish merchants' dependant of the Portuguese and Chinese that supplied Manila from Macao and Canton.<sup>11</sup>

The greatest merit of the Manila Galleon trade was the uniting of the known world around a common economic purpose. Never before a commercial route had connected three continents, Europe, America, and Asia. This initiative had evident trade merits, but it also fostered the exchange of foodstuffs

<sup>11</sup> See: MIYATA, Etsuko, *Portuguese Intervention in the Manila Galleon Trade*. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd., 2016.

and cultural values. The route had ramifications that involved many countries and regions; European countries such as England, France, or Germany, produced and sold goods of interest to the New Spain and Asian markets, such as weapons, textiles, clothing, tools, and many others, that were shipped to Seville. In there were added wines, olive oils and other local foodstuffs destined to the Americas.

On their arrival at Veracruz, the products were separated between those destined to Mexico and those that were to be loaded onto carts and sent to Acapulco, where the Manila Galleon awaited. In that port, those products were joined by cochineal, logwood, cocoa, tobacco, straw hats, soap, sugar cane, peanuts, tomato, pumpkins, cattle, and, above all, silver. This last leg was the closing of a circuit that encompassed the four continents and permitted the circulation of foodstuffs in all directions.

Philippine cuisine is a good example of this intercultural exchange as the recipient of Chinese, Malay, and Indian influences. It does also absorb American products such as potatoes, maize, and chillies, in addition to culinary techniques from the Spanish cuisine, which in turn includes American ingredients such as the potato and the tomato.<sup>12</sup>

### THE KINGDOM OF SIAM

It all started in 1511, with the arrival of the Portuguese tailor Duarte Fernandes, at the Ayutthaya court, some months after being released from incarceration in Malacca, upon Afonso de Albuquerque conquest of the city. Fernandes had learned the Malay language while in prison and was therefore chosen to head the diplomatic mission to the Kingdom of Siam, the Malacca Sultanate being dependent of that kingdom. Boarding a junk, they sailed up the Chao Phraya River, to the royal palace, where King Ramathibodi II received the first European envoy to his court.

Fernandes gave the king a gilt sword with diamond set scabbard, and delivered a letter from Albuquerque, that substantiated the conquest of Malacca by the Portuguese. The king accepted the gifts and did not oppose the Sultanate's occupation. Fernandes returned to Malacca accompanied by a Siamese envoy, and various outlandish gifts for the King of Portugal.

The two states would sign a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce in 1518, the first such document signed with a European nation. The new king, Prajairaja, saw evident value in this relation, given that the Portuguese held strong military power, and could therefore supply weapons and train the Siamese troops in the kingdom's defence against the neighbouring Kingdom of Burma. Three hundred men were deployed to Ayutthaya, marking the origin of the Luso-Siamese community. In 1538, the king will also recruit 120 Portuguese for his personal guard and, since then, the relationship between the two countries has never perished.

Contrary to other Europeans that would subsequently arrive in Thailand, the Portuguese had no moral impediments regarding marriage to local women. This tight integration in Siamese society explains the long-lasting nature of the Luso-Siamese community that persists to the present day.

As in other Asian territories, the Portuguese had considerable impact in local eating habits. The exchange of plants and fruits, introduced the Thai diet to sweet potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce, annona, papaya and pineapple, amongst many other produces, but above all the chilli, that would forever change Thai cuisine.

On the subject of Portuguese influence in Siam's gastronomy, a short historic episode must be referred: Maria Guyomar de Pina, born in Ayutthaya in 1664, during the reign of King Narai—the daughter of a Portuguese man from Goa and of a Japanese Christian woman of Portuguese name—known as *Thao Thong Kip Ma* (ท้าวทองกีบม้า) in Thai, married the Greek adventurer Konstantinos Gerakis, who converted to Catholicism, adopting the name Constantine Phaulkon (Falcon).

<sup>12</sup> See: CARDELÚS, Borja, *El Galeón de Manila y la primera globalización del comercio mundial*, Spain: The Hispanic Council, 2020.

Constantine would earn prominence in the Royal Siamese court, eventually rising to Foreign Minister, and later to the title of Chao Praya Wichayen, a sort of plenipotentiary minister to the king. The couple built a western style house to the north of the capital and Guyomar became renowned at court, as an excellent cook and hostess.

In the meanwhile, the French enter the scene and Guyomar is bestowed the title of Countess of France. King Narai dies, and Constantine falls from grace, is decapitated, and Maria Guyomar takes refuge in the French mission.

Phra Phetracha, the usurper king, demands that the French relinquish Maria Guyomar, and condemns her to slavery in the Royal Palace kitchens, from where she presents various desserts to the court, many of Portuguese origin—probably received from her mother, who would have learned them with the Japanese Christian community.

The new desserts employed eggs or egg yolks, refined sugar, and cassava or soya starch, as well as dried fruits, all novelties in Thailand. *Thong yip* (angel hair of egg threads), and *Foi thong* (sweet egg rolls) are today Thai desserts prepared for special occasions as, in Siamese tradition, Golden-yellow desserts are considered auspicious.

### MACAO

The Portuguese trading outpost in a Pearl River peninsula, in Southern China, was born out of a combination of trading interests from China and Japan, who had fallen out, and therefore accept the opportunistic mediation of Portuguese merchants to cater for their mutual needs.

The Middle Empire needed silver from Japan, while the Shogunate craved Chinese silks and porcelains. If were Portuguese adventurers, acting privately, that conquered the trust of Canton Mandarins—and negotiated the agreement that enabled the building of a settlement, as long as they would not construct walls—, soon the Crown took to regulating trade, by imposing that all merchandise carried between Macao and Japan, had to be transported by the ‘Great Ship’ that, sailing between Goa and Nagasaki, had to dock in Macao.

The new settlement comprised of a Chinese core of Fujian merchants and their servants—who settled in Macao to control more efficiently the Chinese foreign trade circuits, with the purpose of, above all, reinforcing trade with Manila and Japan—and a Portuguese contingent that João Paulo Oliveira e Costa describes as such:

*The Portuguese in turn, formed a hybrid group, typical of their Asian diaspora. (...) they were composed by a bunch of men born in Portugal and by a much larger group of Luso Asians, sons or grandsons of Portuguese from the kingdom, but whose mothers were Indian, Malay, Siamese, Chinese or Japanese, for example, whose fathers could already be interracial born in India or in Malacca, in the first half of the 1500s. As such, they had Asian appearance, new local languages, many had been brought up in non-Christian environments, or at least familiar with beliefs, tales, and lore from the most diverse parts of Asia. Simultaneously, they dressed in the European manner, wore hat, were catholic and had Portuguese names. A product of two different worlds, they corresponded undoubtedly to Macao’s spirit, in itself a product of that crossbreeding and contradictory encounter, in which a city mainly inhabited by non-Christians, that did not speak Portuguese was, after all, a radiating hub of Christianity and Portuguese culture throughout eastern Asia.*

It is in such context that Macao’s gastronomic identity is forged, perhaps the first fusion cuisine of the modern era. If we attempt at finding a Portuguese identity on Macao’s tables, we will hardly find it, as in the origin, its practitioners were not Portuguese, but were instead women from other colonies, married to men who seldom had any contact with life in Portugal. In the 1630s there was one European woman registered in Macao’s censuses.

Cuisines are in permanent evolution and, as such, it is possible to imagine that Macanese cuisine absorbs influences from all the other Portuguese colonies and outposts along the Spice Route—from

Africa to India, to southeast Asia and even from Japan—since Macao took in many persecuted Japanese Christians expelled by the Shogunate.

In its evolution, Macanese cuisine recipes will only absorb stronger Portuguese influence over the course of the last century, when the colonial administration becomes more present and active, and when its officials settle with their families in the territory.

Amongst the better-known recipes, it is clear which are recent as they include ingredients originating from the Portuguese food industry that supplied the colonies, such as stoneless green olives, canned chorizo or ‘moça’ milk, cured pork loin, or port wine.

Many other dishes evidence Malay, Japanese, Indian or African influences, according to the ingredients used, the seasoning or the culinary techniques. A good example is the chicken *cafreal* or African style, of which other versions exist in Mozambique and in Goa, all different, albeit similar in method. It is easy to assume that it corresponds to an ancestral recipe, but in fact, the Macanese recipe, only appeared in the 1940s, created by the chef Américo Ângelo at the Macao Inn, as an attempt at softening the homesickness of Mozambican soldiers stationed in Macao.

To browse through the index of a Macanese recipe book, is a journey through time and an excursion through exotic places in three continents. The dishes names in Macanese patois are difficult to translate in other languages, but supply suggestive clues to Portuguese speakers, mainly those interested in history and gastronomy. If Macanese cuisine is an open window for the memories of the vast Portuguese colonial empire, it is also a small entry point into the immense gastronomic universe of China, to which it belongs.

## JAPAN

The earliest Europeans to visit Japan, were a small group of adventurers, who did not dock elegantly in a caravel, but were instead rescued from a Chinese junk that, during a storm, shipwrecked by Tanegashima Island, to the south of Kyushu, in 1543.

For the period of 100 years in which the Portuguese maintained commercial exchanges with Japan, they also exerted a profound cultural, linguistic and, above all gastronomic influence over the Land of the Rising Sun.

The Japanese have named this period as ‘Namban Bōeki’ or ‘Namban trade period’. Namban in Japanese refers to the ‘southern barbarians’, namely to the foreigners arriving from the lands to the south of Japan, and the term was used well before the arrival of the Portuguese. During this period, the Japanese adopted Namban to refer to something foreign, exotic, and valuable. Influenced by the *namban-jin*, southern (nan) barbarian (ban), people (jin), other contexts and expressions do emerge, such as *Namban bijutsu* (Namban art), *Namban bunka* (Namban culture), *Namban bungaku* (Namban literature) and also *Namban ryōri* (Namban cuisine).

Portuguese influence was of such importance that a new style of cuisine emerges, with its own specific designation. The integration of products and utensils taken by the Portuguese, in Japan’s everyday life, would also change the language which, eventually adopted Portuguese words to refer things that were previously unknown.

The better known, and widely repeated in and out of Japan, Portuguese word is certainly *tempura*, a culinary term that still requires better definition and context. Another relevant word is *kompeitō*, candy in Portuguese, small sugar dragees, identical to candy that still exist in various Portuguese and Portuguese speaking regions. The art of confectionary was introduced by the merchants, in a context in which sugar was known, but very rare and expensive, as the Japanese did not control refining techniques.

In 1569, a missionary gifted a candy full glass jar to Nobunaga, a powerful feudal lord, to persuade him to allow him to preach in his territory. Sugar imports increased and Portuguese sweets reached a



level of popularity that still maintain, under the name *Namban kashi*. Nowadays there are three types of indispensable *Namban kashi*: the Castella or *kasutera*, the *Pão de Ló*; *o bolo* (read *Bôro*), small round biscuits; and the *konpeitô*, which, similarly to the *pão de ló*, are gifted as *omyiage* (friendliness offerings).

The names of many Japanese dishes of Portuguese origin do also incorporate the prefix *nanban*, such as is the case of *nanbanzuke*, the Japanese version of the Portuguese pickled dishes. In its contemporary version, *nanbanzuke* consists of fried fish marinated in a vinaigrette made with soya sauce, powdered chilli and onion or chives.

There are two reference recipe books that include recipes learned from those early Portuguese visitors: one about *nanbangashi* (*Namban confectionary*) '*Kokon meibutsu gozen gashi hidenshō*' (recent secret writings on the subject of famous, recent, and ancient, Japanese confectionary), published in Kyoto in



1718; and *'Namban ryōrisho'*<sup>13</sup> a collection of loose texts, compiled and published after the expulsion of the Portuguese in 1639. This compilation includes savoury and sweet recipes of Portuguese origin, that are the basis of dishes ubiquitous in modern day Japan. ↗

FIG. 5  
Kanō Naizen (1570–1616), *The Portuguese in Japan*

<sup>13</sup> See: RATH, Eric, *Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan*, California: University of California Press, 2010.

# The Portuguese language in Asia, Asia in the Portuguese language

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In generic terms, there were three phases of European presence in Asia: the Portuguese (16th/17th centuries), the Dutch (17th century onwards) and the English (from the 19th century). In its particularities, Portugal's strategy to entrench its influence in those far way lands, consisted primarily in the occupation of strategic points, and in resorting to other Europeans, to African and Asian enslaved people, and to autochthonous populations. To its advantage, it had the fact that it was the first European power with a presence in the region, a condition that facilitated the development of varieties of Portuguese as *língua franca* for trading, diplomacy and religion.<sup>1</sup>

The role of the Portuguese language in Asia can be considered based on: the development of contact languages; the direct influence of the Portuguese lexicon on regional languages.

In turn, the impact of Asian languages over Portuguese, can be contemplated according to the direct, or indirect, Asian lexicon influence over the latter and its subsequent transmission to other languages. Religion and trade, often interconnected, were in essence the channels for this propagation. In the specific case of non-standard varieties of Portuguese, a third factor was the migration, or flight, of indigenous populations from the advancing Dutch and English.

## CONTACT LANGUAGES

These occur when two or more languages become exposed to each other and merge, lexically and structurally, in a complex but not entirely understood manner. In colonial contexts, namely the Portuguese, such languages consisted mostly in the lexicon of the colonizer with some influence of the lexicon and structure of the colonized. Contact languages of limited vocabulary, basic grammar and exclusively used as second idioms, mainly in trade contexts, are referred to as *pidgins*, a term believed to originate from the English word 'business'. Those of extensive lexicon, grammatical complexity and spoken as first languages are named creoles.

Due to the scarcity of Portuguese women in Asia, Afonso de Albuquerque (d. 1515), Governor of the Portuguese State of India between 1509 and 1515, encouraged marriages between his soldiers and indigenous women. Although most of these unions were maintained out of wedlock, the ensuing Asian creoles of Portuguese lexical origin would nonetheless surface from the children of such couples, defined as Euro-Asians.<sup>2</sup> The Indian subcontinent, being the first territory touched by the Portuguese in Asia, became the birthplace of a linguistic contact variety, referred as Indo-Portuguese.

This form did not constitute a single language, but corresponded instead to variants that occurred, and eventually faded, along most of the Indian coast, and which were influenced by the vast diversity of local languages: the Gujarati in the northwest (Diu, Cambay, Surat, Daman), the Marathi in the central western coast (Mumbai, Bassein, Chaul/Korlai, Thane, Dabhol), the Konkani (Rajapur, Malwan, Goa, Mangalore), and the Kannada, in the west (Onor, Bhatkal), the Malayalam in the southwest (Cannanore, Tellicherry, Wayanad, Mahé, Calicut, Cranganore, Vypin, Kochi, Alleppey, Kayamkulam, Kollam, Anjengo), the Tamil in the south-eastern regions (Tuticorin, Kilakarai, Negapatam, Pondicherry, Madras) and in Sri

<sup>1</sup> TOMÁS, Maria Isabel (2008), 'A Viagem das Palavras' in LAGES, Mário Ferreira & MATOS, Artur Teodoro (eds.), Portugal, *Percursos de Interculturalidade*, Vol. 3, Lisbon: ACIDI; JAYASURYA, Shihan de Silva (2008), *The Portuguese in the East: A Cultural History of a Maritime Trading Empire*, London: Tauris Academic Studies; CARDEIRA, Esperança (2010), 'O Português no Oriente e o Oriente no Português' in TOCCO, Valeria, *L'Oriente nella Lingua e nella Letteratura Portoghese*, Pisa: Edizioni ETS.

<sup>2</sup> DAUS, Ronald (1989), *Portuguese Eurasian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; BYRNE, John (2011), 'The Luso-Asians and Other Eurasians: Their Domestic and Diasporic Identities' in JARNAGIN, Laura (ed.) (2011), *Portuguese and Luso-Asian Legacies in Southeast Asia, 1511–2011, Vol. 1, The Making of the Luso-Asian World: Intricacies of Engagement*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Lanka (Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa), the Telugo in the east, (Masulipatam, Vizagapatam), the Oryia (Pipili, Baleswar) and the Bengali (Kolkata, Dacca, Chittagong), in the Bay of Bengal coast.<sup>3</sup>

Indo-Portuguese creoles from southwestern India's Malabar coast, in present day State of Kerala, are particularly interesting as this was the region where the Portuguese first landed, and settled, and where the language would endure for longer after their departure.<sup>4</sup> Equally relevant are the few Indo-Portuguese creoles that persist in Chaul/Korlai<sup>5</sup>, Daman and Diu.<sup>6</sup>

The most significant example, however, is to be found in Sri Lanka rather than in India, an island colonized successively by three European powers; Portugal (1508–1658), the Low Countries (1658–1796) and England (1796–1948). In Sri Lanka, unions between Portuguese men and Sinhalese women resulted in a Euro-Asian community of *mestizos*, while those between Portuguese men and *mestizo* women gave origin to a population of *castizos*. Such groups, bilingual in Ceylon creole and mainly in Sinhalese (Indo-European language generally spoken by Buddhists) or Tamil (Dravidian language generally spoken by Hindus) became known as Topas or Topasses. The term was absorbed by Tamil from the Sanskrit *dvi*, 'two', and *bhāsā*, 'language', meaning 'two language speakers'.

Conquering the Sri Lankan Portuguese ruled territories from 1568 onwards, the Dutch attempted at imposing their language. Many of these northern Europeans, however, would marry Euro-Asian women, their children acquiring the local creole through the mothers or the enslaved nurses. Additionally, they would also recruit creole speaking Christian soldiers who carried their language to other Asian regions, the term Topas eventually also emerging in the Malay context.

*Mestizos* of Dutch and Portuguese descent were referred as 'burghers', albeit differentiated between them. The former would refer to the latter as *ambachtslieden*, meaning 'artisans', a term which the English translated as 'mechanics', as they engaged in professions such as carpentry, iron smithing and mechanics. Consequently, when compared to the middle-class Dutch burghers, including many clerics, they were seen as poorer, of darker skin and less westernized. But, on a cultural and linguistic level, and given the genetic and cultural miscegenation between them, such division was artificial.

Occurring via the burghers of Portuguese ancestry, the main nuclei where the language can still be found are in Batticaloa and Trincomalee, in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, despite evidence of its progressive replacement by the Tamil. On the western coast, in Puttalam, a second group of descendants from enslaved people of African origin, does still maintain the creole through oral traditions.<sup>7</sup>

For its geographical location, between the two major civilizational centres of India and China, and harbouring the Spice Islands, the south-eastern Asian coast was a crossroads for connecting peoples, cultures and languages—Indian, Chinese, Malay, Arabian and Persian—, well ahead of the arrival of the Portuguese.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, various creoles of Portuguese lexical origin did develop in the region,

<sup>3</sup> SMITH, Norval (1995), 'An annotated list of creoles, pidgins, and mixed languages', in ARENDS, Jacques & MUYSKEN, Pieter & SMITH, Norval (eds.), *Pidgins and Creoles: an introduction*, Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Company.

<sup>4</sup> CARDOSO, Hugo C. (2019), 'The Indo-Portuguese creoles of the Malabar: Historical cues and questions', in MALEKANDATHIL, Pius, VARADARAJAN, Lotika & FAROOQI, Amar (eds.), *India, the Portuguese, and maritime interactions*, Vol. 2, *Religion, language and cultural expression*, New Delhi: Primus Books.

<sup>5</sup> CLEMENTS, John Clancy (1996), *The Genesis of a Language*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company; CLEMENTS, John Clancy (2002), 'Two Indo-Portuguese Creoles in Contrast' *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, Vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 191–236; CLEMENTS, John Clancy (2015), 'Portuguese Settlement of the Chaul/Korlai area and the formation of Korlai Creole Portuguese' *Journal of Language Contact*, Vol. 8, pp. 13–35.

<sup>6</sup> CARDOSO, Hugo C. (2009), *The Indo-Portuguese Language of Diu*, Utrecht: LOT.

<sup>7</sup> CARDOSO, Hugo C., RADHAKRISHNAN, Mahesh, COSTA, Patricia & PEREIRA, Rui (2019), 'Documenting modern Sri Lankan Portuguese' in PINHARANDA-NUNES, Mário & CARDOSO, Hugo C. (eds.), *Documentation and maintenance of contact languages from South Asia to East Asia*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

<sup>8</sup> ANSALDO, Umberto (2009), *Contact Languages: Ecology and Evolution in Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; HOOGERVORST, Tom (2018), 'Sailors, Tailors, Cooks, and Crooks: On Loanwords and Neglected Lives in Indian Ocean Posts' *Itinerário*, Vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 516–548.

namely<sup>9</sup> the Malacca creole (*papiá Kristang*), the Burmese (*Thai*) in Myanmar and Thailand, the Batavia and Tugu in Java, the Moluccas creole,<sup>10</sup> from Flores and Solor Islands and the creole from Bidau, in Timor.<sup>11</sup> Of these, only the creole from Malacca has survived to the present and, given that research on contact languages has only surfaced in the 19th century, the knowledge of the other variants is limited or non-existent.

The earliest Portuguese contact with Malacca dates from between 1509 and 1511. The current modern name for the local creole is *papiá Kristang*, ‘speaking Christian’, the neighbourhood where the community converged being the *padri sa-chang*, or ‘priest’s land’, both designations evidencing the links between language, religion, territory and identity. Today, this creole is valued as an important identity marker, albeit of reduced social prestige.<sup>12</sup> The little that remains of the *Portuguese Settlement* or *Kampung Portugis*, consists of a small group of fishermen families that attract both national and overseas tourism, as well as anthropological interest from within the community<sup>13</sup> and from foreign scholars.<sup>14</sup>

Being the first Europeans to challenge Portuguese claims to the region by conquering Malacca in 1641, the Dutch forced part of the Euro-Asian populations into other territories, such as Macassar, in Celebes Island. When they attacked the latter city in 1660, part of the population fled to Larantuka in Flores Island, the Dutch linguistic policy in Malacca thus failing. During the ensuing British period, and after Malaysia’s Independence, the local creole was heavily impacted, or even replaced, by English and Malay, both in Malacca and in the other regions where the community lived. When the British founded Penang in 1786, many Euro-Asians of Portuguese origin settled in that city. Similarly, when in 1819 they founded modern Singapore, the Portuguese Euro-Asians were also the first to establish themselves permanently in the area.

Such populations were split into ‘lower’ and ‘middle/high’ class groups. As they occupied a social stratum immediately below the Europeans and above the Asians, to belong to the latter group proved politically advantageous. Following from Singapore’s independence in 1965, many ‘lower’ stratum Euro-Asians emigrated and adapted to other local identities. The upper classes maintained their identity, although avoiding any association with the poor Malacca fishermen. But, even in this scenario, and despite its evident decline, there have been efforts to revitalize the *papiá Kristang* creole.<sup>15</sup>

Founded in 1619, Batavia, modern day Jakarta, was never under Portuguese control. Notwithstanding, many groups under some type of Portuguese influence—soldiers, enslaved people and families from

<sup>9</sup> CARDOSO, Hugo (2016), ‘O Português em Contacto na Ásia e no Pacífico’ in MARTINS, Ana Maria e CARRILHO, Ernestina (eds.), *Manual de Linguística Portuguesa*, Berlin: De Gruyter; CARDOSO, Hugo (2020), ‘Contact and Portuguese-Lexified Creoles’ in HICKEY, Raymond (ed.) (2020), *The Handbook of Language Contact*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>10</sup> WHINNOM, Keith (1956), *Spanish Contact Vernaculars in the Philippines*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press; LIPSKI, John M. (1988), ‘Philippine creole Spanish: assessing the Portuguese Element’ *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, Vol. 104, no. 1–2, pp. 25–45; GRIMES, Barbara Dix (1991), ‘The Development and Use of Ambonese Malay’ in STEINHAEUER, H. (ed.), *Papers in Austronesian Linguistics*, Vol. 1, Canberra: The Australian National University.

<sup>11</sup> BAXTER, Alan N. (1990), ‘Notes on the Creole Portuguese of Bidau, East Timor’ *Journal of Pidgins and Creole Languages*, Vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 1–38.

<sup>12</sup> PILLAI, Stefanie, SOH, Wen-Yi & KAJITA, Angela S. (2014), ‘Family language policy and heritage language maintenance of Malacca Creole Portuguese’ *Language & Communication*, Vol. 37, pp. 75–87.

<sup>13</sup> SARKISSIAN, Margaret (2000), *D’Albuquerque’s Children: Performing Tradition in Malaysia’s Portuguese Settlement*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

<sup>14</sup> BAXTER, Alan Norman (1988), *A Grammar of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese)*, Canberra: The Australian National University; BAXTER, Alan Norman & SILVA, Patrick de (2004), *A Dictionary of Kristang (Malacca Creole Portuguese) with an English-Kristang finderlist*, Canberra: Pacific Linguistics Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

<sup>15</sup> SCULLY, Valerie & ZUZARTE, Catherine (2004), *The most comprehensive Eurasian heritage dictionary: Kristang-English, English-Kristang*, Singapore: SNP International; WONG, Kevin Martens (2019), ‘Kodrah Kristang: The initiative to revitalize the Kristang language in Singapore’ *Language Documentation & Conservation Special Publication*, no. 19, pp. 35–121. See also: <https://www.facebook.com/kodrahkristang/> (consulted 9/11/2022); <https://www.facebook.com/KristangKL/> (consulted 9/11/2022); <https://www.facebook.com/yofalah.linggukristang> (consulted 9/11/2022).

India, Sri Lanka, Malacca and insular southeast Asia—converged into the city, wherefore a variety of Portuguese creole was developed for communication between European, Asian and Eurasian groups. The language remained alive in Tugu, a village near Batavia, which, contrary to most of the Euro-Asian communities, converted to Calvinism. Jacob Quiko (m. 1978) was its last speaker and active promoter. His grandson, Guido Quiko, has maintained the former's legacy, mainly through the organization of occasional cultural events celebrating this ancient culture.<sup>16</sup>

With the intention of exploiting Timorese sandalwood, Portuguese merchants and missionaries settled in on the islands of Flores, Adonara and Solor, just a few days travel away from Timor. These Euro-Asians were referred to as Larantukers, as they were mostly installed in the village of Larantuka in Flores Island.<sup>17</sup> Later, in 1702, the Portuguese would eventually settle in Lifau, on the island of Timor, but Portuguese linguistic elements survived in Larantuka, mainly in the scope of religious rituals.

Despite not being used in daily communication, the Macanese creole<sup>18</sup>, commonly known as *maquista* or *patuá* (from the French 'patois', a dialect) does nonetheless maintain an artistic role. In the mid-20th century, Leopoldo Danilo Barreiros (1910–1994), amassed a collection of humoristic texts dating from the late 19th century and later.<sup>19</sup> In the last century, the Macanese José dos Santos Ferreira (1919–1993) composed a variety of texts of identical nature.<sup>20</sup> Nowadays, the drama group *Dóci Papiçám di Macau*, founded by the Macanese lawyer Miguel de Senna Fernandes, stages new plays in creole and uploads occasional comedy videos on *YouTube*.<sup>21</sup>

Although Indo-Portuguese creoles are all but extinct in everyday communication, they do remain alive in cultural contexts, mainly in oral traditions, with many tales and songs being known and told in local creoles, even if their contents are no longer understandable to their tellers/singers. Examples of such occurrences are the themes known as *Jingli Nona*, 'Sinhalese madam', that survive in Sri Lanka, Malacca and Singapore<sup>22</sup>, or the *Bastiana* (perhaps the nickname for Sebastiana), a character that appears in a range of musical compositions, but of related topics, in Mangalore, Diu and Macao.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> MAURER, Philippe (2011), *The former Portuguese Creole of Batavia and Tugu (Indonesia)*, London: Battlebridge Publications; TAN, Raan-Hann (2016), *Por-Tugu-Ese?: The Protestant Tugu Community of Jakarta, Indonesia* [PhD Dissertation], Instituto Universitário de Lisboa; <https://clubel1raizes.wordpress.com/2014/10/01/comunidade-tugu-indonesia-raizes-portuguesas-pelo-mundo/> (consulted 10/1/2023).

<sup>17</sup> VIOLA, Maria Alice Marques (2013), *Presença histórica 'portuguesa' em Larantuka (séculos XVI e XVII) e suas implicações na contemporaneidade* [PhD Dissertation], Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa.

<sup>18</sup> BATALHA, Graciete Nogueira (1988), *Glossário do Dialecto Macaense: Notas lingüísticas, etnográficas e folclóricas*. Instituto Cultural de Macau: Macau; FERNANDES, Miguel de Senna e BAXTER, Alan Norman (2004), *Maquista Chapado: Vocabulary and Expressions in Macao's Portuguese Creole*. Macau: Instituto Cultural do Governo da Região Especial Administrativa de Macau; YAN, Xi and MOODY, Andrew (2010), 'Language and Society in Macao: A review of sociolinguistic studies on Macao in the past three decades' in *Chinese Language and Discourse*, Vol. 1, no. 2, 293–324; GALÃO, Raul Leal (2019), *Dicionário do Crioulo de Macau: Escrita de Adé em Patuá*, Macau: Praia Grande Edições.

<sup>19</sup> BARREIROS, Leopoldo Danilo (1943–1944), *O Dialecto português de Macau: Antologia*, Macau: Renascimento.

<sup>20</sup> FERREIRA, José dos Santos (1994), *Obras Completas de Adé dos Santos Ferreira*, 6 Vols., Macau: Fundação Macau.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@DocipapicamdiMacao> (consulted 2/1/2023); <https://www.facebook.com/groups/docipapicam/> (consulted 2/1/2023).

<sup>22</sup> JACKSON, Kenneth David (1990), *Sing Without Shame: Oral Traditions in Indo-Portuguese Creole Verse: With a Transcription and Analysis of a Nineteenth-Century Manuscript of Ceylon Portuguese*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 49–50; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jQVinpqn3A> (consulted 4/1/2023); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z-w2Oex5O4c> (consulted 4/1/2023); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5CVFj6J6Ss> (consulted 4/1/2023); <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPy4qj4Oji8> (consulted 4/1/2023).

<sup>23</sup> JACKSON, Kenneth David (1990), *Sing Without Shame: Oral Traditions in Indo-Portuguese Creole Verse: With a Transcription and Analysis of a Nineteenth-Century Manuscript of Ceylon Portuguese*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 47–48; CARDOSO, Hugo C. (2012), 'Oral Traditions of the Luso-Asian Communities: Local, Regional and Continental' in JARNAGIN, Laura (ed.), *Portuguese and Luso-Asian Legacies in Southeast Asia, 1511–2011, Vol. 2, Culture and Identity in the Luso-Asian World: Tenacities & Plasticities*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp. 151; JAYASURYA, Shihan de Silva (2008), *The Portuguese in the East: A Cultural History of a Maritime Trading Empire*, London: Tauris Academic Studies, pp. 65; *Arquivos de Macau*, Vol. 1, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, p. 160; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z95IgVkwio4> (consulted 4/1/2023).

### THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE IN ASIA, ASIA IN THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

The ‘*Glossário Luso-Asiático*’ (1919), compiled by Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, is the essential publication for the study of Asian languages influence on Portuguese.<sup>24</sup> Dalgado, a Goan missionary and a highly competent linguist of encyclopaedic knowledge, employed his capacities to recreate the bygone Portuguese Empire, and to emphasize the Portuguese culture and language influence in Asia. For this purpose, Dalgado recorded, alphabetically, the words from most eastern native languages that were present in Portuguese, or other European documents, drafted between the late 15th and the early 20th century.<sup>25</sup> These eastern ‘borrowings’ can be split into two categories; words of historical use and hence unknown in the present, and those that, for their survival or for belonging to a global language, remain of widespread knowledge.

Arabic influence is identified in two independent historical periods; the first corresponding to the centuries of Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula, up to the Christian reconquest, and the second, relating to maritime expansion, colonialism and imperialism, during which the Portuguese encountered indigenous Arabic speaking populations. Words that were assimilated by Portuguese in the former period are usually prefixed by the article *al-*, but that is not the case for the latter phase. Some other words integrated the Portuguese language in both periods; *halwā*, ‘sesame jam’, which appeared earlier as *alféola* and later as *aluá*; *mu’addin*, ‘the one who calls to prayer’, which occurs in Portuguese as *almuadem* and later as *muezim*; *wazir*, ‘incumbent’, originally *alvazir* or *alvazil* and subsequently as *guazil* and *vizir*.<sup>26</sup> From Persian, Indo-European language lexically influenced by Arabic, Portuguese has absorbed words that are common in historiography as well as in Asian variants; *achar* (*ācār*), ‘spicy vegetable preserves’, which occurs at least in Korlai, Sri Lanka, Malacca and Macao, *bandel* (*bandar*), ‘port’; *bazar* (*bāzār*); *caliana* (*qalyān*) or *narguilé* (*nargilé*), nowadays better known as *xixa* (*šiša*, ‘glass’); *caravana* (*kārvān*); *catual* (*ku-tvāl*); *chader* (*čādor*); *chale* (*šāl*) or, at the present, *xaile*; *choca* (*čowgān*, ‘pole’); *lascar*, ‘army’, and *lascarim*, ‘soldier’ (*laškar*); or *xá* (*šāh*).

Most Indian subcontinent languages can fit into two groups: the Indo-European (Indo-Aryan), mainly in the north (Sanskrit, Hindi/Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengalese, etc.) and in Sri Lanka (Sinhalese), and the Dravidian, present in the south (Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, etc.). The Portuguese, being an Indo-European language, does feature various words (numbers, body parts, family members, etc.) that are like others from Indo-Aryan idioms.

Dravidian languages, structurally and lexically different, were spoken in most of the subcontinent before the arrival of the Indo-European peoples. A Portuguese speaker will be able to recognize the words *rei* (*king*) in the Sanskrit *rājan* or the Hindi *raja*, which appear historically as *raja* and its various associations, or the word *maraja*; or *dois* (two), *dvi* in Sanskrit or *do* in Hindi, as in *topas*; or even *jugo*, ‘a wooden element to join a pair of bulls’, a yoke, or *yoga* in Sanskrit and Hindi, an activity whose participant occurs in Portuguese historiography as *jogue*.

From other Indo-Aryan languages the Portuguese absorbed *bagate*, (*bhakta*, ‘devout’, of which Dalgado says, rather derogatorily, that in Portuguese India, corresponds to a ‘man with dealings with the devil’ and that in Macao means spell); *chita* (Sanskrit *citra* ‘multicoloured, sprinkled’), in the ‘textile’ context; *jagra* (Malayalam *chakkara*, ‘brown sugar in lumps’), ultimately of identical origin to the arabised word *açúcar* ‘sugar’; *mangusto* ‘mongoose’ (Marathi *mungūs*); *saguate* (Hindi *saugāta*, ‘gift’, of Persian origin); and *tanque* ‘tank’ (Gujarati *tāki*).

<sup>24</sup> DALGADO, Sebastião Rodolfo (1988), *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, 2 Vols., New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.

<sup>25</sup> Parts of the glossary have been updated since then. For the Chinese context see: REIS, Amilton Jorge da Costa, 2020, *Uma análise atualizada dos étimos chineses no Glossário luso-asiático de Sebastião R. Dalgado* [Masters Dissertation], Universidade de São Paulo.

<sup>26</sup> CORRIENTE, Federico, 2008, *Hdo: Dictionary of Arabic and Allied Loanwords, Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan, Gallician and Kindred Dialects*, Leiden: Brill; ALVES, Adalberto, 2013, *Dicionário de Arabismos da Língua Portuguesa*, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda.



FIG. 1  
A currency trader *xarafa* from the kingdom of Cambaia and the clientele who approach him, including three Portuguese. *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI—Códice Português da Biblioteca Casanatense* (no. XXVIII).

From Dravidian languages it assimilated *apa* (Tamil *āppam*, ‘flat bread’); *areca* (Malayalam *ataykka*); *canja*, ‘chicken soup’ (Malayalam *kaññi*); *caril*, ‘curry’ (Malayalam and Tamil *kari*); *catamarã*, ‘catamaran’, (Tamil *kattumaram*); *charuto*, ‘cigar’ (Malayalam and Tamil *curuttu*); *jangada*, ‘raft’ (Malayalam *cannādam*); *manga*, ‘mango’ (Malayalam *mānna*); *parau* (Malayalam and Tamil *patavu*); or *pagoda*, ‘pagoda’ (of Dravidian origin, in Malayalam *pagodī*, and from the Sanskrit *bhagavati*, ‘[goddess] blessed’).

The Malay/Indonesian belongs to the Austronesian family, of wider geographic reach than the Indo-European languages, being spoken from Madagascar to Easter Island. From the Malay the Portuguese picked words such as *balichão* (*belacan*, ‘fermented shrimp paste’); *bambu*, ‘bamboo’ (*bambu*, through some Dravidian language, the Tamil having *vēmpu*); *bebinca*, (*bingka*, ‘type of cake of various layers’ common in Goa and often served in Indian restaurants in Portugal); *boião*, ‘jar’ (*buyong*); *bule*, ‘teapot’ (*buli* or *buli-buli*); *junco*, ‘reed’ (*jung* or *ajung*, ‘war and trade ship’); *gudão*, (*gudang*, in the last instance of Dravidian origin, the Tamil having *kitanku*, ‘warehouse’); *lancha*, ‘boat’ (*lancang*); *pires*, ‘saucer’ (*piring*, ‘plate’); *rota*, ‘rattan’ (*rotan*, ‘wicker’); or *sapão*, ‘sappanwood’ (*sepang*).

Most Chinese words originate from Mandarin via Portuguese contact with the Chinese court, and from Cantonese via their settlement in Macao. Such examples include *canga*, ‘yoke’ (扛枷, Cantonese *kong<sup>1</sup>gaa<sup>1</sup>*); *chau-chau*, ‘frying’ (炒, Cantonese *caau<sup>2</sup>*), as in the traditional Chinese *chau-chau* rice; the interjection associated to give a toast, *chin-chin*, (請, Cantonese *cing<sup>2</sup>*, ‘to invite, to give a meal’, through the pidgin English from China); *lichia*, (荔枝 mandarin *lizhi*); *leque*, ‘fan’ (琉球, mandarin *Liúqiú*, name of the Ryukyu Islands, in Portuguese ‘Ilhas Léquias’); *longana*, (龍眼 *lung<sup>4</sup>ngaan<sup>5</sup>*); or *taufú* (豆腐, Cantonese *dau<sup>6</sup>fu<sup>6</sup>*), now *tofu*.

Despite the strong lexical influence of Chinese languages on Japanese, that idiom is grammatically different, being considered an isolated language, that is, a language with no direct links with others. From it the Portuguese has drawn in *banzai/banzé*, ‘kerfuffle’ (万歳, ‘ten thousand years’); *biombo*, ‘screen’ (屏風, *byōbu*); *bonzo*, (possibly from 坊主, *bōzu*, ‘Buddhist monk’); *catana*, ‘katana’ (刀, *katana*); *gueixa*, ‘geisha’ (芸者, *geisha*); *hara-quiri*, ‘hara-kiri’ (腹切, *harakiri*, literally ‘belly cut’); *jinricxá* or, nowadays, *riquexó*, ‘rickshaw’ (人力車, *jinrikisha*); *nambão* or *nanban*, (南蛮, *nanban*, ‘southern barbarian’); *quimão*, presently *quimono* (着物, *kimono*); or *saqué* (酒, *sake*).

But Portuguese words do also survive in national and regional languages in Asia. The comprehensive monograph on this subject, ‘*Influência do vocabulário português em línguas asiáticas*’, also published by Dalgado in 1913, records Portuguese influenced words in over 50 Asian language.<sup>27</sup> At the present, such research favours not only written sources, often inclined to be more prescriptive than descriptive, but also oral sources. Most of the ‘borrowings’ recorded by Dalgado belong to specific semantics groups; 1. Catholic religion, 2. human made objects, 3. plant species introduced by the Portuguese, not necessarily

<sup>27</sup> DALGADO, Sebastião Rodolfo, 1913, *Influência do vocabulário português em línguas asiáticas (abrangendo cerca de cinquenta idiomas)*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade.

from Europe but also from other geographic areas such as Africa or the New World, 4. society and administrative organization.

Prominently standing out from among others, according to Dalgado, the languages of higher number of such borrowings are the Konkani from Goa (1768), the Tetum and the Galoli (774) from East Timor, and the Malay (431). Additionally, other major national or transnational languages are Sinhalese (208), Japanese (93), Arabic (50), Thai (35), Cambodian (25), Persian (22), Vietnamese (15), Burmese (7), Turk (4) and Chinese (3). The author does also record some borrowings in varieties of contact idioms related to other European languages; the Indo-English (173) and the Indo-French (62). The former was extensively documented in the Hobson-Jobson (1886) by orientalist Sir Henry Yule (1820–1889) and Arthur C. Burnell (1840–1882), who often resort to the Portuguese and its variations to explain Indo-English words such as: *benzoin*, ‘*beijoim*’; *congee*, ‘*canja*’; *curry*, ‘*caril*’; *catamaran*, ‘*catamarã*’; *mandarin*, ‘*mandarim*’; *mango*, ‘*manga*’; *mangosteen*, ‘*mangostão*’; *monsoon*, ‘*monção*’; *palanquin*, ‘*palanquim*’; *tank*, ‘*tanque*’; *vindaloo*, ‘*vinha d’alhos*’; or *caste*, from ‘*casta*’.<sup>28</sup> Dalgado also refers pidgin English words from China (15), the trading language of South China ports, based on English but preceded by a variety of Portuguese. An interesting word is joss-stick, referring to the incense sticks that the Chinese burn in religious ceremonies, ‘joss’ originating from the Portuguese ‘*deus*’.

In 1530, Goa became the capital of the Portuguese State of India. Following from its annexation by the Republic of India in 1961, and the subsequent formalization of Konkani as the official language of the newly formed State of Goa, in 1987, the local spoken Portuguese faced a steep decline.<sup>29</sup> Such trend was already perceptible in Dalgado’s, a native Konkani speaker, published work. His dictionary of the language delivers not the colloquial version spoken in the street and widely impacted by Portuguese vocabulary, but a Konkani rather influenced by Sanskrit.<sup>30</sup>

According to research carried out in the 1980s by Irene Wherritt, a Spanish and Portuguese Studies scholar, the level of Portuguese language usage from 1961 onwards, was related to predictable social factors, such as religion, gender, and age. The Christian population, the women and the elderly, resorted to Portuguese in a higher proportion than the Hindus, the men, those that worked outside the domestic context, and the young, who were more likely to learn languages perceived as of higher status—besides the Konkani, the Marathi, the Hindi and the English. Even though Portuguese did not have direct contact with Hindi (together with English the official federal languages of India), the latter does contain various words of Portuguese origin; *almāri*, ‘*armário*’ (cupboard); *aspatāl*, ‘*hospital*’; *kamrā*, ‘*quarto*’, from the Portuguese *câmara* (room); *cābī*, ‘*chave*’ (key); *mez*, ‘*mesa*’ (table); or *sābun*, ‘*sabão*’ (soap).

Identical situation occurs with other Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages. In Tamil it is possible to identify the following words of Portuguese origin; *alamāri*, ‘*armário*’ (cupboard); *jannal*, ‘*janela*’ (window); *mēcai*, ‘*mesa*’ (table); *pēnā*, ‘*caneta*’, from the word *pena* (pen); or *rōjā*, ‘*rosa*’ (rose).

Equally interesting are the names of fruits which, although derived from American languages, were introduced in Asia by the Portuguese; *annāci*, ‘*ananás*’ (pineapple); *koyyā*, ‘*goiaba*’ (guava); or *pap-pāli*, ‘*papaia*’ (papaya).

The mutual linguistical and cultural exchanges with Japan are also often researched. The Portuguese arrived in Japan in 1543 and, almost immediately, entered a rather intense missionary activity that would eventually be forbidden by the Kanpaku 豊臣秀吉 Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598). Later, in 1639,

<sup>28</sup> YULE, Henry e BURNELL, A. C. (1996), *Hobson-Jobson: The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, Ware: Wordsworth Reference.

<sup>29</sup> SARDESSAI, Manohar L. (1983), ‘The Portuguese Influence on Konkani’ *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 155–158; WHERRITT, Irene (1985), ‘Portuguese Language Use in Goa’ *Anthropological Linguistics*, Vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 437–451; WHERRITT, Irene (1989), ‘Portuguese Loanwords in Konkani’ *Hispania*, Vol. 72, no. 4, pp. 873–881.

<sup>30</sup> DALGADO, Sebastião Rodolpho (2012), *Dicionário Português-Konkani*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services.



**FIG. 2**  
A Portuguese nobleman choosing one of two Hindu women to wed, dressed as Portuguese women who had already converted to Christianity. *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI—Códice Português da Biblioteca Casanatense* (no. LI).

Christians would be expelled from Japan and the Portuguese ships banned from the Japanese coast. Nonetheless, during the period of coexistence, many Portuguese words were absorbed by Japanese, mostly by the Nagasaki dialect. An estimated two to four hundred words do survive nowadays, most related to Catholicism. But others, associated to trade, warfare and culture, mainly covering clothing and culinary, do also remain in use<sup>31</sup>; *botan*, (*botão*) ボタン (button); *karuta*, ‘*carta (de jogar)*’ かるた (playing card); *kasutera*, ‘cake similar to ‘*pão-de-ló*’ from the word ‘*Castela*’ カステラ (sponge cake); *konpeitō*, ‘*confeito*’ こんぺいとう (sweet); *koppu*, ‘*copo*’ コップ (drinking glass); *miira*, ‘*múmia*’ ミイラ (mummy), from *mirra*, (myrrh) used for embalming; *pan*, ‘*pão*’ パン (bread); *tabako*, ‘*tabaco*’ 煙草 (tobacco); or *tenpura*, 天ぷら ‘fried vegetables’, related to the word *tempero* (seasoning).

The Batavian Indonesian, which included various Portuguese words, was influent for the modern press, wherefore such words ended up integrating the national language. *Boneka*, ‘*boneco/a*’, (doll); *jendela*, ‘*janela*’ (window); *keju*, ‘*queijo*’ (cheese); *kemeja*, ‘*camisa*’ (shirt); *kereta*, ‘*carro/automóvel*’ (car), from *carreta*; *lemari*, ‘*armário*’ (cupboard); *meja*, ‘*mesa*’ (table); *mentega*, ‘*manteiga*’ (butter); *minggu*, ‘*domingo/semana*’ (Sunday); *pesta*, ‘*feira*’ (party); *sabtu*, ‘*sábado*’ (Saturday); *sekolah*, ‘*escola*’ (school); or *sepatu*, ‘*sapato*’ (shoe).<sup>32</sup>

East Timor is a rare instance in the generalized decline of the Portuguese language in Asia. It is estimated that the country encompasses 31 ethnic-linguistic groups and 46 ‘kingdoms’<sup>33</sup>, but Portuguese, together with Catholicism, emerged as the means for the elites to resist the many years of Indonesian occupation. Following from East Timor’s independence, both the language and the religion, remained a means of developing a national identity and of unifying the many decentralized ethnic-linguistic groups. Next to the Portuguese, the Tetum, also an official language, is not considered a creole, but an Austronesian language strongly impacted by Portuguese, lexically and grammatically, despite its considerable internal variation.<sup>34</sup> For evident historical reasons, the *tétum prasa*, the ‘urban Tetum’ variety spoken in Dili, the country’s capital city, was strongly influenced by Portuguese, which, as a language of older literary tradition, remains more evident in the printed press, being facetiously referred as *tetunguese*, a mix of Tetum and Portuguese. ✍

<sup>31</sup> JANEIRA, Armando Martins (1970), *O impacto português sobre a civilização japonesa*, Lisbon: Dom Quixote; BOXER, Charles Ralph & MOSCATO, Michael (ed.) (1979), *Papers on Portuguese, Dutch, and Jesuit Influences on 16th and 17th Century Japan: Writings of Charles Ralph Boxer*, Washington D.C.: University Publications of America, Inc; KONO, Akira (2001), ‘Portuguese-Japanese Language Contact in 16th Century Japan’ in *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, no. 3, pp. 43–51; SIQUEIRA, Josefina María Núñez (2014), *A Influência Portuguesa no Léxico Japonês* [Graduate Dissertation], Brasília: Universidade de Brasília.

<sup>32</sup> JONES, Russell, GRIJNS, C.D. & VRIES, Jan W. de (eds), 2007, *Loan-words in Indonesian and Malay*, Leiden: KITLV.

<sup>33</sup> PAULINO, Vicente (2012), ‘Remembering the Portuguese Presence in Timor and Its Contribution to the Making of Timor’s National and Cultural Identity’ in JARNAGIN, Laura (ed.), *Portuguese and Luso-Asian Legacies in Southeast Asia, 1511–2011, Vol. 2, Culture and Identity in the Luso-Asian World: Tenacities & Plasticities*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

<sup>34</sup> GREKSÁSOVÁ, Zuzana (2018), *Tetun in Timor-Leste: The Role of Language Contact in Its Development* [PhD Dissertation], Universidade de Coimbra.



# Africa



In the decades following from the successful conquest of the northern African city of Ceuta (1415), the Portuguese turn definitely to the sea, focusing on the maritime exploration of the Western African coast.

Gil Eanes' prowess of crossing the Cape Bojador, or 'Cape Fear', to the south of modern day Morocco, in 1434, would irreversibly open the way to the Great Discoveries that followed. This dangerous Cape, a large extension of oceanic silting caused by centuries of Saharan sands blowing by the desert winds into the sea, was known as a difficult, almost impossible barrier for shipping, many believing that nothing existed beyond it.

Ten years later, in 1444, the explorer Diogo Dias arrives to the Cape Verde archipelago, a strategic point for trading routes, and in 1445 to Guinea, a region that would become the most important commercial outpost for the West African trade. In that same year Pope Nicholas V, writes the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, confirming these new lands as Portuguese Crown property and stipulating that all the lands and seas discovered beyond the Cape Bojador would also become property of the Kings of Portugal, who would therefore be entitled to impose taxes on navigation and trade. This important document was essential for the recognition of all the territories still to be discovered by the Portuguese explorers.

In 1460, following south along the coast, Pedro de Sintra reaches Sierra Leone, another important trading outpost, from where originate the very rare and precious sapi-portuguese ivory objects, so admired and coveted by the Lisbon elites. In 1471 João de Santarém and Pero Escobar land in a village that they name 'Mina', building the important trading factory of Saint George of Elmina, which would become the political and commercial centre for the Portuguese trade monopoly in the Gulf of Guinea, and the point from where Western African gold flowed into Europe. In the following year Rui Sequeira arrives to the coast of present day Nigeria, in a region that he names Lagos.

The following decade was crucial for the establishing and settling of the Portuguese in Africa, and for the development of diplomatic and commercial relations, as well as military alliances, with the strongest and most influential contemporary African states, the Kingdom of Benin or Edo Kingdom, in

Map of Africa, Willem Janszoon Blaeu, 1640

modern Nigeria, and the Old Kingdom of Kongo, that included in its territories part of north-eastern Angola in present day Republic of Congo, and of modern Gabon to the South.

In 1486, João Afonso Aveiro disembarked in Benin, as ambassador for the Portuguese King João II, returning to Lisbon with a representative from the Oba, the Benin ruler, an exchange that marked the establishing of strong ties and trade relations between the two kingdoms. From the close co-operation and exchange between these two cultures, did also emerge a particular type of art known as Bini-Portuguese.

Portugal and the Old Kingdom of Kongo had already established some contact in 1483, when Diogo Cão landed at the mouth of the River Congo. In this instance Catholicism might have been the main contact point, accountable for the union between the two cultures. In 1491, with this alliance consolidated, the King of Portugal, in a highly significant diplomatic and political display, appoints the Manicongo, the king of Kongo, his brother, distinguishing him with an armorial in the European manner, the Manicongo Arms, which was registered in the '*Livro de Nobreza*', the official record for all Portuguese armorials, and included in the '*Livro da Perfeição das Armas*' (1521–1541), today kept at the Torre do Tombo National Archives in Lisbon.

The powerful kingdom of Kongo ruled over a vast region that included the Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba, whose fusion resulted in the Kingdom of Angola (1559), where the Portuguese remained until the region's independence in 1974.

The final phase of West African coast exploration will be completed by 1488, when Bartolomeu Dias crosses what he called the Cape of Storms in Southern Africa, reaching the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese king, on receiving these extraordinary news, changes this name to Cape of Good Hope, trusting that this victory would open a maritime link to India and the East, furthering the Portuguese Discoveries successes.

In 1498, on his first voyage to India, Vasco da Gama lands on the Island of Mozambique founding the first Portuguese trading factory in Eastern Africa, arriving soon after on the Island of Quilua, on the southern coast of present day Tanzania. In there he subjugates the local Sultan, taking control of an important commercial outpost that controlled various trading routes such as those for Zimbabwean gold and iron, Eastern African slaves and ivory and Asian spices, textiles, porcelains and jewellery.

Heading north, da Gama failed to conquer Mombasa, settling in Malindi, also in modern day Kenya, where he established a Portuguese trading factory. From there he eventually headed east, moving away from the African coast and towards the Indian subcontinent.

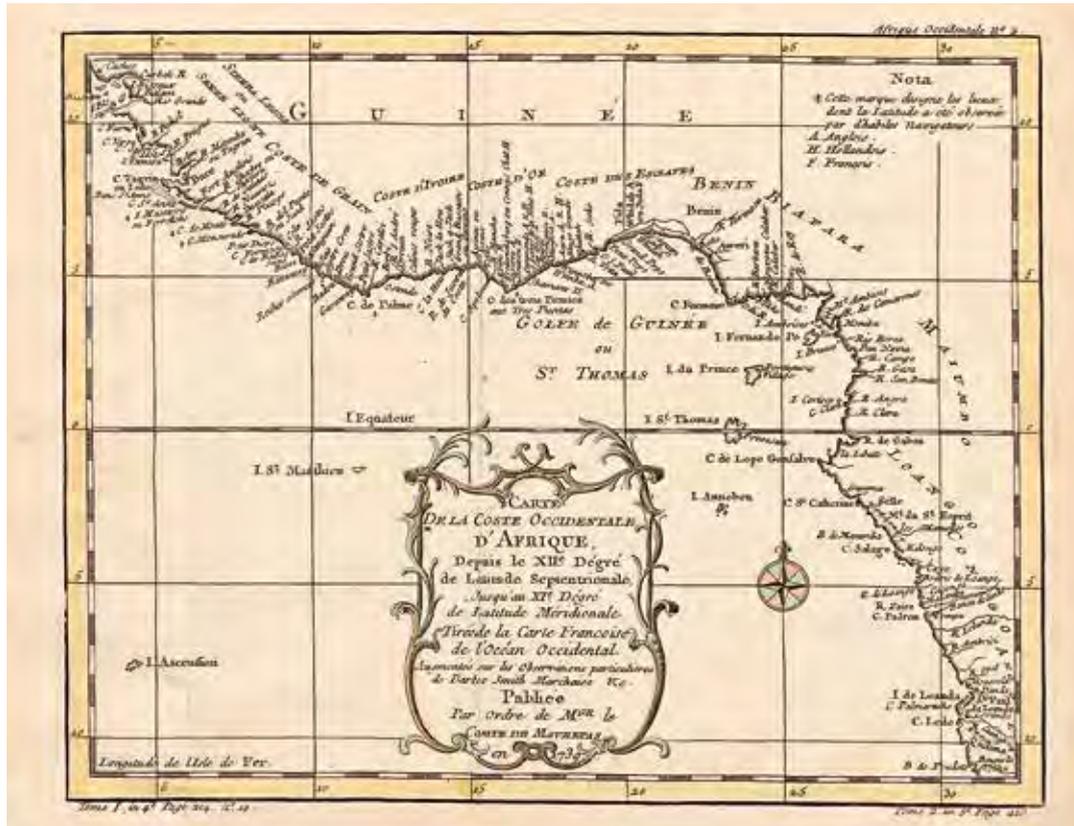
With the triumphant arrival in India it became vitally important to defend the commercial routes between Lisbon and those new Portuguese territories. For this purpose it was crucial to take control of Mombasa and of the Strait of Hormuz.

The taking of Mombasa from the Swahili would eventually become one of the most complex tasks of all the Eastern conquests. Apart from being one of the best deep water ports on the Eastern African coast, strategically positioned facing the Indian subcontinent, and a major Islamic trading outpost with excellent contacts in Cambay in Gujarat and in Sofala in Mozambique, it was also a major defence port against the Ottoman Turks. Following various attempts, the Sultan of Mombasa was eventually defeated in 1528, and an important fortress built—the Forte de Jesus—and outstanding example of Portuguese military engineering and architecture in East Africa, that became the main Portuguese operational base in the region, replacing Malindi.

Equally important was the Island of Ormuz, on the narrow passage into the Persian Gulf, which controlled the movements of ships and dominated the commercial routes between India, North Africa and Persia. Nine years after da Gama's voyage of discovery and conquest, Afonso de Albuquerque, 2.º viceroy of India, took the island for Portugal, founding the city of Hormuz and building important fortifications.

Following from these epic campaigns and on the basis of highly skilled administration, broad religious tolerance and masterly resistance to ottoman advances, Portugal will successfully maintain and strengthen its grip on this vast Indian Ocean territory for the following 100 years. ➤

# Kingdoms of Benin and Owo



Map of West Coast of Africa, Jacques-Nicolas Bellin, 1703

Following the Conquest of Ceuta in 1415, their first overseas incursion, the Portuguese continued their exploration of the Western African Coast, reaching Guinea in 1442. On venturing inland into those unknown territories, they came into contact with highly organised and sophisticated local societies that had, for centuries, been producing artistic objects in wood, bronze, copper and ivory, as well as intricately patterned woven textiles.

These societies, the ancient Kingdoms of Benin, Owo e Ijebu, could trace their origins to the city of Ife, cradle of the Yoruba culture, and believed that their founders were the sons of the God Oduduwa, the first ancestral Yoruba King. The oldest artistic, historical and archaeological records, particularly those related to the Kingdoms of Owo and Benin, do certainly reinforce and confirm the links with the Ife culture.

Indeed, it was the appropriation of historical ties and of certain religious and political aspects of that culture that encouraged the sense of a common shared identity. The Oba, the supreme King or Ruler, was at the top of the hierarchy, with supreme powers inherited from the ancestral Gods, that could vanquish the most terrible of creatures. Additionally, the evidence suggests that this court culture was fluid between the three Kingdoms; Benin, Owo e Ijebu.

The Portuguese would settle in this region from the middle 15th century. The explorer João Afonso Aveiro (c.1443–c.1490), envoy from King D. João II (1481–1495), arrived in Benin in 1486, and soon after returned to Portugal accompanied by a representative from the Oba, charged with the task of promoting the economic development and trade between the two kingdoms, which would include the exchange of slaves, pepper, ivory, textiles and bronze and copper artefacts.

The Kingdom of Owo, whose King was called Olowo, was located to the Northwest of the Kingdom of Benin. The Portuguese expansion inland within the area of the Gulf of Guinea and the proximity of these in modern Nigeria promoted a territorial dialogue that resulted in economic as well as artistic and cultural exchanges. ✓

## 01

## AN OLIPHANT FROM BENIN

Ivory

Kingdom of Benin (?) (present-day Nigeria); 17th century

Dim.: 8.0 × 37.5 × 4.5 cm

F866

*Provenance: Sylvie Lermite-King collection, Paris and J.J.F. collection, Oporto*

Unusual carved ivory hunting horn, defined by its singular characteristics within a western African production context.

Dating from the 17th century, and carved from an elephant tusk, it was probably made for local use, albeit featuring significant European influence arising from the contacts between the Portuguese and the western African peoples, from the 15th century onwards<sup>1</sup>. It is, nonetheless, impossible to exclude that it might reflect a specific commission from a more modest traveller, and that its individuality resulted from the customer specifications, given that, its unique characteristics, distance it from others for local use or for exporting.

Of evident decorative restraint, it is defined by a plain faceted body of octagonal section, featuring a trapezoid suspension ring towards the middle of the concave arch, and three prominent juxtaposed bands circumscribing the simulated mouthpiece, whose tip is simply decorated with incised zigzagging lines. The outer convex face is pierced with two small orifices for blowing.

The ivory's yellow shade is intersected, towards the campanula, by a light coloured band of well-defined boundaries—revealing the translucent qualities of the material—that indicate the previous

existence of an applied element, perhaps in leather or other material, that jointly with the suspension ring and the three raised bands, would complete the suspension system related to the object's use as a hunting horn, or as a musical, or sound emitting, instrument.

Luso-African ivories are generally defined by profusely carved decoration, of European formal character and iconographic motifs, mainly Portuguese, combined with African elements. They are consensually attributed to two large production centres—the ancient Sierra Leone and the Kingdom of Benin, in the territory of modern day Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> As for the oliphant's from the Kingdom of Kongo, the evidence for Euro-African miscegenation has raised some doubts amongst specialists, and those from Ghana, a recently identified production centre<sup>3</sup>, seem to have been made for exclusive African use, as were those from Begho and Calabar, and with no connection with the Europeans.

In general, the horn's morphology allows for the identification of its origin. A decisive factor for differentiating between hunting horns and oliphants<sup>4</sup>—European commissioned horns—is the location of the blowing opening which, in local cultures, is al-

<sup>1</sup> In these export pieces, the combining of African and European characteristics was identified by William Fagg (1959) and classified in a group of hybrid ivories referred as 'Afro-Portuguese'—oliphants, covered containers—salt cellars and pyx—spoons and forks, knife handles, amongst other pieces—, that resulted from the encounter of different cultures or civilizations.

<sup>2</sup> See: CURNOW, Kathy, *The Afro-Portuguese Ivories: classification and stylistic analysis of a hybrid art form*, [s.l.], PhD Dissertation, University of Indiana, 2 volumes, 1983; and BASSANI, E., FAGG, W., *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestel Verlag, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> See: AFONSO, L. U., ALMEIDA, C., HORTA, J. da Silva, 'Early African Ivories: The Ghana Cluster', in *African Arts* 55, 2, pp. 10–19.

<sup>4</sup> The medieval term 'oliphant', derived from the French olifant—*elephas* in Greek—designates an ivory tube or hunting horn, while simultaneously referring to the elephant and to its tusk's ivory.



ways found towards the side of the tusk, either on the inner or on the outer curved surface. In the case of oliphants, the mouthpiece is apical, hence found at the horn's narrower end.

The setting of the blowing orifice is distinctive in each production origin. In the case of the *mpungi* from Kongo, it is featured on the concave surface and ogive shaped, whereas in the *akohen* from the Kingdom of Benin, the mouthpiece is rectangular and found in the convex curve, as it is in Edo-Portuguese oliphants for exporting.<sup>5</sup> In Sierra Leone's pieces commissioned by the Portuguese, it is placed at the horn's end, in the European manner.

The hunting horn described does not feature an apical orifice, although it simulates it. It does however remit to Sapi-Portuguese oliphants, due to its suspension ring in the concave surface, in similar fashion to others from that production centre, although in such horns the rings appear in larger numbers. This detail—the only characteristic that might suggest European influence, and which is never present in traditional African oliphants—has been referred as a distinctive feature in the identification of these objects, particularly in relation to horns from the Kingdom of Kongo.<sup>6</sup>

Blowing orifices placed on the horns' convex surfaces have been identified in hunting horns and oliphants from the Kingdom of Benin, both for local use and for exporting. This feature was exclusive to this ancient Kingdom, located in modern day Nigeria, and to other kingdoms and peoples under its control, and are not found in horns produced elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> In relation to the octagonal faceted shape, it can be found in horns from Ghana, but with differing characteristics and more accentuated than in this example.

Mentioned in Medieval Europe, as well as in earlier societies such as Hebrew, Egyptian, Assyrian, Etruscan, Teutonic, Celt, and even by Greeks and Romans, oliphants represented a means of communicating and motivating, be it in battle, in religious rituals or in crusades.<sup>8</sup> Others, smaller sized, were also used in hunts or simply as display objects.<sup>9</sup>

Portuguese written records do also refer these instruments, namely in a note by the chronicler Rui de Pina, in the 1492 '*Relação sobre o Reino do Congo*', and in the '*Crónica de D. João II*', in which he describes that the embassy sent to the King of Kongo in 1491, was greeted with 'many ivory horns and drums'.<sup>10</sup> A 'small ivory horn'

<sup>5</sup> AMARAL, Leonor L., *Os marfins luso-africanos do reino do Benim (séculos XVI e XVII). Estudo histórico-artístico e material*, Lisbon, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, PhD Dissertation, 2022, p. 134.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. in BASSANI, E., FAGG, W., *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestael Verlag, 1988, p. 198.

<sup>7</sup> CURNOW, K. in LEVENSON, Jay (ed.), *Encompassing the Globe, Portugal and the World in the 16th & 17th Centuries*, Smithsonian Institution, 2007, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> See GLEASON, B. P., 'Cavalry Trumpet and Kettledrum Practice from the Time of the Celts and Romans to the Renaissance', in *The Galpin Society Journal*, no. 61, 2008, pp. 231–232.

<sup>9</sup> AFONSO, L. U., HORTA, J. da Silva, 'Afro-Portuguese Olifants with Hunting Scenes (c.1490–c.1540)', in *Mande Studies*, no. 15, 2013, p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> RADULET, Apud, IDEM, *Ibidem*, p. 23.



**FIG. 1**  
‘The Marriage of Saint Ursula  
with Prince Conan’ (Saint Aute  
altarpiece), painted on panel,  
MNAA, 1522–1525

is also listed in the inventory of Álvaro Borges (1507), Capitan of the Island of São Tomé, a strategic point for commercial exchanges with western and central Africa.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding the Kingdom of Benin, mid-17th century Capuchin missionaries described Edo practices, mentioning the use of ivory flutes and horns. Recounting ritual parades and processions close to the Oba palace, Father Filippo de Hajar referred ‘ivory flutes’ players in the musical accompaniment.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, a contemporary Dutch merchant reported, amongst other curious details, that the Oba’s servants played ‘horns and flutes’.<sup>13</sup>

Depictions of similar instruments do also appear in Portuguese paintings from the 1500s, namely in ‘The Marriage

of Saint Ursula with Prince Conan’ (Saint Aute altarpiece, MNAA, 1522–1525), in which African musicians play various wind instruments in a gallery (fig. 1), as was customary in Portuguese courtly occasions marking solemn events or ceremonies.<sup>14</sup> Two African horns from the collection Settala (Milan, 1666), captioned ‘elephant tooth made for playing, used in the Kingdom of Kongo for being played in the presence of the king’, were also illustrated (...).<sup>15</sup>

These objects, produced in various centres of sub-Saharan Africa, assumed various roles that were reinforced by the relevance and the symbolism of the ivory. Highly elaborate pieces revealed the importance of the orderer, such as those featuring the Portuguese armorial shield, or King Manuel I coat of arms. In Benin, horns were associated to military, ceremonial, and ritual aspects, as well as to the Oba. Destined to glorifying the ruler, the sounds they released conveyed his power, while the whiteness of the ivory was a token of the wealth, strength, and purity of the king himself.<sup>16</sup>

In light of the hybrid structure of this horn and considering the placing of the blow openings on the instrument’s convex surface, a prerogative of Benin horns, it is possible to consider this as its likely provenance, albeit the fact that Benin’s mouthpieces were usually rectangular. In addition to that, another curious detail reinforces the singular and ‘mixed’ character of this horn—the evident similarity with 17th century European horns (*cornetto*, in Italian), with blowing openings and octagonal shaped, and featuring a slotting mouthpiece.

Characterised by interesting formal stylization, our uncommon instrument seems to fit both the for-exporting and the local production, while incorporating formal European contributes. By changing geographic contexts, these objects have certainly acquired multiple (re)significations. As such, it is likely that overlapping of more complex interpretations in the analyses of these ivory objects, does also exist. *LLA*

<sup>11</sup> In MOTA, A. Teixeira da, ‘Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII’, in *Africa*, no. 30, 1975, p. 585.

<sup>12</sup> In SALVADORINI, Vittorio A., *Le Missioni a Benin e Warri nel XVII Secolo, La Relazione inedita di Bonaventura da Firenze*, Università di Pisa, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Giuffrè Editore, 1972, 253.

<sup>13</sup> In HODKIN, Thomas, *Nigerian Perspectives, An historical Anthology*, London, Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup> AMARAL, Leonor L., *Os marfins luso-africanos do reino do Benim (séculos XVI e XVII). Estudo histórico-artístico e material*. Lisbon, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa. PhD Dissertation, 2022, p. 135.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800*, London, British Museum. 2000, p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> EZRA, Kate, *Royal Art of Benin. The Pearls Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, p. 210.

## 02

### AN OLOWO BRACELET, OWO/YORUBA

Ivory

Nigeria; probably 18th century

Dim.: 12.7×10.0×9.5 cm

F879

*Provenance: Peter Schnell collection, Zurich and Alpoim Calvão collection, Cascais (one of the most important officers of the Portuguese army during the colonial war, a great collector of colonial art)*

*Published: DARK, Philip, 'An Introduction to Benin Art and Technology', 1973, p. 89, no. 14*

*Similar bracelet in the Museum für Volkerkunde, Vienne*



Extremely rare 18th century ivory bracelet, originally made for the Olowo of the Kingdom of Owo, Yoruba People.

The bracelet, of strong visual impact, is conceived as a double ivory cylinder, composed of a thinner inner section, densely punctured in a pattern that outlines the carved decorative figures, and of a thicker outer section, equally pierced, but featuring a banded and mirrored decorative composition, alternating two rectangular banners with two smaller, oval ones. Each of these depicting two scenes that evolve from the centre outwards, from a pierced and corded central axis, from which hang some beads.

The rectangular banners are defined by two double renderings of remarkable iconic and symbolic complexity. In one section the Olowo ruler, central figure of great expressiveness, is depicted with long neck, flattened face, prominent pupils with heavy eyelids, and parallel split lips. He is wearing a conical hat and crossed bandoleer, or sashes, attributes adopted by the rulers of Owo and Benin. The king is assisted by two subordinates<sup>1</sup> depicted in profile. The mirrored image portrays another four profiled warriors, conveying the idea of a ruler surrounded by his army. On the opposite banner, two frontally depicted priests with profiled heads, hold a snake while

<sup>1</sup> This triad composition, highly formalised and symbolic, appears often, from the 16th century onwards, in numerous artworks from both the ancient Kingdom of Benin and the Kingdom of Owo, emphasising the powers of domination of these Kings (Oba of Benin and Olowo of Owo), reinforcing and exalting their position. This disposition is still evident in various ceremonies. Cf. <http://www.conceptvessel.net/iyare/>; this representation is common to the Oba's every day, highlighting the idea that a ruler's power depends of the strength of those he rules over. (Cf: BORTOLOTT, Alexander Ives—Department of Art History and Archeology, Columbia University).

flanking an *Opan-Ifa*, or *Ifa*<sup>2</sup>—a cult and divination object—whose frame is circled by mudfish.<sup>3</sup> Equally mirrored and horizontal, two profiled warriors appear next to a crocodile<sup>4</sup> that swallows a mudfish, both symbolic animals of Olokun, God of the aquatic realm.

Adhering to the same decorative scheme, on each of the oval banners appearing two mirrored frontal depictions of open armed warriors, holding snakes that form arches above their heads—symbols of royalty.

Just as other ivory Owo objects, this bracelet displays considerable aesthetic sophistication that is conferred by its various textures and patterns, as well as by its decorative density. The anthropomorphic depictions follow the characteristics of ivory Owo artworks: flattened faces, prominent pupils of heavy eyelids, conical hair styles, as well as pierced decoration and mirrored composition.<sup>5</sup> The technical virtuosity of the artist that produced it, is more than evidenced in this extraordinary masterpiece.

The adopted iconography extols and illustrates the particular leadership of the Owo ruler whose insignia derive from the traditions of the Oba or King of Benin Kingdom. This type of bracelets were destined for the exclusively use of these leaders and, when displayed in their arms, assumed intrinsic meanings of power and self-protection as the mirrored composition was intended to be



**FIG. 1**  
Double cylindrical bracelet with carved stylized figures. Ivory, Owo origin (H. 11.3; D. 9.5 cm), 18th century. Royal Treasure of Benin. Now at the Fur Volkerkunde Museum, Vienna, inv. No. 74.017

read by both the ruler wearing it and by the viewer. On the other hand, the whiteness of the ivory alludes to the sea foam and reflects the close connection between the King and Olokun, God of the Sea, the reason why bracelets produced in this material were exclusively destined to these monarchs.

Elephants were then abundant in the forests surrounding Owo and the city was known as a centre of sculpture and supplier of ivory to Benin. Produced from the 16th century onwards, the themes and decorative elements depicted in these objects of considerable erudition, were repeated well into the 20th century.

The bracelet herewith described is closely related to one other presented in Ezio Bassani's study, dated to the 16th cen-

<sup>2</sup> *Ifa* is the source of knowledge, holder of all the information on the past and forecasts on the future.

<sup>3</sup> Mudfish—symbol associated to *Olokun*, God of the sea who, in the Edo pantheon is the older son of the God creator *Osanobua*; *Olokun* resides in the aquatic realm, symbolising health and fertility. One of the most powerful images of divine royalty are the king's legs as mudfish—symbol of prosperity, peace and fertility—as these fish have the capacity to overcome any problem. When the Oba of Benin and the Olowo of Owo feature mudfish legs they become invested of semi divine symbols of power.

<sup>4</sup> Such as the mudfish, the crocodile is, in Benin art, a recurring reference to the *Oba* affiliated to the aquatic kingdom of *Olokun*.

<sup>5</sup> EZRA, Kate, *Royal Art of Benin—The Perls Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Cat.), 1992, p. 278.





tury and also originating from the Kingdom of Owo in Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, an analogous example is preserved in the British Museum, supposedly acquired in Benin, and of common aesthetic language to Owo pieces. Another bracelet, belonging to the Royal Treasure of Benin and dated to the same period, formerly in the W.D. Webster collection, is now deposited in Vienna's *Museum für Volkerkunde* (Inv. no. 74017), (fig. 1).

The Kingdom of Owo, formed mainly by Yoruba peoples, together with the ancient Kingdom of Benin (1440–1897), essentially formed by Edo ethnic groups, was located to the south of modern day Nigeria, and had its roots traced to the *Ife*<sup>7</sup> culture from the ancient city of Ile-Ife—the cradle of the Yoruba culture.

The historical ties between these two kingdoms and Ife contributed to their sense of identity, justifying the appropriation and sharing of certain political, religious and artistic characteristics.

William Fagg (1951)<sup>8</sup>, comparing ivory objects from Benin and from Owo, concludes that they share considerable similarities in their iconographic and technical details, albeit being possible to distinguish specific differentiating characteristics between one style and the other, particularly in the figures facial characteristics. This historian advocates that the *Igbesanmwan*—the guild of Benin ivory carvers—must have recruited many artisans from Owo to work in its workshops, hence explaining the close affinities between the two production centres. ✓ TP

<sup>6</sup> Cf. BASSANI, Ezio, and FAGG, William Buller, *África and the Renaissance—Art in Ivory*, 1988, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Spread worldwide through the African diaspora, this culture contributed significantly to Cuban, Brazilian and United States societies.

<sup>8</sup> FAGG, William, 'Tribal Sculpture and the Festival of Britain' in *Man* Vol. 51, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1951, pp. 73–76.

## 03

**A BENIN ARMLET DISPICTING A PORTUGUESE OFFICER**

Brass

Edo, Kingdom of Benin (present-day Nigeria); 17th–18th century

Dim.: 12.5 × 8.0 × 7.5 cm

F1151

*Provenance: Jacques Kerchache and Rui Quintela collections*

A rare and important cast brass armlet, most probably made in the city of Edo (now Benin City in Nigeria) in the 17th century, possibly as one of a pair intended for a high official or ruler of the Kingdom of Benin.

Cast by the lost-wax technique, the armlet features a pattern whose outstanding motif is the iconic depiction of a Portuguese figure, probably a 16th century officer or soldier, wearing doublet and jerkin of prominent buttons, short hoses and a round hat, his hands raised to the hips and what appears to be a sword in the right hand.

Often adopted for decorating this type of ceremonial objects, depictions of Portuguese figures were imbued with symbolic meaning since foreigners, arriving from the seas, were perceived as links to the sea God *Olokun* (symbolized by the colour white). As such they were interpreted as protective, almost magical and talismanic figures associated with the great 16th century warrior-king, the Oba Esigie (r. 1504–1547), who had Portuguese support in the war against the *ata*, or king, of Idah, a kingdom that he would conquer and incorporate into his own.<sup>1</sup>

Portrayed with aquiline noses and prominent almond-shaped eyes, as they invariably are in this context, the Portuguese figures alternate standing up and up-side-down, as if creating a pattern, on an openwork ground of double braids and thread-like spirals set near the feet and head of each figure. The armlet's edges, defined by running braids, are dotted at regular intervals by sequences of three loops from which bells would be suspended. The same decorative detail is also missing from the spiral's centres.

The figure's thread-like character, the braids and the spirals, relate to a manufacturing process that consists in modelling wax threads of even thickness, which are then incised with a stylus, creating the positive template to be moulded in plaster—the negative that becomes the mould from which the metal object will be cast.

As seen from other extant examples, additional manufacturing steps were limited to polishing of casting sprues and air vents, with all excesses remaining intact alongside the openwork motifs.

At court ceremonial occasions, and up to this day, alongside strands and rigid necklaces, headdresses and garments made entirely of a mesh woven with Mediterranean red coral (*Coralium*

<sup>1</sup> See PLANKENSTEINER, Barbara, (ed.), *Benin. Kings and Rituals. Court Arts from Nigeria*, Gent, Snoeck Publishers, 2007, p. 123, and EZRA, Kate, *Royal Art of Benin. The Perls Collection in The Metropolitan Museum* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, pp. 175–178.



*rubrum*) beads—known as *ivie ebo* or ‘European beads’, symbols of power, blood, danger and immense wealth introduced to Benin by Portuguese merchants<sup>2</sup>—, rich fabrics, brass hip ornaments and other regalia, the Oba, or king, as well as other Benin chieftains, still wear pairs of long cylindrical armbands on performing ritual ceremonial sword (*eben*) dances, so as to keep the beads from getting entangled while brandishing the sword.

Carved ivory armbands, produced for exclusive use by the king, except during politically weaker reigns, were matched by a cast or hammered brass pair, to be worn by the court elites for throwing the *eben* ceremonial sword during the annual December *Iga* festival. This annual festival celebrated the renewal of the Oba Ewuare (r. 1440–1473) magical powers or, according to other traditions, his marriage to Ewere.

These brass armbands, a copper and zinc alloy—mistakenly identified as bronze (an alloy of copper and tin), not unlike the

plaques which once adorned the palace of the Oba—, were commissioned to the *Igun Eronmwon* or bronze casters guild.

Some other extant lost-wax cast armbands survive in the British Museum collection, albeit of simpler geometric decorative motifs, such as two of banded openwork lattice decoration alternating with spiral friezes (inv. no. Af1920,1106.12 and Af1947,18.50), both similar to the present example in their braided rims set with suspension loops for bells. One other similarly decorated with bands of openwork lattice alternating with wide six-threaded braids (inv. no. Af1954,23.360), or yet a fourth of five complex design bands of three-threaded braids.

Combining the openwork lattice with Portuguese figures, although careless in their depiction, which is mostly iconic and abstract, mention should be made of an armband, albeit dated to the nineteenth-century, from the Perls collection, today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. no. 1991.17.150).<sup>3</sup> HMC

<sup>2</sup> See PLANKENSTEINER, Barbara, (ed.), *Benin. Kings and Rituals. Court Arts from Nigeria*, Gent, Snoeck Publishers, 2007, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> See EZRA, Kate, *Royal Art of Benin. The Perls Collection in The Metropolitan Museum* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, p. 183, cat. no. 76.

# Portugal and the Old Kingdom of Kongo

The diplomatic and commercial relations between Portugal and the Old Kingdom of Kongo were initiated in the late 15th century (1483), when the explorer Diogo Cão lands at the mouth of the River Congo. Soon after, Catholicism becomes a major link in the development and deepening of contacts between the two cultures. Kongo's conversion to Christianity however, differed substantially from other contemporary examples as, more than imposed or conquered, it was in fact encouraged by Kongolese rulers, which used their power and authority to impose this religion upon their people.

To assist in this conversion effort, the Catholic Church encouraged the production of imagery, adapting local creative potential to visual symbols of Christian imagery. This syncretism was facilitated by existing parallels between catholic and indigenous rites. Accordingly Christian concepts mutated into local theological meanings, either by the adoption of Kikongo words or integrated in old popular practices. Linguistic conciliation determined that a Christian object was a *nkisi*—a place inhabited by an ancestral spirit with the power to interfere in daily matters. Similarly, salt replaced holy water in baptism ceremonies, as a protector against sorcery.

Following from this new preaching, Christian imagery, rosaries and crucifixes took over the ancient amulets. Baptism became an important rite of passage, and so did marriages and burials. These various Catholic practices, intermingled with ancient world view cosmologies, made up the essence of this 'Kongolese Christianity', defined by a novel system of religious thought liaised to a new artistic expression and political organisation that facilitated Kongo's integration in the European universe of the period.

In time, cult icons took over *minkisi*, (the plural of *nkisi*). These various images were sold to the converted in various markets in the interior of the kingdom—called 'resgates' by the Portuguese—where the slave trade also thrived.

The cross, major symbolic icon in Portuguese expeditions, occupies a major role in Kongolese Christianity. Crucifixes were immediately accepted, not because Christ was understood as a 'Supreme Being', but because Kongolese rulers, the Manikongo, saw, in the approach to the Portuguese and to their religion, considerable potential for powerful political statements—some of them even integrating catholic symbolic imagery in their official vestments.

Such was the case of the *Nkangi Kiditu* crucifixes ('Christ the Protector' or 'The Tied Christ'), widely accepted by local rulers, which would become symbols of authority and legitimacy, being commissioned by the Manikongo themselves, and worn in various ceremonies, namely the enthronization, as symbolic attributes of their leadership.

In the 17th century Luso-Kongolese relations enter a period of serious crisis, eventually rupturing in 1655 following the defeat of Kongo at the Battle of Mbwila, the catalyst for the subsequent disintegration of the kingdom.

It is in this context that a new phenomenon, known as 'Anthonianism', will eventually emerge as a popular movement dedicated to Saint Anthony.

Although the devotion to this saint had started under the influence of Portuguese missionaries, it was intensely promoted in this period of severe social crisis, assuming aspects of messianic cult by the hand of Kimpa Vita, a priestess follower of the Marinda cult (*nganda marinda*) and simultaneously indoctrinated into Catholicism. Kimpa Vita alleged that she had been possessed by the spirit of Saint Anthony, receiving, through this reincarnation, a predestined force to face and solve the kingdom's problems. 'Anthonianism' ends eventually defeated by the king of Kongo's troops in 1706, under the influence of Capuchin friars, Kimpa Vita's being arrested and condemned to death by burning as a heretic.

Eventually, although the Catholic Church had initially supported the Kongolese processes of religious 'reinterpretation' in order to achieve its evangelical purposes, it will in the end, deem them sources of disturbance of the faith and of departure from God. ✍

## 04

### A TONY MALAU—SAINT ANTHONY OF CONGO

Ivory

Kingdom of Kongo; 18th century

Height: 7.8 cm

F1097

*Provenance: M.H.R. collection, Lisbon*

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Rare ivory miniature depicting Saint Anthony of Kongo—also referred to as ‘Anthony of Good Fortune’, ‘Toni Malau’, ‘Ntony Malau’ or ‘Dontoni Malau’ – a remarkable symbol of the Christian movement that emerged within the Kingdom of Kongo in the early part of the 18th century.

The small pendant figure is portrayed with clear local artistic traits; flattened skull that alludes to a tonsure, oval face and almond shaped eyes of prominent lids and unmarked orbits, wide nose and full lips suggesting mild mandibular prognathism. The Saint, wearing the characteristic Franciscan hooded habit, belted at the waist by a knotted cord, holds the Infant Jesus on his left arm and the cross in his right hand. Of identical physiognomical characteristics, the Child points to the cross with the right hand.

The assimilation of the figure of Saint Anthony of Lisbon by the various Congolese peoples’ is closely tied to Portuguese popular beliefs and to the devotion this Saint attracted. Saint Anthony fulfills a major role in the Order of the Friars Minor, to which the Capuchins were related, a most relevant congregation in the Christianization of the Old Kingdom of Kongo.

His cult, mainly assimilated by the indigenous groups that referred to it in Kongolese language as Toni Malau, gave rise to a new religious movement known as ‘Anthonianism’. Albeit initiated by Portuguese missionaries, this early cult would be intensified by the social crises that followed the Kongolese defeat at Mbwila, assuming messianic aspects by the hand of Kimpa Vita. Originating from the Kingdom capital, Mbanza Kongo, and baptized Beatriz, this





priestess had been trained as *nganda marinda*, a person said to be able to communicate with the supernatural world, while simultaneously being indoctrinated into Catholicism.

The visionary founder of this new movement, Beatriz claimed to have died and, on resuscitating, to have been possessed by Saint Anthony. Amongst other prophecies the Saint had commanded her to rebuild the greatness of the Old Kingdom, by then devastated by civil war and weak leadership. In this syncretic current, various catholic concepts were creatively adapted to permit a new reading of the Christian message by the local Bantu / Bakongo peoples. It is such an example the adulteration of the Holy Family biographies: Beatriz's mystic vision revealed that the Holy Family was in fact African, from Mbanza Kongo rather than from Palestinian Nazareth.

Without ever disputing Rome's authority, Beatriz disavowed local clergy for distancing themselves from the spiritual needs of the Kongolese people. She converted the 'Tony Malau' into the mystic axis of this wide popular movement that proposed redemption in life and the radical Africanization of Christ. Her followers took over Mbanza Kongo, the Kingdom's capital, dispatching envoys throughout the land and inviting local chieftains to adhere to their project of political rebuilding and reunification.

The 'legal' existence of 'Anthonianism' was brief. Considered a Messianic cult, Beatriz was charged with rebellion and heresy, trialed and condemned to death by fire in 1706, an outcome determined by the commitment of local dignitaries and the Italian Capuchin Friars Bernardo da Gallo e Lorenzo de Lucca. Following from this event Tony Malau would enter clandestinity.

The cult, as defined by its priestess, reaches syncretic processes that impose strict rituals of amalgamated cultural codes, symbolically represented by small sculptures used for its dissemination, and whose iconography can be better understood in light of a 'resignification' or 'Congolese Catholicism' phenomenon.

Of the various iconographies of Saint Anthony, it was the one with the Cross and the Child Jesus that inspired the Congolese Tony Malau. This depiction was solidly introduced in Portuguese art from the 16th century, particularly by Flemish influence, appearing here as *Nkisi* (a spirit inhabited object) and religious amulet, that protects against illness and other evils.

It was widely believed that these small images had the power of recovering lost and stolen objects, protecting ships and their passengers and crews from shipwrecking, as well as healing when in contact with body areas believed to shelter illness. More importantly, beyond these powers focused on the individual, 'Anthonianism' promoted the belief that its followers were the 'Chosen People'.

These miniature figures, often evidencing major wear and tear and polished surfaces resulting from intense rubbing, were also worn as powerful protective totems during pregnancy and childbirth.

Congolese figures of Saint Anthony in wood, brass or bronze survive at various Museum collections such as the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Inv. N.º 1955.9.23 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Inv. N.º 1 999.295.1. The rarest are undoubtedly the ivory made examples, carved in a high status and precious material, that were first mentioned in a list of 'ivory objects' sent in 1498 by the Kongo ruler, the 'Manikongo', to the Portuguese king D. João II. In addition to the early 18th century example here described, undoubtedly a treasure of 'Anthonianism', another two are known at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and at the Santo António Museum in Lisbon. ➤ TP

### A STAFF FINIAL—*MVWALA* DEPICTING A PORTUGUESE FIGURE

Ivory and red pigment

Kingdom of Kongo; 16th–17th century

Height: 13.5 cm

F1217

Provenance: Joshua Dimonstein collection and Fernando Moncada collection, Portugal

Published: *FELIX*, Marc Leo, 'White Gold Black Hands', Vol. 2, p. 156

Important late-16th–early-17th century Kingdom of Kongo staff or baton finial, depicting a high rank male figure, probably a chieftain, dressed in prestigious mid-16th century European attire. Skilfully carved in ivory and highlighted by light reddish patination, this small sculpture conveys a strong formality and expressive intensity.

The figure's face, of characteristic Kongolese features, is defined by its triangular shape and mask like appearance. Prominent striated eyebrows define a semicircle that extends to form a circumference, completed by exuberant eye bags, which enclose and enhance converging almond shaped eyes of exaggerated lead pupils. The 'heart shaped nostrils'<sup>1</sup> show some evidence of wear and tear, while the mouth, ajar and with prominent scabbard-top lips, reveals semi-closed but pronounced regular teeth, in a manner that exudes highly charged energy.

Stoutly build, the figure seats joint legged on a block, or wooden case, with its head resting on the raised right hand that simultaneously hides the ear, in a gesture of marked symbolic strength. The left arm, held close to the body, bends high over the shoulder. It wears 'coura', a type of leather made military waistcoat<sup>2</sup> fashionable in mid-16th century Europe. This type of attire is characterised by its frontal slashed openings, high collar, creased neck and tails that hide the top (*muslos*) of the tight trousers.<sup>3</sup> On the head a wide brim hat (*sombreiro*).

This small sculpture corresponds to the top section of a leadership staff or baton (*mvwala*), a power and dignity insignia belonging to a chieftain or ruler in the ancient Kingdom of Kongo.<sup>4</sup> Instrument for the perpetuating of memories passing from one generation to the next, it served as tool for communicating with



subjects and for mediating between the world of the living and the afterlife. Through the staff, the leader seeks inspiration from the ancestors, the revealing of solutions to problems and advice for important negotiations. When set into the ground the *mvwala*

<sup>1</sup> Musée Dapper, *Le Geste Kôngo* (cat.), Paris, Editions Dapper, 2002, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> We thank Hugo Crespo for the identification of the sleeveless 'coura ou colete' (from the Italian *coletto*), of high fitted collar, well-defined waist and tight fitting that was worn over a shirt or doublet and usually leather made; (...) See: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, 'Trajar as Aparências, Vestir para Ser: o Testemunho da Pragmática de 1609' in SOUSA, Gonçalo de Vasconcelos e, (coord.), *O Luxo na Região do Porto ao tempo de Filipe II de Portugal (1610)*, Oporto, Universidade Católica Editora, p. 101, note 36; ORENSE, Marta Sánchez, *Estudio del léxico de la industria textil y de la sastrería en la época renacentista*, Universidad de Salamanca, 2007, pp. 240, 242 e 338.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Op. cit.*, p. 102, note 46; Vd.: ORENSE, Marta Sánchez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 216–217 (calza); IDEM, *ibidem*, 'Particularidades del léxico de la moda renacentista: dificultades en su análisis', Cuadernos del Instituto Historia de la Lengua, 1, 2008, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> One of the Kingdom of Kongo's foundation myths states that the 9 staffs/batons that belonged to the 9 original clan chiefs were needed for assisting in government. The staff/baton was, as such, a power instrument and a crucial symbol of the chieftain in the communication between the living and the dead. [www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/cultur/tervuren/terb01de.html](http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmc/exhibitions/cultur/tervuren/terb01de.html)



symbolizes the world axis and expands the sense of authority and energy of the rulers<sup>5</sup> who, similarly to religious leaders<sup>6</sup>, had power over the living and over the ancestors.

Figurative finials such as the present one have been recorded in wood, iron or ivory, the latter<sup>7</sup> being the rarest and most desirable.

The reduced number of extant ivory examples is undoubtedly related to the fact that this material, of important symbolic meaning, was of exclusive use of religious, political, economic and social elites, and hence forbidden to the majority of Kongoleses.<sup>8</sup> Manufactured separately from the staffs, finials were later fitted to their top.

The symbolic value of this sculpture is linked to concepts of leadership authority, as ritual attribute charged with mystic beliefs, aspirations and moral purposes, amongst which the desire to assist, protect and heal.

The gestures, or body language, omnipresent in Kongoleses sculpture, are central to a representative system whose decoding reveals the allegoric sequence of each component. Chieftains were generally depicted seated (*sendama*), a sign of high social standing. The seat itself can assume the shape of a stool or a box (*Kinkulu*), such as the one present in this piece, a posture that forces the leader to bow to his kingdom and his power<sup>9</sup>, invoking ancestral protection, as if 'he sat on the past to build the future'.<sup>10</sup> For the Bakongo people<sup>11</sup>, death is exclusively physical, a mere transition between the living community and that of the dead.

In the ancient Kongo's culture the head is sacred as it rises towards the divine, the forehead representing the soul and the eyes farsightedness.<sup>12</sup> In this sculpture, the lead pupils that fully cover the eyes give it a large field of vision, allowing for a global perception of both the real and the spiritual world.

The unusual position of the figure's right arm, raised with the hand close to the ear, can possibly allude to the Kongoleses adage *mvumbi ofwa kya meso, ka fa fwa kya matu ko* (the person dies of vision but not of audition). It therefore constitutes a transmission vehicle for 'messages' to the ancestors<sup>13</sup> which, in turn, respond to the request through visions during sleep. Another adage, *kuto kumosi kuwidi matu ye matu makamba* (literally: 'a ewe heard, let the other ewes spread the information amongst themselves') confirms this concept, meaning: 'can the listener that is present be the mouthpiece for the absent'.<sup>14</sup> The left arm, flexed close to

<sup>5</sup> AUSTIN, Ramona, 'Haut de canne mwala' in Gustaaf Verswifer et al. *Trésors d'Afrique, Musée de Tervuren*, 1995, p. 292.

<sup>6</sup> Religious leaders were split in 3 categories: the Itomi, who communicated with the natural forces and enthroned the new chieftain with their carved staff; the Nganga who provided private services with the assistance of *minkisi*, magical objects inhabited by the spirits; and the Ndoki, wizards specialised in assisting their clients in harming the other. Cf.: SOUSA, Marina de Mello e, *Reis Negros do Brasil Escravista—História da Festa de Coroação do Rei Congo*, Belo Horizonte, Editora UFMJ, 2006, pp. 65 e 66.

<sup>7</sup> Ivory alludes to the physical power of the elephant, untameable animal that can even kill humans.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *White Gold, Black Hands—Ivory Sculptures in the Congo*, V. 2, 2011, p. 186.

<sup>9</sup> Musée Dapper, *Op. cit.*, p. 89. On this topic Cf.: FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>10</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Name of the Kongoleses in their Kikongo language, whose origin lies in the Bantu linguistic family.

<sup>12</sup> Musée Dapper, *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>13</sup> This adage points to the belief of the survival of the dead and the possibility of communicating with them. Cf.: Emanuel Kunzika, *Dicionário de Provérbios Kikongo*, Luanda, Editorial Nzila, 2008, p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> KUNZIKA, Emanuel, *Op. cit.*, p. 219; Afonso Teca, *Concepção e Representação Social da Morte no Grupo Étnico Kongo*, Doctoral Dissertation, Universidade Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, 2015, p. 210.



the body and bent over the shoulder, suggests another illusory gesture, although Marc Leo Félix suggests that it might depict a shot gun's stock or grip.<sup>15</sup>

The fact that the figure is attired in mid-16th century European fashion, is of paramount importance for its dating. In the Kingdom of Kongo, Portuguese costume was swiftly adopted as insignia of power. Marc Leo Félix, on analysing a vast inventory of extant sculptures<sup>16</sup>, which includes the piece herewith described, concludes that European fashion would not have taken more than 20 years to get to Kongo, from the date of its introduction in Europe, a fact that illustrates the local elites' taste for the latest European fashions.<sup>17</sup> According to this author, the precise dating of Kongoese sculpture can only be reached by the thorough study of History of Fashion manuals.

The Portuguese were responsible for this cultural syncretism. Their 1483 arrival to the Kingdom of Kongo was the starting point for a period of long and fruitful exchange between the two nations. Certainly conducive to such a success was, on the one side the African monarch's and his people's conversion to Christianity—

Catholicism becoming the country's official religion<sup>18</sup>, and on the other the fascination with the Portuguese monarchy, that led to the official adoption of Portuguese protocol including the use of the language, nobility titles, ceremonies and practices. The Lusitanian fatherland became a reference, being seen as a sister country, reason why the Portuguese Crown conferred it a privileged treatment. Up until the mid-17th century Kongoese power was sustained by Portuguese military aid, technologically more efficient, that granted the *Manicongo*—the King—superiority over his subordinates and neighbouring enemies while simultaneously ensuring the reinforcement of a centralised administration.<sup>19</sup>

In its depiction of a Kongoese ruler dressed in European attire fashionable in the mid-1500s, the iconography of this small sculpture illustrates clear concepts linked to the authority of its original owner, while simultaneously dating it to the later part of that century or the early part of the next. This important staff, or baton finial, published in Marc Félix's book<sup>20</sup>, embodies a glorious historic period of the Kingdom of Kongo in which the Portuguese actively partook. ✍ TP

<sup>15</sup> FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 150, figs. 813, 817.

<sup>16</sup> FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>17</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, fig. 841.

<sup>18</sup> According to Thornton: 'this Christianity was accepted as a syncretic cult, fully preserved with other cosmological Kongo cults'. Cf.: THORNTON, John, 'The development of an African church in the Kingdom of the Kongo, 1491–1750' in *Journal of African History*, 25, no. 2, Cambridge, Via Tropicália, 1984, pp. 147–167.

<sup>19</sup> SOUSA, Marina de Mello e, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 156, fig. 841; *The world of Tribal Arts*, Winter 2001 / Spring 2002, p. 29.

# Kuba Kingdom

The Kuba kingdom, established by the Bushoong, is situated in the western region of Kasai, between the Kasai and Sankuru rivers, within the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). Its roots can be traced back to a migration of the Mongo people from the Northwest, occurring approximately two hundred years prior. According to oral tradition, these groups claim descent from a legendary ancestor named Woot,<sup>1</sup> regarded as the primordial human—akin to Adam—who would have named the animals and nature.

The kingdom was founded around 1620 by King Shyaam, who united various cities and small chiefdoms, leading to the formation of the Bushong people. The unification of several ethnic groups resulted in a complex yet well-organized social structure, blending military prowess with agricultural production, trade, and taxation, headed by the king, who was considered a divine figure.<sup>2</sup>

Following its foundation, rich traditions were cultivated, both in terms of architecture and sculpture, and in terms of textiles and various decorative arts. Similar to other regions within the Congo basin, Kuba art is intertwined with two central themes: power and religion, with the representation of royal power being linked to four key factors: ‘strength (military authority), legitimacy (ritual sanctification), status (social hierarchy) and wealth (material differentiation)’.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, courtly art flourished in the Kuba kingdom, characterized by formal and stylistic features tied to the pursuit of power.<sup>4</sup> Each monarch acquired a commemorative *ndop* statue and new symbols of prestige (from 1650 onwards), such as masks or everyday objects, collecting works of art for the purpose of political gifting. The nobility, too, possessed symbols of distinction, leading to the creation of a diverse array of intricately ornamented pieces.

The purpose of the commemorative royal statues, stylized and idealized representations, was to legitimize the supreme chief, the *nyim*, who was chosen from among the Bushoong, establishing a connection to the ancestral forefathers.<sup>5</sup>

Within this society, intense competition prevailed amongst members of the government elite vying for positions of power and titles, which was reflected in the work of sculptors who crafted sumptuous works, serving as symbols of wealth and power, contributing to the definition of their owner’s social status.<sup>6</sup>

The sophisticatedly adorned cups or vessels designed for consuming palm wine held a reserved status to members of the aristocracy, individuals with political or religious authority, and the king—the latter often with a full-body—constituting valuable diplomatic offerings, although also used in funeral ceremonies. Their decoration and creativity have passed through the ages, due to their well-organized social structure, with a distinctive ethnic identity, profound religious beliefs, and remarkable artistic production. ✍️ LLA

<sup>1</sup> LOWES, Sara, et al, *The evolution of Culture and Institutions: Evidence from the Kuba Kingdom*, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Vessel: Head / Kuba peoples / The Metropolitan Museum of Art (metmuseum.org).

<sup>3</sup> BLIER, Suzanne, in FALGAYRETTES-LEVEAU, Christiane, *Arts d’Afrique*, Éditions Gallimard/ Musée Dapper, 2000, p. 289–290.

<sup>4</sup> VANSINA, J., *Art History in Africa, An Introduction to Method*, ROUTLEDGE, Taylor & Francis Group, 1984, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Constantin Petridis in FALGAYRETTES-LEVEAU, Christiane, *Arts d’Afrique*, Éditions Gallimard/ Musée Dapper, 2000, p. 293.

<sup>6</sup> BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art*, Skira, 2012, p. 229.

## 06

### A HIGH DIGNITARY KUBA PALM WINE CONTAINER

Wood, brown patina

Kuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo; 19th–20th century

Dim.: 12.7 × 10.0 × 9.5 cm

F1410

*Provenance: Private collection, France*



This remarkable vessel, which takes the form of an anthropomorphic head, (or cephalomorphic cup), carved from wood by artists of the Kuba kingdom (Democratic Republic of Congo) belongs to a group of palm wine cups intended for members of the aristocracy. Its pronounced stylization seamlessly blends with a naturalism of great formal and ornamental beauty, exuding a remarkable expressiveness. Palm wine, a beverage consumed during festivals, funerals, and various secular social events, held an important role in male ritual initiations.

Adorning the surface of this receptacle, featuring a top opening, are numerous incisions that embellish it, forming a variety of ornamental patterns. The hair and headdress take on the appearance of a basket, while the facial features exhibit a geometric precision, notably, the almond-shaped eyes, crowned by thick incised eyebrows arranged in rhythmic parallel and herringbone lines separated by four vertical parallel lines in the middle of the forehead. The triangular nose and double-pointed mouth convey strength and symmetry to the head, enhancing the serenity and regality of the face; the facial scarifications—identity marks for

the community—further reinforce its overall symmetry. On the reverse, a forearm-shaped wing extends from the neck to the nape of the neck, with a closed hand.

The geometric patterns visible on this cup share a connection to the kingdom's textile art, as do other sculptures and objects adorned with designs reminiscent of the luxurious velvety raffia fabrics, which were employed in royal and initiation ceremonies. The intertwined knots, known as *nnaam*, and the raised faceted diamond pattern present in the hair area, are prevalent in the decorative arts of this community, as is the zig-zag—a royal symbol—in architecture. Furthermore, the parallel lines in the centre of the forehead are indicators of the elevated social status of the figure portrayed.

Each pattern carries a name derived from the analogy between the design and various forms found in nature. The isolated geometric shapes, incised on the face and nape of the neck, or featured on the neck and handle in a zig-zag pattern, hold individual significance. According to Vansina, these isolated elements are signs, such as the double knot inscribed in a square, referred



to as *imbol*, which when used behind a mask, establishes a connection to the king.<sup>1</sup>

While some historians connect the closed hand motif—also found on drums—to emblems of the warrior society symbolizing a dead enemy and possibly associated with a war event in the late 19th century, others link it to rituals with no definitive evidence for either interpretation.<sup>2</sup> However, interestingly, in other sub-Saharan African kingdoms like Benin (in present-day Nigeria), the representation of the hand is closely tied to the Portuguese, associated with the metal ‘manilhas’ (bracelets)—brought by them to trade with the Edo peoples—having been introduced into ritual objects of royal art. Furthermore, the handle of the object evokes European ewers, replicating their shape seen in silverware or

Portuguese faience, which featured various forms, including animals and human figures.

Kuba artists are celebrated for their inventive approach to adorning practical items like cups and goblets, with a surge in sculptural specialization starting in the 1890s. Human-shaped pieces (head or entire body), stand out as the most prestigious objects, considered to be genuine sculptures, whose virtuosity is clearly visible in this piece. Typically, the heads represent titled officers, individuals who have attained their status through personal merit, since among the Kuba, titles are not hereditary.

Similar cups can be found in the British Museum in London, identified by the inventory number Af1949.46.399, and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, with the inventory number AN1979.206.108, both dating from the 19th–20th centuries. However, the São Roque cup distinguishes itself among these surviving examples through its refined aesthetics. The cup’s sophisticated shape and decoration serve—beyond its utilitarian purpose—as a visual reminder of its owner, undoubtedly a person of significance, standing as a symbol of wealth and prestige. *LLA*

<sup>1</sup> VANSINA, J., *Art History in Africa, An Introduction to Method*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1984, p. 117.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, pp. 54–55.

# Brazil



In the late 15th and 16th centuries, amidst the significant geographical explorations aimed at discovering new international trade routes, Portugal, having initiated a grand maritime expedition to the East in pursuit of the Indies and the South Seas, expanded its exploration of the mainland westward.

On April 22, 1522, the Portuguese armadas caught sight of Monte Pascoal - after all, it was Easter season, according to Christian hagiology to which Portugal was affiliated—marking that day as the commencement of a new political-administrative, cultural, religious, and social era. The extensive territory known as Terra de Vera Cruz would evolve into the State of Brazil, remaining under Portuguese colonial administration for three centuries.

It was only in the 19th century, with the relocation of the Portuguese court to Rio de Janeiro and the elevation to United Kingdom of Brazil and Portugal in 1815, followed by its subsequent independence on September 7, 1822, that Brazil actively participated as a sovereign nation in the international community of nations.

Despite their political separation, the two kingdoms continued to share a common history for an extended period. After all, the first Emperor of Brazil, D. Pedro I, was the male heir of his father, D. João VI, and himself, the future King of Portugal. His daughter, D. Maria da Glória, would later succeed him in Portugal, while his son, D. Pedro II, would succeed him in the Empire of Brazil.

Strong family, cultural, and commercial ties persisted to connect the two countries across the Atlantic. Interweavings that remain beyond the sorrows of History. Pages that are rewritten and that impart new meaning to themselves every day. ✍️

MARIA ADELINA AMORIM  
CHAM-NOVA FCT

Vítor Meireles, *First Mass in Brazil*,  
oil on canvas, 1860

## 07

## AN IMPERIAL PRINCESS D. JANUÁRIA DE BRAGA FOLDING FAN

Paper, silk, mother-of-pearl, gouache, gold and pearls

France; 1861 (?) or 1874 (?)

Signed Adolphe d'Hastrel (1804–1875)

Diam.: 54.0 cm

F1398

Provenance: Princess of Brazil, D. Januária de Bragança (1822–1901); Galerie Koller, Zurich; Walter Geyerhan collection, Zurich; Hana Jacobs Ramos collection, Brazil; private collection, Portugal



**FIG. 1**  
Portrait of D. Januária, Simplicio Rodrigues, 1830

A double-leaf pleated fan (*double-entente*) crafted from paper and silk, featuring a polychrome gouache painting with a landscape of Rio de Janeiro, overlooking the bay and Corcovado with a special focus on Morro and Igreja da Glória and, on the reverse the JL monogram and the Brazilian imperial crown from the Second Empire.

Frame with 18 sticks in filigreed mother-of-pearl with gold applications, with floral and plant motifs and a rivet topped with two pearls. The guards, also in mother-of-pearl, are finely decorated with flowers and pearls.

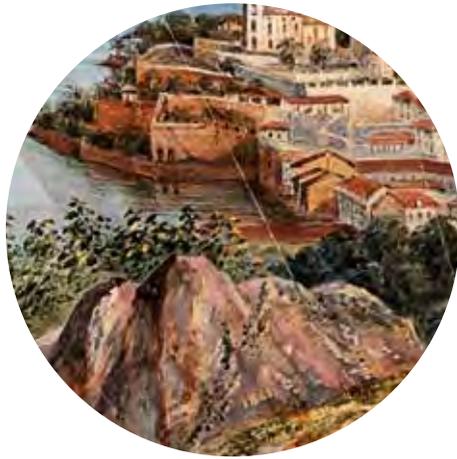
The painter's autograph signature, 'Ad. D'Hastrel', is visible on the right side, in the background. The signature marks the work of Étienne Adolphe de Hastrel de Rivedoux<sup>1</sup> (b. Neuwiller-lès-Saverne, Alsace, Oct. 4, 1805, d. Paris, July 1, 1874), a renowned French artist.

Adolphe d'Hastrel, painter, watercolorist, lithographer, and musician, was an artillery officer in the French navy, allowing him to embark on journeys to diverse locations in the Mediterranean, North Africa, and South America.

In the years 1840–41, he made a significant sojourn in Rio de Janeiro, where he frequented the imperial court's circle. He formed a close connection with the Prince of Joinville, D. Francisco de Orleães, husband of Princess D. Francisca de Bragança<sup>2</sup>, Imperial Highness of Brazil, Infanta of Portugal and Royal Princess of France,

<sup>1</sup> Étienne Adolphe de Hastrel de Rivedoux was born in France, Neuwiller-lès-Saverne on October 4th, 1805, and passed away in Nantes, on July 1st, 1874(5?). Regarding her artistic work: *Album Rochelais, composé des vues les plus remarquables de la ville de la Rochelle, dessinées, d'après nature, par Adolphe d'Hastrel; et lithographiées à deux teintes, par Hubert Clerget*, VIGY, A., La Rochelle, 1845; MAUNY, Raymond, 'Aquarelles et dessins de d'Hastrel relatifs au Sénégal (1839)', in *Notes Africaines*, 52, octobre 1951, p. 113–116; RICOU, Xavier, *Trésors de l'iconographie du Sénégal colonial*, Riveneuve, Marseille, 2007; *Album de la Plata o colección de las vistas y costumbres remarquables de esta parte de la América del Sur*, Gihaut Frères, Paris, 18(47?); CARLOZ, Louis-François-Marie, Ca., BAILEY, Joyce Waddell, *Handbook of Latin American Art*, vol. 1, Partie 2, ABC-Clio Information Services, 1984, p. 762; GROSS, Ramon Garcia-Pelayo y, *Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado 1972*, Ediciones Larousse España, Paris, 1972, p. 1250; GROSS, Ramon Garcia-Pelayo y, *Pequeño Larousse Ilustrado 1972*, Ediciones Larousse España, Paris, 1972, p. 1250; *Recuerdos musicales (cantos populares, valsas...), recogidos en Montevideo*, Paris, s. d..

<sup>2</sup> Carolina Joana Carlota Leopoldina Romana Xavier de Paula Micaela Rafaela Gabriela Gonzaga.



**FIG. 2**

D. Pedro II, future emperor and his sisters D. Januária and D. Francisca. Imperial Palace. In the background, D. João VI, his grandfather and D. Pedro I, his father. Watercolors by A. d'Hastrel, c. 1839.

**FIG. 3**

Arms of the Imperial House of Brazil and button from Pedro II's coat.

daughter of D. Pedro I and D. Leopoldina of Austria, emperors of Brazil, with whom he maintained contact in Paris, during their exile.

He drew landscapes of the city's most iconic places, highlighting the bay, the port, Corcovado, Morro, Igreja da Glória and, Santa Teresa, among others.

His views of various cities (Les Sables-d'Olonne and La Rochelle, Île Bourbon, the French colony of Senegal, Argentina and Mar del Plata, the Philippines, and Rio de Janeiro, for example), lithographs and watercolors are reproduced and referenced in Art History books and specialized dictionaries.

Among the albums published in France and England, around 1847 or 1848, he published the very rare, *Rio de Janeiro ou Souvenirs du Brésil, dessinés d'après nature et dédiés à S.A.R. Madame la princesse de Joinville par Adolph d'Hastrel, Paris*<sup>3</sup>, comprised of ten numbered lithographs and a fold-out panorama of the city, of great iconographic insight.

The scenery depicted on the fan does not align with any featured in the previously mentioned album, nor is any lithograph of it known. Hence, it is presumed to be an unpublished view of Rio de Janeiro in the 1840s, during Hastrel's residence in the city, and coinciding with the completion of the artwork dedicated to D. Januária de Bragança. It is, therefore, a unique image of considerable symbolic and iconographic significance.

On the fan guards, the artist also depicts a detail of a white dove with outstretched wings, a quiver holding arrows, a tambourine, and a musical score, all enveloped by olive branches and palms. It is a distinct symbol of Athena's ideals, the triumph of justice over warfare and the paramount virtue of peace. It seems to draw a connection to the Italian unification, alluding to the conquest and annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies from the Royal House of Bourbons. Princess Januária and D. Francisco sought exile in Paris, then.

<sup>3</sup> *Rio de Janeiro ou Souvenirs du Brésil, dessinés d'après nature et dédiés à S.A.R. Madame la princesse de Joinville par Adolph d'Hastrel, Officier d'Artillerie de Marine, Paris, Fon. Delarue (Anc. Mes. Aumont), Rue J.J. Rousseau, 10, London, Gambart, Junin & Co. Berners St. Oxford S. Imp. De Auguste Bry, Rue de Bat, 134 [n.d.].*



The date of these events is expressed on the fan, in the left quadrant—1861—, which underscores the importance of the artistic object beyond its role as a bearer of aesthetic elegance tied to costume and social decorum.

On the reverse, the silk leaf is adorned with botanical motifs, portraying olive leaves and olives, topped by the imperial crown of Brazil (Second Empire) and the monogram JL. This is the sign of belonging of D. Januária de Bragança<sup>4</sup>, the imperial princess of Brazil and heir to the throne, during the period of her brother Pedro II's minority between 1835 and 1845.

The letter J corresponds to Januária, and the letter L represents her husband, D. Luís Carlos de Bourbon-Two Sicilies, the Count of Áquila and Royal Prince of the Two Sicilies.

The 'Princess of Independence', as she was referred to, having been born in Rio de Janeiro in 1822, the year of Brazil's independence, was the daughter of D. Pedro I, the first emperor of Brazil and

his wife, D. Leopoldina da Austria, and sister to D. Maria da Glória, Queen of Portugal.

From October 30, 1835, to February 23, 1845, she held the title of imperial princess of Brazil and served as the presumptive heir to the throne until the birth of her Brother Pedro's son, the second emperor of Brazil. Due to complex political circumstances, the couple had to settle in Europe, between Naples, Paris and London, refraining from returning to Brazilian soil. The siblings and their consorts, would only reunite thirty years later during a visit to Queen Victoria of England.

Due to its formal, iconographic and symbolic characteristics, the fan stands as an object of immense historical and heritage significance. *MAA*

<sup>4</sup> Januária Maria Joana Carlota Leopoldina Cândida Francisca Xavier de Paula Micaela Gabriela Rafaela Gonzaga.

# India



*Atlas Miller, Map of the Indian Ocean, 1519*

In the Age of Discovery, Lisbon replaced Venice as the main centralising and diffusor axis for the various cultural and other expressions arriving from faraway lands, becoming a simmering pot of exchange for both exotic and luxurious goods and for ideas and influences.

On arrival to those newly discovered worlds, the large Portuguese ships loaded with 'European Cargo', will have an enormous, dynamic cause and effect impact that will define long lasting and complex artistic, social and cultural merges.

Indo-Portuguese art is one of such instances, resulting from the coexistence between two very different cultures, and from the cultural inter-influences promoted by the Portuguese Crown, not restricting nor prohibiting, but supporting cultural merging instead. Not, by any means, a Portuguese privilege, Indo-Portuguese art resulted from the collective effort and imagination of a wide range of artists, Indian, mixed race or Mughal, in a cultural symbiosis that contributed for the spreading of habits and behaviours, while simultaneously documenting and immortalising the various customs.

The origins of this composite art can be found, not only in the basic needs of newly settled courtiers and officials to build their own familiar environments, their *habitats*, but also in the propagation of the Christian faith. On arriving in Asia Jesuit priests immediately acknowledged the existence of highly developed and sophisticated cultures. Cleverly, to a certain extent they adapted to local realities, using this hybrid art to assist in the Christianisation of the various Indian peoples. Through visual art and artistic objects they could divulge and disperse the biblical themes and other elements of European Christian culture, essential for spreading Portuguese legends and traditions.

India had undoubtedly a major role to play in the general cultural and religious transmission for the whole of Asia. European Christian faith, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, all fused in that enormous melting pot, with a myriad of goods and raw materials from other faraway lands such as porcelain from China or African ivory from Mozambique.

One of the most successful examples of cultural fusion and religious syncretism are, most certainly, the images of the Child Jesus as Good Shepherd, that resulted from the integration of Portuguese models

with obvious local religious beliefs and imagery; but other examples can be referred, such as religious architecture, both in Portugal, where it assumed orientalist characteristics, and in India where, on the contrary, it is Europeanised; in this latter context the main adopted style is Mannerism, inherited from the Portuguese 'Manuelino', as exemplified by the church of Saint Francis or the Basilica of the Good Jesus, both in Goa.

Indo-Portuguese art, and more broadly Luso-Oriental art, behaves as a free, boundless artistic movement, that crosses all artistic domains, from painting to furniture, sculpture or jewellery, assuming a discreet but effective evangelical role that, in a pacified manner, entered the Asian space. Naturally in its purpose of disseminating the Christian faith it was by no means an innocent art, nor was it so in its purpose of shaping and integrating various highly sophisticated and developed Asian cultures.

Since its takeover in 1510 by the Portuguese, Goa became an important trading centre and a major thoroughfare between South and North India, linking it to Persia via Ormuz, and with China and the vast Southeast Asia via Malacca. Since the mid-sixteenth century, while controlling the major trade routes of luxury Asian goods, Goa established itself as an important artistic centre from the late sixteenth century onwards.

Goa, seat of the Portuguese State of India, played a prominent role in the production of small-scale sculptures and carved ivory objects, fully suitable for the missionary zeal, mainly by Jesuits and Franciscans, specializing in the carving of devotional following the cultic and aesthetic prescriptions of the Counter-Reformation, which aimed to promote religious images as the pillars for an ideological combat.

In fact, European sculpture and painting had a huge impact on Asian societies, playing a crucial role in the spread of the Christian faith. For a better acceptance by the native communities, the similarities between the Christian imagery and the local religion were made more evident. This stylistic duality becomes more obvious given that most of the carvings were made by local craftsmen, with Asian features perfectly integrated into pieces modelled after European prototypes. At first the Portuguese counted upon the expertise of local craftsmen, but within a short time period, merchants and craftsmen from various cultures, from Europe to the Far East, would also settle in Goa.

Not unlike other artistic manifestations, there was also an important cultural fusion between the various religions, ethnicities, customs and aesthetics, in an effort of communication between the different parties where shapes and typologies, usually of European origin, local depictions and decorations in *horror vacui* juxtaposed, which mixed ivory with diverse exotic materials, such as precious Asian woods.

Mughal emperor Akbar, an incontrovertible figure imbued with an avant-garde spirit, interested in ethnic, religious, cultural and artistic diversities, conquered Gujarat in 1573, where Muslim, Hindu and Christian cultures coexisted. Many Mughal objects in which Portuguese culture may be perceived were produced at its capital, where the imperial court settled. Interested in European religious art, Akbar promoted missions to Goa, a town where diplomats and craftsmen stayed for long periods, learning trades and acquiring European works of art. Akbar and Jahangir, his son and successor, went as far as to promote the carving of ivory images depicting Our Lady and Jesus Christ at the imperial ateliers. In these imperial workshops pieces of very high quality were executed, now unfortunately of extreme rarity.

Also in the Sultanates of the Deccan, a bastion of Persian culture in the central Indian plateau between the Mughal North and the South occupied by the Hindu empire of Vijayanagara, which would soon be integrated into the vast Mughal empire, particularly in the sophisticated courts of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golconda, there was an important production of ivory objects Islamic in style and, at the centres where Portuguese influence was more profound, also of some hybrid objects. ✍

## INDO-PORTUGUESE IVORIES

## 08

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

India; 17th century

Dim.: 73.0 × 55.0 × 10.0 cm

F1288

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal

Goan ivory carving depicting the Child Jesus as The Good Shepherd, remarkable for its finely detailed sculptural quality, that reveals the hand of a versed ivory artisan of evident aesthetic talent. The scene featured in this elaborate 17th century composition illustrates the Evangelical episode of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1–21), or the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in which Christ looks after and protects his flock—the believers—and brings the lost sheep—the sinner—into the pen.

From a meticulously carved terraced hill of floral and zoomorphic decorative elements, emerge elegant palm branches, fitted into orifices to the rear of the sculpture, representing the Tree of Life<sup>1</sup>.

On the mountain summit, the well-proportioned Good Shepherd is defined by round face, strands of short curly hair, hooked nose and fine lips, a set of distinctive traits present in 17th century Indo-Portuguese art. As customary to all Indian depictions of this iconography, the Child is dormant. From Buddha He adopts His attitude of ecstasy<sup>2</sup>, typified by His absent expression of expectant concentration, the closed eyes and hermetic smile, the fingers touching the temples and the right-hand resting face. He is attired in the traditional half-sleeved, knee-length tunic, carved

in a faceted diamond tip pattern simulating sheepskin, with plain edges and tied by a cord at the waist. The feet, of finely carved sandals, are crossed. The Good Shepherd carries His traditional attributes: the staff, the waist hanging gourd, and the two sheep, one resting on the left shoulder and the other on His lap, both of diamond tip carved pelts. Beneath the main figure the flock spreads out down the hill, joined by Birds of paradise, symbols of the Souls of the World.

Above the Child Jesus, the effigy of God Father in ‘pontifical majesty’, blessing with the right hand and holding the orb with the left, is crowned with the traditional 17th century papal tiara.

The Child follows the prototype found in Indo-Portuguese representations of the Good Shepherd, both in attire and in facial features. However, unlike the more common iconographic position of sitting atop a rock, sometimes with His foot on a skull, He rests cross-legged on a heart pierced by a pair of arrows<sup>3</sup>. This symbol emerged in the late Middle Ages, likely illustrating Saint Augustine’s expression, ‘You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You’ becoming an iconographic attribute of the saint<sup>4</sup>. Later, the Mystical Transverberation of Saint Teresa in 1560, and a Carmelite nun’s testimony claiming to have seen the Infant

<sup>1</sup> See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-oriental*, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983, pp. 83–93; OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim* (vol. 1), Oporto: Dissertação de Mestrado em História da Arte, FLUP, 1996, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, p. 86; OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, pp. 79–86.

<sup>4</sup> See CARDOSO, Isabel Maria Alçada, *Da humildade à caridade: o ‘coração’ em Santo Agostinho*, Revista Didaskalia (Vol. 47), Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2017, pp. 163–167.



Jesus seated on Saint Teresa's heart, certainly contributed to the spread of this motif.<sup>5</sup>

The canonical hill-shaped and terraced stand features three superimposed scenes.<sup>6</sup> On the first level the Fountain of Life—*Fons Vitae*—is bursting from a cup surmounted by two small overlapping fonts supported by a column. The spring symbolizes the 'Living Water Fountain' (John 4:10), later the 'Fountain of Life' of Biblical tradition, alluding to Christ as the Fountain of Life for the souls, the sheep.<sup>7</sup> Allegories to the Divine Word<sup>8</sup> are the two Birds of Paradise drinking from the water that gushes from the springs above. Flanking the fountain, Our Lady on the right and Saint Joseph on the left pray.

The second-tier features Saint Peter, impassive, kneeling in prayer. He is flanked by a column with a rooster perched atop, symbol of his three denials and repentance. This moment refers to the remorse felt by Peter after denying three times that he knew the Lord on the night of His arrest (Mark 14:63), reactions which had been foretold by Christ at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:34). This anguish is likewise felt by Peter when Jesus asks whether he loves Him, thus redeeming his denials (John 21:15–17), culminating in Christ entrusting him with leadership of His Church, telling him 'Feed my sheep' (John 21:17), a clear reference to the Good Shepherd.<sup>9</sup> From two feline mascarons, with a third above Peter's head, water flows in two arches into basins, giving drink to two pairs of facing birds.

The third level reveals a rocky cave, in which Mary Magdalene, with her long straight hair loose, is seated in an Indian posture with hands clasped over her left knee. To her left stands an alabaster jar, her attribute and symbol of marriage, and to her right a crucifix,

another of her insignia. These elements recall the episode in which the sinful woman anoints Christ's feet with the perfume from her alabaster vessel, washes His feet with her tears, and dries them with her hair (Luke 7:31–50).<sup>10</sup> Two large lions seated on either side flank Mary Magdalene.

The base of the pedestal is adorned with a sequence of winged cherub heads, finely sculpted with delicate features and fragments of drapery cascading from the neck across the chest. A small, beaded band frames the lower edge of the pedestal.

The sculpture's iconographical diversity and complexity suggests that its most likely sources of inspiration were European prototypes, widely circulated through prints and engravings, that were assimilated and interpreted by local Indian artisans working from Goa.<sup>11</sup>

For its evident syncretism, the Good Shepherd is considered the most iconic and original Christian representation, combining Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, that emerged from the Portuguese overseas expansion.<sup>12</sup> The artistic and iconographic symbioses of these sculptural compositions constitute a major material testimony to the religious context that produced them, which linked the Church's concerns regarding the assimilation of the local populations for an easier conversion, to a clear distancing from European prototypes, therefore contributing for the appreciation of these artworks as resulting from an efficient hybridization process. ➤ MSP

<sup>5</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, p. 84.

<sup>6</sup> See: OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, p. 86–88; TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, p. 88.

<sup>7</sup> See: MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España e Portugal*, Monterrey: G.M. Editores, 2010, pp. 283–287.

<sup>8</sup> See: DIAS, Pedro, *A arte do marfim, o mundo onde os portugueses chegaram*, Oporto: V.O.C. Antiguidades, Lda., 2004, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> See: MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, p. 287.

<sup>10</sup> See: OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, p. 109–110.

<sup>11</sup> See: MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, p. 287; OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, p. 79–81.

<sup>12</sup> See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, p. 86.



## 09

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

India, Goa; 17th century

Dim.: 46.0 × 12.5 × 10.0 cm

F1453

*Provenance: Ernesto Vilhena collection, Portugal ans Hubert Guerrand-Hermés, Paris**Reproduced in: Gauvin Bailey, Jean Michel Massing, and Nuno Vassallo e Silva, 'Marfins no Império Português', Scribe, 2013, p. 213*

Goan ivory sculpture representing Infant Jesus as the Good Shepherd, remarkable for its sculptural work, which demonstrates the skill of an experienced ivory carver with a refined aesthetic sense. Dating from the 17th century, this piece illustrates the Gospel episode of the Good Shepherd, the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in which Christ protects and guides His flock (the faithful), leading the lost sheep (the sinner) back to the fold.

The composition is set upon a terraced hill, with delicately worked levels adorned with vegetal and zoomorphic elements. At the top, the Child is seated upon a heart-shaped element pierced by two arrows. Harmoniously proportioned, He has short hair styled in locks, a rounded face, aquiline nose, and thin lips, features typical of 17th-century Indo-Portuguese art. As in other Indian representations of the Good Shepherd, the Child appears asleep. His ecstatic posture<sup>1</sup>, inspired by Buddha, conveys a state of absent yet expectant concentration, visible in the serene expression, closed eyes, faint smile, fingers resting on the temples, and head gently inclined on the right hand. He wears a traditional half-sleeved and knee-length shepherd's tunic, with a looped knot cord encircling his waist. The tunic is adorned with faceted diamond points simulating animal fleece and trimmed with smooth borders. Finely

carved sandals complete the figure. He also bears His customary attributes: a pouch and a waist hanging gourd, as well as two lambs, one on his left shoulder and another on His lap, both with their wool represented by diamond-point carving. Beneath His crossed feet, the flock spreads out down the hill among Birds of Paradise, symbolising the souls of the world.

The Child follows the prototype found in Indo-Portuguese representations of the Good Shepherd, both in attire and in facial features. However, unlike the more common iconographic position of sitting atop a rock, sometimes with His foot on a skull, He rests cross-legged on a heart pierced by a pair of arrows.<sup>2</sup> This symbol emerged in the late Middle Ages, likely illustrating Saint Augustine's expression, 'You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You' becoming an iconographic attribute of the saint.<sup>3</sup> Later, the Mystical Transverberation of Saint Teresa in 1560, and a Carmelite nun's testimony claiming to have seen the Infant Jesus seated on Saint Teresa's heart, certainly contributed to the spread of this motif.<sup>4</sup>

The pedestal, of canonical type in the form of a rocky outcrop, is developed in four superimposed registers.<sup>5</sup> On the first level the Fountain of Life (*Fons Vitae*) bursting from a cup surmounted by

<sup>1</sup> See TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-oriental*, p. 86; OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, pp. 79–86.

<sup>3</sup> See CARDOSO, Isabel Maria Alçada, *Da humildade à caridade: o 'coração' em Santo Agostinho*, Revista Didaskalia (Vol. 47), Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2017, pp. 163–167.

<sup>4</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 86–88; TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-oriental*, p. 88.



two small overlapping fonts supported by a column. The spring symbolizes the ‘Living Water Fountain’, later the ‘Fountain of Life’ of Biblical tradition, a clear allusion to Christ as the Source of Spiritual Life for His flock, the faithful souls.<sup>6</sup> From the top of the stem, two streams of water flow to nourish a pair of Birds of Paradise, an allegory to the Divine Word.<sup>7</sup>

Flanking the fountain, the Virgin Mary on the right and Saint Joseph on the left, the former with her hands joined and the second with crossed arms, are depicted in prayer.

Above the Fountain of Life rises the Allegory of the Pelican, wounding its own breast to feed its three chicks, symbolising Christ’s Sacrifice and the Eucharist, representing the Body and Blood of Christ.

On the second level, the grotto lined with palms features Saint John the Baptist giving water to a sheep. The saint, seated, with dishevelled hair and barefoot, wears an animal-skin tunic fastened with a leather belt. On either side, two fountains spout water into basins refreshing two pairs of Birds of Paradise.

The third level, housing the Nativity scene, reveals a grotto lined with clouds, topped by three angel heads. The depiction follows the 15th-century model disseminated by Franciscan devotion: the Infant Jesus naked and lying on straw, adored by the Virgin Mary, to the right, and Saint Joseph, to the left, in prayer surrounded by two animals. Both are dressed according to late 15th/16th-century models—Mary with a tunic and head veil, Joseph in tunic, mantle, and hat (symbolising Mary’s virginity) draped over his back. On either side of the Child are two angels, and further away, two shepherds bearing offerings, symbolise the spread of the Good News.<sup>8</sup>

On each side of the cave are Mary Magdalene and Saint Joseph. Mary Magdalene, on the right, with long loose hair, wears a long tunic. Seated, holding her right knee, a perfume jar lies to her left, indicating her repentance, and a crucifix to her right, symbolises her love for the Crucified Christ and devotion to His Passion.<sup>9</sup> Saint Joseph is depicted according to his usual physical prototype: bald, round skull with a curl on his forehead. Impassive in expression, he is seated barefoot in prayer.

The base of the pedestal is adorned with a sequence of winged cherub heads, finely sculpted with delicate features, smooth

curls, and fragments of drapery cascading from the neck across the chest. A small, beaded band frames the lower edge of the pedestal.

The removable branches representing the Tree of Life, which would have emerged from visible holes on the lower sides and back of the pedestal, are absent.

The sculpture’s iconographical diversity and complexity suggests that its most likely sources of inspiration were European prototypes, widely circulated through prints and engravings, which were assimilated and interpreted by local Indian artisans.<sup>10</sup>

For its evident syncretism, the Good Shepherd is considered the most iconic and original Christian representation that emerged from the Portuguese overseas expansion, combining Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism.<sup>11</sup> The artistic and iconographic symbioses of these sculptural compositions constitute a major material testimony to the religious context that produced them, which linked the Church’s concerns regarding the assimilation of the local populations for an easier conversion, to a clear distancing from European prototypes, therefore contributing for the appreciation of these artworks as resulting from an efficient hybridization process. ➤ MSP

<sup>6</sup> See MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España e Portugal*, Monterrey: G.M. Editores, 2010, pp. 283–287.

<sup>7</sup> See DIAS, Pedro, *A arte do marfim, o mundo onde os portugueses chegaram*, Oporto: V.O.C. Antiguidades, Lda., 2004, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>9</sup> See OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, pp. 109–110.

<sup>10</sup> See MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España y Portugal*, p. 287; OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 79–81.

<sup>11</sup> See TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-oriental*, p. 86.



## 10

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL SLAYING THE DRAGON

Carved ivory with traces of polychromy

India, Goa; 17th century

Dim.: 31.5 × 21.5 × 5.5 cm

F1139

Provenance: Private collection, Madeira Islands

Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtains Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux France, 2019 (cat. no. 14)

A rare and important sculpted group, made in Goa in the 17th century, finely carved in ivory and with traces of polychromy, depicting the *Archangel Michael slaying the Dragon*, an iconography of great rarity in the devotional Indo-Portuguese ivory carving production and of which no other example is known to us.

In Hebrew, the name Michael means 'one who is like God', traditionally interpreted in Catholic literature as the question 'Who [is] like God?' (from the Latin, *Qui ut Deus?*), a rhetorical question that reveals itself as negative given that no one is like God, and therefore Michael is interpreted as a symbol of humility before God and, thus, the intermediary par excellence between the kingdom of men and the divine realm. The iconography that concerns us here refers to the biblical book of *Revelation* (12:7–9), in which Michael emerges as the general of the armies of God against the forces of Satan and his angels, defeating him in this celestial war. It is this victory against the forces of evil and in particular against the figure of Satan (dragon) that we find depicted in this sculpted group in ivory, a very useful and urgent iconographic for the missionary work carried out in Portuguese Asia during the so-called Age of Discovery, since the missionaries fought daily against the local evil forces of paganism.

An unusually large group, most likely produced for a private oratory of some nobleman settled in Asia or a rich merchant, in this *Archangel Michael slaying the Dragon* we see the figure of the archangel standing (lacking his original wings, which would be joined in the back), trampling the dragon's abdomen with his feet as he strikes a spear that pierces the dragon's throat with his right hand, holding a staff in his left hand. Archangel Michael, dressed in a mixture of courtly attire, albeit military in appearance—with breast and backplate, articulated hip defenses and arm defenses, highlighted by polychrome decoration highlighted with gold—with reminiscences of Ancient Roman military attire, such as the *cingulum militare* with its *baltea* or hanging straps, and leg protections,

also highlighted with pigment and gold over the carved surface of the ivory.<sup>1</sup> The archangel, albeit wearing, as depicted in carving, a gown (*roupeta*) over the doublet, and a mantle on top fastened by a clasp over his chest, has on his head an elm, a helmet without a visor widely used by the Portuguese military stationed in India.

We do not know what exact visual sources the ivory carvers might have used for the production of this group, although it is clear that some kind of model, probably engraved, was provided by the client. Similar iconography, which may even have served as a model, may be found in an engraving by Hieronymus Wierix, whose work, especially devotional prints made in partnership with his brother and following the resolutions taken at the Council of Trent, was widespread in Portuguese Asia by Jesuit missionaries. From the first years of the seventeenth century and bearing the title *Quis sicut Deus?*, the engraving depicts St. Michael with open wings wearing a helmet with plumes, triumphing over the dragon, trampling his belly with his feet and hurling a spear through the dragon's mouth, a print of which an example may be found in the British Museum, London, inv. no. 1859,0709.3148.

Curiously, our ivory dragon is depicted not in the form of a reptile as we would somewhat expect—without wings or claws, but with human appearance and human hands and feet—but as a naked human-like figure, of which only the head and the serpentine tail stand out. The open mouth, revealing the dragon's powerful teeth and curled goat-like horns betray the demonic nature of the depiction and its likely dependence on an autochthonous Indian model. In fact, the depiction derives from that of *divs* or *dēws* (Persian *div*), demons which are found in Persian literature and have large teeth, black lips, blue eyes, claws in their hands and gigantic bodies covered with fur, and are usually mistaken with the *ghūl* or ogres, associated not only with demons, but also with ogres, giants, and even Satan, which may explain our depiction in ivory.<sup>2</sup> Demons, similar to ours, are depicted in contemporary examples

<sup>1</sup> On Portuguese courtly attire of this period, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Trajar as aparências, vestir para ser: o testemunho da Pragmática de 1609*, in SOUSA, Gonçalo de Vasconcelos e (ed.), *O Luxo na Região do Porto ao Tempo de Filipe II de Portugal (1610)*, Oporto, Universidade Católica Editora, 2012, pp. 93–148.

<sup>2</sup> See: OMIDSALAR, Mahmoud, 'Div', in YARSHATER, Ehsan (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 7.4, London–Boston, Routledge–Kegan Paul, 1989, pp. 428–431.



of the Rāmāyaṇa—an ancient Indian epic poem that tells the story of Rama, whose wife had been kidnapped by the king of demons, Ravana—produced in the Mughal period under Iranian influence in both composition and in the depiction of demons.

Alongside the local way of depicting the dragon, clearly Hindu in character, mention should be made of the fineness of the depiction of the hair, reminiscent of the production of devotional ivory carvings in Ceylon and which constituted the starting point of the later Goan production, from the mid seventeenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup>

Stemming from an ivory carving tradition which was promptly exploited by the Portuguese, whether by missionaries

keen on commissioning the images they so desperately required for the indoctrination of new converts, or even by courtly officials, the production of Catholic images in Ceylon achieved huge fame and prestige, having been the starting point and dissemination centre for an industry that, from the island's loss to the Dutch newcomers in 1658, and which probably moved to Goa, thus explaining the Ceylonese reminiscences of our rare and very important Goan carving of the *Archangel Michael slaying the Dragon*. From nearby producing centres, notably from the Philippines, several examples of this iconography are known, some of them very large in size and all of them produced in Manila.<sup>4</sup> HMC

<sup>3</sup> On these two different productions, see: FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1982; SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e, *Engenho e Primor: a Arte do Marfim no Ceilão. Ingenuity and Excellence: Ivory Art in Ceylon*, in SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e, (ed.), *Marfins no Império Português. Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Lisbon, Scribe, 2013, pp. 87–141; and SOUSA, Maria da Conceição Borges de, *Ivory catechisms: Christian sculpture from Goa and Sri Lanka*, in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 104–111.

<sup>4</sup> See: MARCOS, Margarita Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España y Portugal*, Ciudad de México, Espejo de Obsidiana, 2010, pp. 110–125, cat. nos. 44–48.

## 11

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GOAN SAINT GERACINA

Silver

India, Goa; late 16th–early 17th century

Dim.: 45.5 × 15.5 × 16.0 cm; Weight: 1753.0 g

B246

Provenance: M.H.R. collection, Portugal

Exhibited: 'Jewels from the Indian Run', Museu do Oriente, Lisbon 2014 (cat. no. 123)



FIG. 1

Silver mask representing Shiva from the LACMA–Los Angeles County Museum of Art (acc. AC1995.16.1)

Of Goan origin, and probably dating to the sixteenth century, this is a very rare sculpture in silver of fine repoussé and chased decoration which would have been affixed to a wooden core, with the holes on the base still surviving.

In full figure, this martyr saint—who undoubtedly was holding in her left hand her identifying attribute, the cast and chased palm of martyrdom, now unfortunately lost—is depicted as a damsel and courtesan, wearing a full length Flemish gown (in figured damask with a foliage or rinceaux pattern), with a square neckline, a silk veiling partlet, a cherubim, belt and a large mantle that, covering her shoulders, envelops her similarly to a *pano-paló*, the piece of cloth that Christian Goans borrowed from the dress style of Hindu women.

With a severe appearance of a tough demeanour, the long hair stands out, spiralling as it falls over the shoulders (similar to the long hairs in the Goan and Ceylonese ivory devotional sculptures), with prominent ears placed artificially. Her hands are delicately cast, probably from wax, and are set inside the sleeve openings, where even the buttonholes were depicted.

The chisel work is minute and notable, reflecting an unusual decorative repertoire of great erudition, rare in Goan pieces but nevertheless comparable with early works known and still surviving in Goa.

Such is the case with the box (*ciborium*) with a rare octagonal shape from the Goa Cathedral and probably contemporary to this saint considering its fine decoration *ao romano*, with candelabrae of the purest Renaissance style derived from European engravings.

Microscopic examination enable us to posit, in what regards the chiselling, for a direct connection with the Goan monst

presented above, given that both feature a discontinuous movement of the chisel, in which the clearness of the line is sacrificed in favour of the overall expressiveness and always advancing tentatively with the punch, as is particularly visible in the hairs, with such a procedure probably in effect at a workshop lacking in iron chisels of a greater range of shapes.

It should also be noted that the damask background, in contrast to the flat surface of the foliage (*rinceaux*) motives, was fully punched in *fond criblé*, with a circular iron punch even if in a somewhat random fashion.

The Goan origin of this remarkable sculpture is indisputable, whether given the erudition of the chasing or the type of sheet silver used, with its lack of thickness and featuring, in particular on the back less exposed to the believer, the usual ingenious use of the material available, with overlying and soldered joints, but above all for the type of figuration.

The almond-shaped eyes, the very prominent eyebrows, the fine nose, the small mouth and the ears almost soldered-like (in fact, in repoussé and chased), are similar to the icon, the Hindu idol (*murti*, or *muhurti* in Konkani, 'incarnation' or 'manifestation' of the divine) made in the round featuring articulated hands and arms, of Devaki Krishna, the mother of Krishna with the boy (Balakrishna) in her left arm, which remains today the attraction of worshippers at her Temple in Mashel, or Marcela, in *taluka* Mormugao, in Goa.

This is a processional idol (*utsava murti*) made from *panchaloha*, a sacred alloy composed of five metals (gold, silver, copper, iron and lead) normally used in the production of this type of secondary images used during religious festivals and profusely adorned with





Microscopic examination

rich textiles and jewels given by devotees. The main idol (*mula murti*, or *mula vigraha*), from black granite, seems to have been saved in the sixteenth century by fleeing Hindus, when the original temple in the island of Chorão (Chodam, former Chudamani) was taken by the Portuguese, and transported by canoe to Bicholim, then beyond the territory under Portuguese rule in what has already been dubbed the flight of the deities. Similarly, the anatomical features and style of our saint may easily be compared with those of the silver mask depicting Shiva in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (acc. AC1995.16.1), an eighteenth-century example of the Hindu sculptural tradition of the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka in Southwest India.

The clear stylistic parallels that may thus be established with the idol of Devaki Krishna of Mashel or with the *Bhuta* masks from these coastal regions of the Deccan, demonstrate the production of this martyr saint by Hindu artists versed in the arts and technology for the production of idols and in their treatises (*shilpa shastras*), handed down from generation to generation.

In reality, the production of masks representing Hindu deities is one of the most significant sculptural traditions of the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, within which the territory of Goa is geographically located, wedged between the two on the Konkan coast.

In all likelihood, given the quality of the silverwork, its ornamental erudition and size—in keeping with a martyred saint whose worship was certainly held in great importance in the city of Goa, this precious sculpture depicts Saint Geracina, one of the handmaidens to Saint Ursula (martyr and princess), known as

the Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne. In reality, on 14 October 1548, appearing out of Goa Cathedral was the head of the martyred saint—arriving from Rome after its gift by the Superior General Ignatius of Loyola—taken in solemn procession in the direction of the Colégio of São Paulo, the Jesuit main residence in the Portuguese State of India, as the king is told by the Bishop of Goa, Juan Albuquerque (1479–1553) in a letter dated 5 November 1548. Having travelled in the chest of the Jesuit and future rector in Goa, António Gomes (1519–1554) from Lisbon on board the carrack Galega, on a voyage deemed not to have ended in shipwreck through the intercession of the saint with the relic held up in procession as the carrack passed a reef off the coast of Mozambique. Years later, António de Noronha, viceroy from 1550 to 1554, ‘had the silver monstrance made, in which the venerable head is preserved today’ (*mandou lavrar a charola, ou custodia de prata, em que hoje se guarda a veneravel cabeça*). The reliquary of Saint Geracina, of Goan manufacture, formerly in the Goa Cathedral and later in the Colégio de São Paulo-o-Novo, known to us only by photograph, with its base decorated with an acanthus frieze, cylindrical body and with its dome-shaped cover, has ‘depicted in high-relief, Saint Ursula, crowned, with a flag on her hand, flanked by her female companions and, on the background, the carracks in which they travelled.

Curiously, Saint Ursula ladies-in-waiting appear dressed precisely according to the courtly fashions of the sixteenth century, with full gowns, jerkins, kirtles and long cartridge-pleated ruffs, which indicate that this reliquary must be later than 1580 and not the primitive one donated by António de Noronha. This represented the beginnings to the worship of this saint that would certainly



have been advanced by the founding in 1552 of the Brotherhood of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, perhaps only eclipsed not only by the antagonism with which António Gomes received Francis Xavier on his return to Goa in 1549, but also by the later presence of the incorrupt body of now Saint Francis Xavier, beatified in 1619 and canonised in 1622, and then transferred from the *Colégio de São Paulo* to the Church of Bom Jesus in 1624 for public veneration.

Whatever the case, in accordance with the chronology of its decorative features, in conjunction with the clothing worn by the saint, a Flemish gown with a square neckline following in the fashion of a 16th century court lady, we may be certain that this very rare silver image precedes by many dozens of years the well-known, monumental sculpture, also in silver with its wooden core, depicting the 'Apostle of the Indies', dated to 1679 and in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa.

Our sculpture thus belongs to the first religious silver pieces produced in a Jesuit context of which none was known until the present. The one depicting Saint Francis Xavier, similar to the martyred saint, rather than comparable with Goan ivory sculpture (with which the parallels are indeed very limited), can only be analysed in light of the local production of Hindu idols. Only thus may we explain not only all of the piece's volumetric form, but also the autonomous and articulated positioning of the arms and hands, as well as the type of face features (mask), or the typical ears of the Hindu *murti* of which various large examples are known and still worshipped in the temples of Goa. Among them stands the idol of Naguesh (or *Nagesh*), a manifestation of Shiva, in his temple in the village of Bandivade (or *Bandode*) in taluka Pondá, Goa. *HMC*

**12****AN INDO-PORTUGUESE DECCANESE WRITING BOX**

Ivory

Deccan Sultanates, Maharashtra; 17th–18th century

Dim.: 5.7 × 24.8 × 10.5 cm

F920

*Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon*

Ivory parallelepiped writing box of sliding cover, raised on four bracket feet, featuring four delicately carved elevations of elegant lobate cartouches interspersed with flowers—chrysanthemums, carnations and lotus. The lid decorative composition is defined by a sequence of Persian style niches.

Within the cartouches female and male cross-legged figures seated on the ground and holding small birds, flowers and wine cup, in a language of courtly erudition that illustrates the palatial pleasures favoured by the Deccan courts in central India.

Identical courtly imagery was also adopted for the sliding cover decoration, the female figures portrayed in saris, in the Hindustani fashion, and the male in turbans. This delicately carved ground is framed by double geometric border, ending in a spiral entwined floral frieze in the Persian taste. On the inner lid, hidden from preying eyes, a curious depiction of Shiva, the ‘Destroyer’ god in the Hindu triad, portrayed as a sculptural idol, or murti, on a stepped stand as is common in related devotional imagery.

Most certainly a courtly object related to the act of writing, this box hides in its interior a religious figure whose devotion

would be hampered in an essentially Islamic court, and one that evidences the cultural, religious and aesthetic synthesis between the Islamic Persian and the Southern Indian Hindu traditions. This symbiotic relationship illustrates a characteristic of both the Northern India Moghul culture and the Deccan Islamic courts in present day State of Maharashtra. *— HMC*



## MOTHER-OF-PEARL AND TORTOISESHELL

The discovery, in 1498, of the maritime route to India, and the consequent conquest by the Portuguese of several long-established trading centres in the Indian Ocean, altered the political landscape and much of the Muslim dominion of these places. Almost simultaneously, two new powers would establish in the region: the Safavid Empire in Iran (1522–1722) and the Mughal Empire (1526–1858), in the north of India, new empires which join the already established Ottoman Empire. During this period, there were major changes in the political and economic organization of these various territories, with the Portuguese occupying a prominent position, establishing themselves in important strategic points and dominating a vast commercial network that covered all the Indian Ocean, a vast network called ‘Portuguese State of India’.

The province of Gujarat (on the west coast of India), namely the areas of Cambay, Surate and mainly its capital, Ahmedabad, has long been known for the manufacture of objects and furniture made from mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell, precious objects of rare beauty.

There are numerous historical sources which associate the use of these materials to the region, while the oldest record is that of the chronicle of Gaspar Correia (c. 1502), where it is mentioned that the Sultan of Malindi gifted Vasco da Gama with a wonderful bed from Cambay, made of gold and mother-of-pearl.

This territory was coveted by Portuguese traders since the early sixteenth century. The Portuguese State of India resulted essentially from the control of a network of ports of strategic geographical location. Very soon, the Portuguese tried to conquer the city of Diu, one of the largest trading posts of this sultanate, considered at the time as having an excellent strategic position. After several attempts at conquest, this city was offered to the Portuguese in 1535 as a reward for the military aid they had given to the sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat against the Great Mughal emperor in Delhi, thus promoting exchanges between the Portuguese and the sultans in power.

The objects of mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell quickly fascinated westerner clients and reached the Europe where, beginning with the Portuguese royal collections, quickly spread to other European courts.

Linschoten (1583–1588) recounts the production of a series of pieces inlaid or entirely covered with mother-of-pearl, being sold throughout the Indian territory—especially in the Goa and Cochin regions—and subsequently brought to Europe by the Portuguese where they would enrich royal collections and be exhibited in *Kunstammer*, famous ‘chambers of wonders’. In the Portuguese inventories of the sixteenth century there is also a significant quantity of mother-of-pearl objects recorded, originating in Gujarat and brought to Portugal.

Although production destined for the European market led to a sharp increase in the manufacture of these objects, their use is also attested before they were exported into Europe, both in the Arabian Sea region and in particular on the East African coast (for example, the gift offered by the sultan of Malindi), an also in Ottoman Turkey and the Middle East. The mixed influence of these different cultures is reflected in the strong Islamic characteristics of certain examples.

These luxurious goods were also intended for the Mughal court and other Indian patrons. Abu’l Fazl (c. 1595), an important Indo-Persian chronicler, mentions the existence of this production in Ahmedabad. The style and its decoration are similar to the mother-of-pearl objects inlaid on black mastic, which were produced for the European market.

The mother-of-pearl tesserae used for the mosaic-style decoration is made from the shell of the turban sea snails or *Turbo marmoratus* and according to the historian Hugo Crespo also from the shell of pearl oysters, probably *Pinctada radiata* and *Pinctada maxima*, which was found in abundance in the Persian Gulf and alongside the coasts of Gujarat due to pearl fishing.

We can group the Gujarati mother-of-pearl objects into three distinct groups: the first consists of objects whose structure is entirely made of mother-of-pearl or, in some cases, of wood covered with mother-of-pearl tesserae; the second, less common, consists of wooden objects covered with black mastic or bitumen—the so-called Gujarati lacquer—with small mother-of-pearl tesserae forming geometric and



vegetal patterns, and, rarely figurative scenes. The third group, highly original and very rare, consists of objects entirely made from mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell, materials deemed extremely exotic and of extraordinary beauty, and whose combination in one piece makes them even more luxurious, precious and highly coveted.

However, the origin, the source of inspiration for the shapes, materials and decoration of most of the Gujarati objects remains difficult to identify.

The examples covered in mastic are probably modelled after objects made in the Far East, in China and Korea. Indeed, in China, during the Liao (918–1125) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties, small caskets matching the Gujarat were made. There are also objects made in Korea from the Goryeo Period (918–1392), of which the decorative elements and patterns are very similar to those seen of the Indian pieces. These techniques would have been brought across neighbouring countries to India and adapted to local forms and tastes.

At an early stage, the typologies were strongly influenced by the Islamic world, with emphasis on the Ottomans which dominated most of the trade in the coastal regions of the Arabian Sea. Subsequently, as the Portuguese began to control the Indian trade, Western forms were introduced, which resulted in objects and furniture for export increasingly made according to European taste.

Tortoiseshell, on the other hand, has its origin in the transformation of the scutes of two types of marine animals: the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) which since time immemorial is mainly used for inlays, and the hawksbill sea turtle or *Eretmochelys imbricata*, which allows for autografting, the perfect fusion by means of heat of the various scutes from the carapace and the plastron of this animal. The cooled material allows for the structural stability of the objects.

The production centred mainly in Gujarat, where pieces of elaborate manufacturing technique were produced. These objects would then be taken in Goa, where they were enriched with elaborate silver mounts, similar in their decoration to Islamic-Persian motifs that characterize Mughal art. Around 1575, the Mughal emperor Akbar sent an embassy to Goa with a commercial and artistic mission which remained there for a year and focused on learning how to work in Portuguese-managed workshops, while at the same time exerting influence on Goan productions. Resulting from the need for communication between both parties, miscegenation of cultures occurred, which constituted the aesthetic and creative essence responsible for the beauty and balance of these precious objects.

The tortoiseshell caskets fit into the sumptuous productions exported from India to the European courts and to high Church dignitaries, with Lisbon being the turntable of this luxury market. Highly refined objects, these caskets were initially intended to store jewellery and valuables in civilian and religious homes alike. Later in their common, shared object history they were used as a ciborium, to collect relics of saints and to transport the Holy Sacrament in the procession of Good Friday according to ancient liturgical rites.

These objects, which were part of the largest royal and private collections in Europe, as well as precious Church treasures, bear witness to the travel and circulation of models and types which resulted from the mixing of artistic forms and types of decoration between Portugal and India from the sixteenth century onwards. ✍

A Gujarati tortoiseshell writing chest from the second half of the sixteenth century (11.4 × 24.5 × 17.8), Aga Khan Museum collection

## 13

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI SPOON

Mother-of-pearl and silver

Indo-Portuguese, Gujarat; 1620–1640

Dim.: 1.8 × 11.5 × 4.5 cm

F1163

Provenance: Private collection, England



Rare and precious 17th century Indo-Portuguese silver handled spoon of *Turbo marmoratus* mother-of-pearl bowl. The iridescent shell of this marine gastropod species, common in Gujarat, was much appreciated in Europe from the mid-1500s onwards.

This particular format of spoon, of shallow oval shaped bowl, follows contemporary European prototypes. The cabriole handle, adorned with three raised rings, is topped by an ungulate foot. A simulated slit and a small protruding head close to the bowl end simulate a rivet. In the original prototype, a hinge would effectively articulate the shaft, folding it onto the bowl concavity. The model however, most certainly copied from a drawing or print, was not fully understood by the artisan, who failed to replicate this detail.

The mother-of-pearl bowl fits into a double faced, stylized trefoil silver piece of engraved decoration, being fixed by two rivets in the same metal.

Spoons were the most abundant cutlery types on royal and princely tables, becoming highly relevant throughout Europe in the 16th century, as the various foods were mainly eaten in small por-

tions or in stews. They were also used to serve sugar or spices, both expensive goods stored in purpose built and portable containers<sup>1</sup>.

*Turbo marmoratus* mother-of-pearl objects such as spoons and forks, imported into Lisbon by Portuguese merchants and often exported to other European courts<sup>2</sup>, would occasionally be mounted in silver on arrival to the Old Continent.

'Ungulate foot' spoons are extremely rare. Some examples dating to the Greco-Roman period have been recorded particularly in Pompey. From the 14th century<sup>3</sup> onwards they are well documented in Holland, often appearing depicted in Dutch still-life paintings<sup>4</sup>.

Contemporary examples can be found described in the 1596 inventory for Archduke Ferdinand II of Tirol *Kunstammer*, and in the *Musée National de la Renaissance* collections at Écouen.

This 17th century small but important spoon, of short and ergonomic silver handle, Indo-Portuguese in character, was probably produced for an Iberian aristocrat or high dignitary. TP

<sup>1</sup> MOORE, Simon, *Op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno (coord.) *A Herança de Rauluchantim*, Lisbon/Lisbonne, C.N.C.D.P., 1996, p. 137.

<sup>3</sup> E. M., Ch. F. Klijn, *Eet—en Sierlepels in Nederland Tot ca. 1850*, De Tijdstroom, Lochem, 1987, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> CLAESZ, Willem, *Heda, Un Dessert* (c. 1637), Louvre Museum (Inv. no. 1319).

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI DRINKING BOWL (SALVA)

Mother-of-pearl and brass; silver mounts

India, Gujarat; 1550–1600

Diam.: 29.3 cm

F1475

Provenance: Ian Irving collection, New York



This mother-of-pearl *salva*, a drinking bowl, was made in the second half of the sixteenth century in Gujarat, on the western coast of India, for the Portuguese market, and was further embellished in Europe with a silver rim.

The mother-of-pearl mosaic on the central dome-shaped boss features a stylised lotus flower, while the flat, slightly flared wide border complete its floral design with concentrically arranged pieces in the shape of polylobate petals; the upturned rim is made from wide rectangular pieces.

Known as *salvas* or *salvers* (from the Portuguese and Spanish *salvar*, ‘to save, taste food for one’s master’, from the Latin *salvo*, ‘to save’), that is, named after their function, such objects are recorded in early sixteenth-century Portuguese inventories as *taças para salva*, and were used at this time at princely and patrician tables for testing wine for poisons at the beginning of the meal and were afterwards placed on display in stepped cupboards or tables called *copas* or *copeiras*.<sup>1</sup>

Following the shape of the medieval European *hanap* (from the Frankish *\*hnapp*, in turn from the Proto-Germanic *\*hnappaz*, ‘cup’, ‘bowl’), these shallow circular drinking bowls feature a central dome-shaped boss, flared sides with upturned rims, and generally

do not exceed the span of a palm in diameter (ca. 20–30 cm). Such shallow circular drinking bowls are in fact a natural development of the *phiale mesonphalos* from Antiquity—libation cups with a central omphalos used to better secure the vessel with just one hand, with the index and middle fingers placed on the underside of the boss while the thumb secures the rim.

Adapted to European taste following the arrival of the Portuguese on the western coast of India in the early sixteenth century, Gujarati mother-of-pearl works can be divided into two groups.<sup>2</sup> The first includes items either made entirely of mother-of-pearl plaques (mosaic) or applied over a wooden core. The second comprises wooden objects covered in dark mastic inset with finely cut mother-of-pearl pieces following complex geometric or floral patterns, and, more rarely, figurative and calligraphic designs. Objects produced using the first technique, sometimes combined with tortoiseshell, of which examples are known today, include pieces of furniture such as caskets, writing boxes, table-tops and reversible games boards, and other smaller household objects including large and medium-sized basins, *salvers*—such as the present example—dishes of every size, saucers, ewers, tankards, bottles, bowls, cups and other drinking vessels, salt cellars,

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, ‘At the Prince’s Table: Dining at the Lisbon Court (1500–1700)’, in CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *At The Prince’s Table. Dining at the Lisbon Court (1500–1700). Silver, mother-of-pearl, rock crystal and porcelain*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2018, pp. 50–114, on pp. 69–71.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 26–58; and IDEM, *Gujarat & Portugal. Mother-of-pearl, Tortoiseshell and Exotic Woods*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 7–29.



Back

flatware and spice boxes and other round boxes, and also arms such as daggers, powder flasks, and maces. Items made using the second technique include caskets, fall-front writing cabinets, pen cases, reversible games boards, and large basins. Both techniques, probably developed in the same production centres, use highly iridescent material, with shades of pink, green and blue, cut from the green turban shell (*Turbo marmoratus*), a marine gastropod which was once common in the Indian Ocean and reached the large sizes needed for the thick overlays on wood and double-walled construction of household items.

Gujarati mother-of-pearl vessels of this shape are exceedingly rare. Only one other example (Ø 29.0 cm), with minor differences in the more complex decoration of its dome-shaped

central boss, is known; it belongs to a Portuguese private collection in Estoril-Lisbon.<sup>3</sup>

Although also featuring a dome-shaped central boss, a large basin (Ø 44.0 cm) with deep cavetto and wide flat border once in the princely collection (*Kunstammer*) of Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol (r. 1564–1595) at Schloss Ambras in Innsbruck (inv. KK 4095), is modelled after a different prototype. Unlike *salvas*, basins were used at Portuguese princely, aristocratic, and patrician households for the ritual hand washing (called ‘água-às-mãos’) before and after meals.<sup>4</sup> HMC

<sup>3</sup> TRNEK, Helmut, VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno (eds.), *Exotica. Os Descobrimentos Portugueses e as Câmaras de Maravilhas do Renascimento* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001, pp. 129–132, cat. 31 (catalogue entry by Pedro de Moura Carvalho).

<sup>4</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, p. 128, cat. 30 (catalogue entry by Sigrid Sangl).



## 15

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI CASKET

Teak and mother-of-pearl; silver mounts

India, Gujarat; Europe (mounts); 1550–1600

Dim.: 24.0 × 33.0 × 20.0 cm

F1491

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon



This Gujarati casket comprises a rectangular box and a truncated pyramidal lid, sloping on each side to a flat top, and is made of teak (*Tectona grandis*) covered with mother-of-pearl mosaic.

The tesserae, cut from the shell of the green turban sea snail (*Turbo marmoratus*, a marine gastropod) and from pearl oyster—probably *Pinctada maxima*, given its whitish hue—are attached to the wooden structure with large ball-headed silver nails that replaced the original brass pins.

The truncated pyramidal shape corresponds—like its contemporary tortoiseshell counterparts, also made in Gujarat—to a type of furniture used in the Indian subcontinent under Islamic rule before the arrival of the first Portuguese. This form is both ancient and characteristic of East Asian caskets, chests or boxes made to contain and protect Buddhist texts (sutras).<sup>1</sup>

Raised on a socle, the casket features, on the front, sides and back, two variants of an overlapping scale pattern: one with rounded edges and the other with straight ones. By contrast, the straight sides of the lid display a lozenge-and-triangle pattern. The interior is simply decorated in vivid red shellac. The casket is further embellished with silver mounts of European manufacture, added when it arrived in Europe. All the edges of the casket are protected by thin silver bands decorated with a chased frieze of ovules. The lock plate on the front and the hinges at the back are similarly chased with vegetal motifs.

The Gujarati origin of this production has, over the past few decades, become widely accepted and fully demonstrated, not only through documentary and literary evidence—such as descriptions, travelogues and contemporary archival documents—but also through the survival in situ of sixteenth-century wooden structures covered in mother-of-pearl tesserae.<sup>2</sup>

A fine example is the canopy that decorates the tomb of the Sufi saint Sheikh Salim Chisti (1478–1572) at Fatehpur Sikri, in the Agra district of northern India. This production is geometric in character and Islamic in nature: the mother-of-pearl tesserae typically form complex fish-scale designs or, as on dishes made with the same technique using thin brass sheet and pins, stylised lotus flowers. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, *Ibidem*, pp. 26–58; CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Gujarat & Portugal. Mother-of-pearl, Tortoiseshell and Exotic Woods*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquities & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 7–29.



## 16

## A LARGE GUJARATI TORTOISESHELL CASKET

Tortoiseshell; silver fittings

India, Gujarat; second half of the 16th century

Dim.: 29.5 × 17.5 × 13.5 cm

F1375

Provenance: Pedro Costa collection (1870–1958), Portugal



**FIG. 1**  
Fifteenth century French cuir bouilli casket at the Cluny Museum—Middle Ages National Museum, Paris (inv. NNI952)

Rare 1500s parallelepiped casket of undulating ribbed cover, fully constructed with golden, translucent and mottled turtle shell plaques, after one of the rarest European casket typologies copied by Gujarati artisans in this autochthonous raw material.

Its prototype would have been a 15th century French *cuir bouilli* original (tooled leather coated wood) now at the Cluny Museum—Middle Ages National Museum, in Paris (inv. NNI 952) (Fig. 1). Similarly to other caskets destined for the safekeeping of small, but highly valuable illuminated Books of Hours, this Paris casket features a lock in one of its shorter sides, a detail unknown in extant Gujarati examples.<sup>1</sup> In addition, its usual system of reinforcing iron bands was, in this instance, enhanced by the tripartite cover profile.

Quite remarkable are our casket's probably Goan made silver fittings, of which the most striking and unique aspect is undoubtedly their Persian Timurid inspired decoration of waved friezes covering whole surfaces, including the scalloped corner pieces and lateral panels. This repousse decoration was achieved in an expeditious manner by using metal, possibly bronze or iron, matrices, a standard procedure in Indian goldsmithing and jewellery making. These silver fittings are attached to the turtle shell carcass by large round headed silver tacks, or star headed pins, also

made in a matrix. The square cased lock and its characteristic lizard shaped latch feature repousse and chiselled waved decoration. Additional silver elements include cast and finely chiselled side and top handles of lizard or snake finials (snake heads swallowing lizards). The fittings Timurid character is also evident in the palm shaped matrix made rear hinges.

Originally used as a jewellery box, this rare and precious casket was likely adapted for religious use. For this repurposing its inner surface was lined in a thin hammered silver sheet. In addition, a Greek cross of scallop shell finials and a central armorial shield, identified as the medieval heraldic for the Kingdom of Majorca, were also added, albeit surmounted by a count's coronet. Rather incongruous and of revivalist flavour, this heraldic is likely to date from the 19th century.<sup>2</sup>

The silver mounts are assay marked 'Elder's Head', a stamp used in Portugal from 1886 onwards on objects of artistic or archaeological worth.

One of the earliest documental references to a specific turtle shell casket, is one that refers to a now lost example in the 1556 *post mortem* inventory for the court bailiff Afonso de Castelo Branco: *'hũu quoffre de tartaruga guarnjido de prata vall—dois mil reais'*<sup>3</sup> (a turtle shell casket mounted in silver worth two thousand reals). *—HMC*

<sup>1</sup> On these caskets, destined to hold books of hours, often with contemporary religious prints to their inner cover, see: LEPAPE, Séverine, HUYNH, Michael, VRAND, Caroline (eds.), *Mistérieux coffrets. Estampes au temps de La Dame à la licorne* (cat.), Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Musée de Cluny—Musée National du Moyen Âge, Lienart, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> I must thank Miguel Metelo de Seixas for his assistance in interpreting this armorial, and in discussing its chronology.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jewels from the India Run* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015, pp. 65–67.



## 17

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI CASKET

Tortoiseshell and silver

India, Gujarat; 16th century

Dim.: 7.0 × 13.0 × 7.9 cm

F935

Provenance: J.M.J. collection, Portugal

Exceptionally rare silver-mounted rectangular tortoiseshell casket of dual pitched lid, certainly manufactured in a Gujarati workshop in the second half of the 16th century.

The case and the lid of this small casket were cut from plates of translucent speckled tortoiseshell from the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys Imbricata*) and underlayed by gold leaf giving it deep contrasting tones and sophisticated beauty.

The plaques are joined at the angles by indented silver strips with large and exuberantly decorated corner pieces, fixed by small seven-pointed star round-headed tacks and decorated with a common matrix of chased and *repoussé* motifs of animals, birds and swirling trifoil floral elements.

The hinges, lock, latch and handle are adorned according to the same chased and *repoussé* techniques following an identical decorative language. The lock is boxed and raised within a zigzag motif band frame and engraved with a bird and vegetal patterns. The latch is fixed to the lid by round-headed silver tacks. The decorative scheme is completed by a punctured background that highlights the artistic accomplishment of the piece.

The two lid profiles are silver wrapped and each surface defined by a central axis of winding floral motifs, decorated symmetrically with pairs of animals, heads bent backwards, in a depiction characteristic of early Middle Eastern art and often used in Mughal decorative compositions. A central rounded hoop and naturalistic snake head finials enrich the handle's twisted rope design.

The rarity of this casket relates not only to the precious and exclusive materials that it employs, and to the sophisticated manufacturing techniques involved in its construction, but also

to its atypical two gabled architectural form alluding to popular Portuguese religious buildings, thus transforming it into a rather striking example.

The chased and *repoussé* decoration of scrolled vegetal patterns, *al-tawriq* in Arabic, with stylized leafs and split stalks, share a common root with Islamic Cordovan art of the 9th and 10th centuries.

According to Nuno Vassallo e Silva this type of Islamic derived decoration, of floral and vegetal scrolls interspersed with animals on a tightly punctured background 'was a decorative scheme well known in Northern India', and one that would later be widely assimilated and repeated by silversmiths in the various Indian Portuguese territories. ➤ TP



## 18

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI WRITING BOX (VENTÓ)

Teak, tortoiseshell, ebony, ivory and gilded copper

India, Gujarat; early 17th century

Dim.: 23.6 × 20.5 × 29.4 cm

F974

Provenance: J.M.J. collection, Portugal

Contrary to most furniture typologies that were manufactured in Asia for a European clientele, based on prototypes released by the Portuguese in the Orient throughout the 16th century, this model reflects an Eastern, specifically Japanese origin.

These rare and unusual pieces are known in Portuguese as *ventó* from the Japanese etymological root *bentó*. However, in Japan the term *bentó*, according to the first Japanese-Portuguese dictionary, published in 1603, the ‘Vocabulario da Lingoa de lapam’, was and still is today, used to refer to a container to carry food.

Truly, the correct Japanese word for the *ventó* is *kakesuzuri-bako*, or ‘portable writing box’, which, when opening by a hinged door on its narrower side and fitted with safety locks as in a safe box, is generically called *tansu* or navy storage cabinet, defined as an hinged single door cabinet for seals and valuables, often adorned by intricate metalwork and having various drawers or compartments on the inside.

A rare example of this uncommon, but prized type of Indo-Portuguese furniture, this cabinet is also untypically coated on the whole in tortoiseshell likely to be from the species Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys Imbricata*), of which several joined scutes were needed.

Similarly to horn, skin and hair, turtle scutes are made of keratin, a naturally produced and resistant protein and are fused together by a heating process, a characteristic unique to some species of marine turtles, in order to achieve large, uniform surfaces suitable for the decorating of furniture pieces.

The luxurious and sophisticated feature of this type of coating, also used on the drawer fronts, is complemented by the fluted ebony framing and ivory filets whose colour contrast enriches the whole.

The gilt copper metal mounts, particularly the corner pieces, hinges and escutcheon, are stylistically and technically related to the type of metalwork in indo-Portuguese pieces of the 17th C.

‘Ventós’, writing boxes and small cabinets were made in Asia from exotic and otherwise expensive materials such as tortoiseshell and ivory—or, as in the present case, combining the two materials—being much admired and avidly sought after in Europe, due not only to their form and exotic character, but also to their technical perfection and decorative lavishness.<sup>1</sup> TP

<sup>1</sup> For other examples of this production, see DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 309–310, 315, 319, 369.



## 19

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE CHAUL PAINTED VENTÓ

Wood, dyed shellac and silver

India, probably Chaul, early 17th century

Dim.: 28.5 × 26.5 × 36.5 cm

F1396

Provenance: Private collection, France

Such rare storage furniture typologies—boxes with one door to their narrower sides, opening towards the right and featuring inner drawers of various formats—became known in Portuguese as *ventó*, from the Japanese word *bento*. Nonetheless, and according to the earliest Nippo-Portuguese dictionary, the '*Vocabulário da lingua de Iapam*', published in 1603, the Japanese *bentō*, refers, even nowadays, to a food box.

The original Japanese prototype for the *ventó* is known as *kakesuzuri-bako*, literally a 'portable writing box'. However, when featuring a single door to one of its shorter sides, and robust safe like hardware, this box is named *dansu*, or 'sea chest'—a 'seal box' destined for storing writing paraphernalia or valuables such as coins.<sup>1</sup>

As such, and contrary to most other typologies, the *ventó* reflects a Japanese, rather than a European model, a detail that grants it a unique position in the context of Asian made furniture for the European market.

Of teakwood carcass (*Tectona grandis*), this *ventó* features unique bright coloured and vibrant shellac painted decoration, characterised by three horizontal rows of stylized flowering plants, bushes and trees, on all its outer elevations and inner door. This rug-like pattern composition comprises of large central grounds filled with floral rows, whose stylization does not allow for botanical identification, and narrow, purely geometrical borders.

The box silver fittings include ring pulls, hinges and a shield shaped and pierced lock escutcheon that is reminiscent of European Mannerist heraldic. Also of far eastern influence, as expected in this type of object and production, the metalware finely chiselled ornamentation of foliage scrolls and *ruyi* shaped motifs, does however reveal Chinese, rather than Japanese, inspiration.

Once open, the box exhibits a group of five different drawers arranged over four tiers, with a larger, double height square drawer to the lower left side, their brightly dyed shellac painted decoration following a reticulated textile pattern of stylized serrated leaves and white highlighted three petalled flowers.

This *ventó* belongs to a specific group of boxes featuring dyed shellac decoration. Despite the existence of furniture with identical ornamentation produced in India's north-western coast for exporting to the Portuguese and other European markets, this cluster suggests an entirely different origin.<sup>2</sup> Recent documental research points to Chaul, then a part of Portuguese India's northern province, and modern day Revdanda Fort, in Maharashtra, as the origin for this uncommon production.<sup>3</sup>

In his travel journal, François Pyrard de Laval (ca. 1578–ca. 1623), refers that '[Chaul's] main production are the silks fabrics, made in such quantities that almost supply the needs of Goa and all of India, being completely different from those made in China'.

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding this production, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 86–88.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding Portuguese ruled Chaul and the type of export furniture therein produced, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 104–108.





Besides these silk textiles, this author also reports that Chaul produces 'a large quantity of caskets, chests, boxes and writing cabinets in the manner of China and very well made' and 'lacquered cots and beds of every colour'.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to our recently identified example, only a handful of similarly decorated *ventós* are known. Two of these, from the Celso Roboredo Madeira Almendra collection, were for several decades exhibited at the National Museum of Ancient Art, in Lisbon. One other, (dim.: 36.5 × 33.0 × 46.0 cm), of floral reliefs decoration similar to one of the above, belongs to the Távora-Sequeira Pinto collection, in Oporto.<sup>5</sup> Both of black coloured ground surface, they feature more formal floral arrangements, possibly inspired by contemporary botanical prints.

The inner door and drawer fronts of the Roboredo Madeira *ventó* feature scenes depicting Portuguese architectures, including a church, couples attired in contemporary Portuguese costume, and even African servants holding parasols, as well as peculiar hunting depictions such as a Franciscan friar shooting birds with an arquebus, hunters on horseback, and scenes with tigers and deer. All these aspects corroborate the suggestion of Portuguese ruled Chaul as its likely production centre.

On its door interior, of bright orange-red ground, the second Roboredo Madeira box depicts a landscape with a Portuguese

building, with characteristic high pitched tiled roof, and a large flowering tree like the one present on our box.

All these examples, contrary to the varnished furniture produced in northern India, namely in Sindh and in the European taste, share a common far eastern, or even a Chinese influence, in their ornamental grammar. The present *ventó* textile patterning of floral reticulated motifs does most certainly suggest a more southern Indian artistic tradition. *HMC*

<sup>4</sup> LAVAL, François Pyrrard de, *Voyage de Pyrrard de Laval aux Indes orientales (1601–1611)*, ed. BOUCHON, Geneviève, CASTRO, Xavier de, vol. 2, Paris, Chandeigne, 1998, p. 757.

<sup>5</sup> CARVALHO, Teresa Nobre de, SERRA, Clara, *As Flores do Imperador. Do Bolbo ao Tapete* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, 2018, p. 24, cat. 26.

## 20

### AN INDO-PORTUGUESE LARGE MOTHER-OF-PEARL AND MASTIC GUJARATI CHEST

Teak, black mastic, mother-of-pearl and shellac; gilt copper fittings

India, Gujarat; second half of the 16th century

Dim.: 39.0 × 64.0 × 37.5 cm

F1366

Provenance: Private collection, USA



Exceptional Gujarati teakwood chest (*Tectona grandis*) of parallelepiped shaped case and truncated pyramidal cover, coated in black mastic and inlaid with mother-of-pearl elements, belonging to a group of utilitarian objects and small to medium sized furniture of mother-of-pearl decoration, made in Gujarat for the local market and for exporting.<sup>1</sup> Of uncharacteristically large size within the scope of this extensive production, it does nonetheless fit into a subgroup defined by objects of identical decorative characteristics.<sup>2</sup>

Its ancient design, as is often the case with other contemporary Gujarat productions, namely those made in turtle shell, corresponds to an Indian subcontinent typology characteristic of Islamic contexts predating the arrival of the Portuguese, and purposely conceived for storing, and safekeeping, Buddhist sacred

texts, the *sutras*.<sup>3</sup> The mother-of-pearl raw material for such objects was obtained from marine gastropod (*Turbo marmoratus*), and pearl oyster (*Pinctada maxima*) shells, the latter of whiter colour gradation than the former.

The lavish and intricate carpet like decoration reflects the long-lasting influence of the international Timurid style, as is evident on the cover decorative composition of three central lobate medallions alternating with large, mirrored palm trees on a ground of foliage scrolls, Chinese inspired and stylised lotus flowers and six petalled rosettes. These palms can be identified as *Corypha umbraculifera*, or talipot palm, a species native to Eastern and Southern India and Sri Lanka, whose leaves were traditionally used as support for writing. The sloping cover surfaces are decorated

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 28–42.

<sup>2</sup> On this group, see Simon Digby, 'The mother-of-pearl overlaid furniture of Gujarat: the holdings of the Victoria and Albert Museum', in SKELTON, Robert, et al (eds.), *Facets of Indian Art*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1986, pp. 213–222.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, p. 15.



with framed floral scroll motifs, that are repeated on the upper edges of the box elevations, and scalloped leaf friezes.

The frontal and rear decoration follows a type of arrangement identical to the cover, featuring three lobate medallions with arabesque decorative motifs alternating with fan shaped palms, most certainly *Borassus flabellifer*, the Palmyra palm, a southern Asia autochthonous species. The lateral panels feature identical decoration but of one single medallion.

The present chest is closely similar to the well-known example (dim.: 40.0 × 55.0 × 32.0 cm) at the *Descalzas Reales* Monastery collection, in Madrid (inv. 00612591)<sup>4</sup>, although the latter does not feature decorative medallions, it does however include identical Palmyra palms and Chinese inspired lotus flower motifs. It would have probably entered this Royal Monastery of Barefoot Clarisses, as a gift from Empress Maria of Austria (1528–1603) destined to protect the Martyr Saint Margaret of Antioch's relics, which had been donated by the religious house's founder, Joana of Austria (1535–1573), Princess of Portugal, and sister to King Filipe II of Spain. Together with another two mother-of-pearl and turtle shell Gujarati chests, this latter example was part of the 'Relics Cabinet' (*Relicario*), formerly the Princess's private oratory.

The chest has belonged to the famous Jim Dixon (1942–2020) collection. Dixon was a landscape architect known for his rugs, and other historic textiles, collection. His vast botanical knowledge

and his passion for artistic depictions of the natural world, might have encouraged the purchasing of this object that has, probably in the 19th or early 20th century, undergone some alterations to its appearance. In addition to the loss of the pigeon-holes that it originally had in its interior, it was also supplemented with carved wooden mouldings to the cover rim and raised socle, alongside brass corner fittings and lock plate, elements that have been recently removed to return the chest to its original appearance. The inner surfaces have also been restituted to their painted decoration, and the minor losses to the mother-of-pearl inlays refilled, according to traditional techniques and materials. The wooden socle, as well as the cast gilt copper mounts fitted to the original positions, are now compatible with those from other chests of identical production and chronology, in public and private collections. *HMC*

<sup>4</sup> SANZ, Ana García, GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, 'Via Orientalis: Objetos del Lejano Oriente en el Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales', in *Reales Sitios 138* (1998), pp. 25–39, and pp. 29 and 31; and SANZ, Ana García, 'Relicarios de Oriente', in MOLA, Marina Alfonso, SHAW, Carlos Martínez (eds.), *Oriente en Palacio. Tesoros Asiáticos en las Colecciones Reales Españolas* (cat.), Madrid, Palacio Real de Madrid, 2003, pp. 128–141, 130 and 135, cat. VII.1.



## 21

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING CABINET WITH TWO NOBLEMEN SITTING

Teak, Indian rosewood ivory, brass and iron; iron fittings

India, Gujarat; late 16th century

Dim.: 28.5 × 44.0 × 31.0 cm

F1394

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



This fall-front writing cabinet, produced in late 16th century Gujarat for the Portuguese market, replicates a well-known European prototype.<sup>1</sup> The teak carcass (*Tectona grandis*), veneered in Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) and inlaid in elephant tusk ivory, features wrought iron fittings that include two robust side handles and fall front and central drawer double headed eagle lock escutcheons. This motif portraying the *gandabherunda*, mythological Hindu bird imbued of magical strength, wards off evil and protects the cabinet's precious contents. The drawers do also feature delicate turned ivory pulls.<sup>2</sup>

The outer decorative composition, as well as the fall front inner surface, are characterized by rug like patterns of lobate central cartouches and inner band, filled by foliage elements, and by a broad border with foliage scrolls of eight petalled rosettes and comma shaped leaves, typical of this Gujarati production derived from the International Timurid grammar.

When exposed, the cabinet inner front exhibits an arrangement of six drawers, simulating eight, arranged over three tiers centred by one double height drawer with individual lock. The drawer fronts inlaid decoration consists of flowering plants flanked by face-to-face placed goats; on the larger drawer the composition

rests on a European type of balustrade, thus copying the architectural elements of European made cabinets.

From the inner fall front ornamental composition, densely filled by flowering trees, stand out two seated Portuguese male figures, seemingly in conversation, attired in long sleeved jerkins, loose trousers, ruff collars and tall hats.

Besides tabletop and dais cabinets, the present example replicates a European prototype that ranked highly amongst the most prestigious 16th century storage furniture typologies. The fall front formed a surface suitable for writing, while the multiple drawers provided easy access to the precious objects and writing paraphernalia therein stored. Such luxury cabinets predominated in the elites' homes and portable examples, such as the one described, would become indispensable for European officials and merchants settled in or travelling through Asia.<sup>3</sup>

Such Eastern objects, produced with exotic and costly raw materials, were much desirable and sought after by Europeans for their practical design, technical mastery and decorative fineness. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> Regarding these productions, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 10–58.

<sup>2</sup> For a cabinet of identical production, and similar decoration, at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (inv. 122–1906), see: JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, pp. 44–45, cat. 15; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, p. 151, cat. 37.

<sup>3</sup> See: JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, p. 18; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 172–191, cat. 16.



## 22

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE FALL-FRONT SINDH CABINET

Teak, ebony, ivory, exotic wood, green-dyed bone and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Sindh (present-day Pakistan); 1580–1630

Dim.: 42.5 × 88.3 × 42.0 cm

F1421

Provenance: Private collection, France; Sylvie Lermite-King collection, France



This imposing fall-front cabinet was likely made in Sindh, in present-day Pakistan, towards the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Of teakwood (*Tectona grandis*) carcass, it is thickly veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) and lavishly decorated with ivory and micro-mosaic (*Sadeli*) inlays. Its gilt copper fittings include two side handles, inner drawers human mask shaped pulls, and front lock plate featuring a double-headed eagle or *gandabherunda*—a Hindu mythological bird possessing magical strength, that wards off evil and protects the cabinet contents.

The box outer decoration follows a carpet-like pattern of polylobate central cartouches filled with foliage motifs, and a border of eight-petaled rosettes with central *Sadeli* motif detail. The fall front inner surface is characterised by a more complex border alternating rosettes and foliage scrolls, and by a central ground segmented into three sections: two circular medallions centred by six-pointed stars of dense *Sadeli* decoration flanking a lozenge of identical decorative motifs over a ground of plant scrolls. The cabinet features twelve drawers, simulating sixteen fronts, all of identical decoration and arranged over four tiers.

This large cabinet would have been commissioned by a wealthy aristocratic household, as a reminiscent of the opulent

ebony, marquetry and *pietre dure* (hard-stone) cabinets produced at the wealthiest European courts. A hybrid piece of luxury furniture, combining a European prototype with complex local decorative techniques and precious exotic raw materials, this cabinet epitomises to perfection the refined taste of the Portuguese clientele who acquired it.

Based on recurrent furniture typologies, favoured materials, and Iranian-derived decorative techniques, such as the time-consuming and delicate *Sadeli* decoration, this elegant and more restrained production, in contrast to furniture made in Gujarat for exporting, has recently been attributed to Thatta, in Sindh (present-day Pakistan).<sup>2</sup>

Cabinets as large as the one herewith described are very rare, those destined to be placed on a table, with each drawer fitted with its own lock, being more prevalent. A privately owned fall-front cabinet of similar size (34.0 × 68.0 × 36.5 cm), and identical Sindh origin, has been published in a monograph by the Art-Historian Pedro Dias.<sup>3</sup> Not as sophisticated in its denser *horror vacui* decorative composition, it is equally made in teakwood, but veneered in East Indian rosewood, rather than in the precious ebony present in our cabinet. ✍ HMC

<sup>1</sup> For a fall-front cabinet of this production, in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. 317–1866), see JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 76–88.

<sup>3</sup> DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 356–357.



## 23

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE TRAY

Teak, rosewood, sandalwood, ivory, bone, brass and gilt copper  
 Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, Thane (?); 1560–1620  
 Dim.: 5.0 × 55.0 × 38.0 cm  
 F1476

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon

This rectangular tray with sloping borders, made from teak (*Tectona grandis*) and East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), is lavishly decorated with inlays in sandalwood (*Santalum album*), elephant ivory, and green-dyed bone, all secured with brass pins. The corners are protected by gilt-copper openwork fittings.

The decoration of the central well follows a carpet-like composition, with a large field featuring a polylobate rosette within a central round medallion, flanked by flowering plants stemming from vases. Between the field and the wide border (and between these and the everted border), there is a narrow border of six-petalled rosettes alternating between ivory and sandalwood. The decoration of the wide border consists of scrolling flowers and, at the corners, *nagini*—figures from Hindu mythology with women's heads and torsos, touching their breasts as symbols of fertility, their lower bodies resembling double-coiled serpents. The wide everted borders features a frieze of repeating flowering plants.

The type of decoration, materials, and techniques used in the manufacture of this unique tray point to an origin within the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, likely Thane, a well-documented centre for lavish marquetry work.<sup>1</sup> Considering its size and exuberant decoration, this tray was probably intended for secular use, possibly for serving sweetmeats and other delicacies in noble or patrician households.

Rectangular trays with sloping sides were a common shape in China during the late Ming dynasty. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century blue-and-white porcelain trays of this shape, like those made from lacquered wood, usually decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays, probably derive from metal prototypes in gold or silver. This may be ascertained from their square shape, straight angles

and raised feet, following a construction, assembly and soldering typical of metalwork.

Similarly shaped trays can be observed in seventeenth-century Mughal paintings, used to display gems, jewellery, precious metalwork and luxury textiles. While lacking comparable earlier visual evidence which might better enlighten us on the emergence of this shape in the Indian subcontinent, it is likely that it was adopted from earlier East Asian models.

Lacquered trays of this shape were also made in different parts of Asia for export to Europe, namely to Portugal. A rare group of differently-sized similarly shaped trays survives, encompassing examples made mostly in China, but also Japan and probably the Ryukyu Islands.<sup>2</sup> Usually, such lacquered objects are described in contemporary Portuguese household inventories as Chinese. Four 'trays from China' are recorded in the post mortem inventories of Fernando de Noronha (†1608), 3rd Count of Linhares, and his wife Filipa de Sá (†1618).<sup>3</sup> Of these, three featured the earl's coat-of-arms, and were all 'gilded and black', that is lacquered in black and decorated with gold; another three were added to them, totalling seven trays. These would have been similar to Chinese lacquer trays in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. 1 Band, 2 Band, 3 Band, 5 Band, 26 Band, and 44 Band), some of which have been scientifically analysed and their materials and techniques identified.<sup>4</sup> Alongside rare trays made in India and decorated with marquetry, some carved examples also survive with painted decoration. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> For this production, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquities & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 8–24.

<sup>2</sup> For an example made in China but most likely by a Japanese craftsman, see CANEPA, Teresa et al., *Depois dos Bárbaros II. Arte Namban para os mercados japoneses, portugueses e holandeses*, London, Jorge Welsh Books, 2008, pp. 336–339, cat. 48.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, 'Global Interiors on the Rua Nova in Renaissance Lisbon', in GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, LOWE, K. J. P. (eds.), *The Global City. On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2015, pp. 121–139, on p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> KÖRBER, Ulrike, SCHILLING, R., Michael, DIAS, Cristina Barrocas, DIAS, Luís, 'Simplified Chinese lacquer techniques and Namban style decoration on Luso-Asian objects from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries', *Studies in Conservation*, 61, Supplement 3 (2016), pp. 68–84. One probably Japanese example belongs to the same Lisbon museum (inv. 20 Band).



## 24

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE WRITING BOX WITH AN ECCLESIASTICAL COAT OF ARMS

Teak, ebony, rosewood, sandalwood, ivory, bone, brass, iron and gilt-copper

Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, Thane?; 1550–1600

Dim.: 13.5 × 26.0 × 35.3 cm

F1443

Provenance: Quinta da Aveleira, Pencilo, Guimarães



This writing box, made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*), and decorated with inlays of East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), sandalwood (*Santalum album*), elephant ivory, and green-dyed bone, was likely made in Thane in the second half of the sixteenth century, then part of the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.

Of box construction, with a sliding top cover, this writing box has a single drawer at the front and, when uncovered, reveals two large open compartments at the front, and four at the back, one lidded to hold the inkwell.

Its pierced openwork gilt-copper fittings include corner brackets, a rosette-shaped lock plate, and a central spiralled drawer pull. Elevated on similarly fire-gilt copper ball feet, this rare writing box is intricately decorated on all sides, except for the underside, following a carpet-like composition.

The top, with a more complex design, boasts a fine border of six-petalled rosettes alternating in ivory and rosewood, and a placed-r of floral scrolls, with serrated leaves and flowers, with double-headed eagles or *gandabherunda*—a Hindu mythological bird imbued with magical strength used to ward off evil and protect the precious objects stored inside the box placed—placed at the corners. The central field, also framed by a similar narrow border with alternating rosettes, prominently features an oval medallion with a narrow-pearled frieze

encircling the heraldic arms of an ecclesiastic surmounted by a black clerical hat with three tassels on each side. The shield, divided in two, shows, on the left, a banner topped by a cross surrounded by stars and, on the right, four bars. The central medallion is surrounded by opposing flowering plants. While the sides and back show floral scrolls emerging from vases, the front lacks a vase.

In ecclesiastical heraldry, a black hat with three tassels on each side, for a total of six, is generally associated with canons. Because heraldry of this period is highly individual and less strictly codified than later personal heraldry, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the individual who used these arms and likely commissioned this writing box.

This type of writing box, modelled after sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European prototypes that are now very rare, was produced for export in exotic, durable woods of great decorative effect, in the various furniture-producing centres of Portuguese India, such as Goa, Cochin, and other locations along the west coast of India. Given that sixteenth-century Portuguese records mention the village of *Taná* or Thane, today part of the city of Mumbai (Bombay), where a large community of Muslim craftsmen flourished, as a centre for precious marquetry furniture, it is likely that the centre of production of this writing box was Thane, then part of the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see Sidh Losa Mendiratta, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, Pius (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.



The present writing box belongs to an exceptional rare group, the earliest furniture made for the Portuguese market that has only recently been identified as to its geographical origin, decorative sources of inspiration, and historical context of production.<sup>2</sup>

A small number of writing boxes of this type, with a sliding cover and similarly decorated with floral inlays, have been

published in recent years.<sup>3</sup> One writing box (14.5 x 27.2 x 39.4 cm) with sliding top of this production and similar decoration belongs to the collection of Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. 1671 Mov). *HMC*

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–105; and IDEM, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquities & Galeria de Arte, 2024, especially the writing box on pp. 48–51, cat. 2.

<sup>3</sup> DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, 2013, pp. 391–393; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15(3).

## 25

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE WRITING BOX

Teak, ebony, ivory and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Thane; 1560–1630

Dim.: 19.5 × 42.8 × 32.5 cm

F1406

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



A Thane Indo-Portuguese teakwood (*Tectona grandis*) made writing box, veneered in thick ebony (*Dyospirus ebenum*), and of ivory and ebony marquetry decoration.

Raised on turned ball feet, this rare writing box is decorated on all its surfaces, except the underside, with a carpet-like chequered pattern composition alternating ivory triangles of ebony pegs with ebony triangles of ivory pegs. Its pierced openwork gilt copper fittings include corner brackets, a lock plate, two button-shaped drawer pulls, and two cast side handles.

Of box construction, it features a single drawer of open nook to the front, an open nook for quills and other writing paraphernalia to the right-hand side and two other smaller compartments for inkwell and pounce pot; all these elements are positioned at half height, as the drawer has built-in lower secret compartments. The sides of the main drawer give access, on both sides, to two long hidden drawers sliding in opposite directions, each with its own lock and ebony framed fronts. These drawers in turn, when removed, do also expose two smaller drawers.

This type of writing boxes, produced in exotic and robust woods of highly decorative effect and modelled after sixteenth and seventeenth-century European prototypes that are now very

rare, were made for exporting in the various furniture producing centres in Portuguese India, such as Goa, Kochi and other settlements along the West Indian coast.

Given that sixteenth-century Portuguese written records mention the village of *Taná* or Thane—then part of the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India<sup>1</sup> and nowadays absorbed by the sprawling city of Mumbai (Bombay)—as a flourishing community of Muslim craftsmen renowned for their production of precious marquetry furniture, it is likely that this writing box is an extant example of such manufacture.

The herewith described cabinet belongs to an exceptional group of rare, early furniture produced for the Portuguese market, which was only recently identified regarding its geographical origin, decorative inspiration and historical production context.<sup>2</sup>

Another Goan writing box of identical shape (17.4 × 44.0 × 36.6 cm), but of scrollwork decoration, belongs to the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. 1670 Mov).<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see MENDIRATT, Sidh Losa, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, Pius (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–105.

<sup>3</sup> Published in FRANCO, Anísio, 'A Circulação de Modelos na Criação do Barroco Português', in FRANCO, Anísio, et al. (eds.), *Josefa de Óbidos e a Invenção do Barroco Português* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 2015, pp. 112–122, ref. p. 118, cat. 41.



## 26

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE TWO-DOOR CABINET

Teak, ebony, rosewood, sandalwood, ivory, bone, brass, iron and gilt copper

Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, Thane?; 1550–1600

Dim.: 49.0 × 36.0 × 35.5 cm

F1445

Provenance: S. F. collection, Portugal



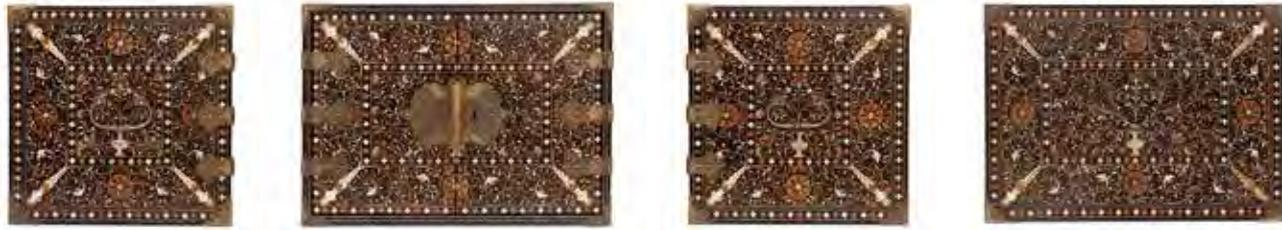
This impressive two-door cabinet, made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), thickly veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*), and decorated with inlays of East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), sandalwood (*Santalum album*), elephant ivory, and green-dyed bone, was likely produced in the village of Thane. Its pierced openwork gilt-copper fittings include corner brackets, three floral-decorated hinges on each side, oval-shaped lock plates on the interior drawers with their pulls, two cast side handles, and a frontal lock plate. The large, superlative lock plate on the front, divided into two parts, is shaped as a polylobate cartouche, encircled above and below by four fish-dragons of Hindu mythology, the legendary sea creature known as *makara*. Islamic in nature, the fine pierced openwork ground of the lock plate features an intricate floral design of stylised lotus flowers and split leaves, typical of the decorative repertoire devised in the Timurid period.

This rare cabinet is intricately decorated on all sides following a carpet-like composition, except for the back—left plain, thickly veneered in rosewood with its beautiful, rich grain. All decorated exterior sides feature narrow borders of quatrefoils, alternating in ivory and sandalwood, and wide borders of vegetal scrolls with dragon-head terminals and serrated leaves. Large star-like rosettes adorn the central points, while the corners feature *nāgini*: figures from Hindu mythology with a woman's head and torso, touching her breasts as a symbol of fertility, and a double-coiled serpent's body below. The central fields bear large flowering plants emerging from vases, engraved and highlighted with red and black mastic. The interior of the doors follows a different composition, with a large central field bordered by a frieze of alternating quatrefoils.

These central fields display towering flowering plants rising from vases—blooming with differently shaped flowers and alive with perched birds—flanked by female figures. They appear to be dressed in European attire, bejewelled, and wearing domed, brimmed hats (*gorra* in Spanish). Alongside the imposing lock plate—exceptional in design and execution—the inclusion of large-scale human figures is highly unusual and adds to the historical significance of this rare cabinet. When opened, the cabinet reveals five drawers (the lowest tier arranged to mimic six for the sake of symmetry) set in three rows, the long bottom drawer designed for storing documents and paper. The drawer fronts replicate the same carpet-like composition, with narrow quatrefoil friezes alternating in ivory and sandalwood, and central fields with vegetal scrolls of serrated leaves terminating in dragon heads. The pierced openwork decoration of the individual lock plates again follows the elaborate Timurid floral pattern.

This type of two-door cabinet, modelled after sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century European prototypes—now very rare—was produced for export in exotic, durable woods with striking decorative effect in various furniture-making centres of Portuguese India, such as Goa, Cochin, and other locations along the western coast. Portuguese records of the sixteenth century mention the village of *Taná* or Thane—today part of the city of Mumbai (Bombay)—where a large community of Muslim craftsmen flourished, as the source of precious marquetry furniture. It is therefore likely that the production centre of this cabinet is Thane, then within the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.<sup>1</sup> The present cabinet belongs to an exceptional group of

<sup>1</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see MENDIRATTA, Sidh Losa, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, Pius (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.



rare, early furniture made for the Portuguese market, only recently identified in terms of geographical origin, decorative sources, and historical context of production.<sup>2</sup> Another two-door cabinet of this type is known, differing in its interior partition, which adheres more closely to an East Asian prototype. Featuring a similarly exuberant decoration of flowering vases—this time including heraldic lions,

rabbits and peafowl—its gilt-copper fittings, although based on Chinese and Japanese models, are local in design. It belongs to the collection of Casa Marta Ortigão Sampaio (inv. 78.67.02), part of the Museu da Cidade, Porto.<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; and IDEM, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–105.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 17–19, figs. 11–13.

## 27

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE *VENTÓ* WHIT THE MANOEL FAMILY COAT OF ARMS

Teak, ebony, ivory, brass, iron and gilt copper fittings

India, probably Thane; 1600–1625

Dim.: 37.0 × 31.0 × 44.0 cm

F1426

Provenance: D. Pedro Manoel de Ataíde, Conde de Atalaia (?) collection, Portugal



An ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) veneered teakwood (*Tectona grandis*) cabinet of ebony, East Indian rosewood and ivory marquetry decoration, fitted with openwork fire-gilt copper fittings. Probably made in Thane, in the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, it replicates an East Asian prototype known in Portuguese as *ventó*.

According to the earliest Japanese-Portuguese dictionary, published in 1603 as *Vocabulário da lingua de Iapam*—the *Nippo jisho*—the Japanese term *bentō*, which was absorbed into Portuguese, referred, and still does, a lunch box. In fact, the original Japanese model for the *ventó* is known as *kakesuzuri-bako* (portable writing box). When it has a frontal door and strongbox like fittings it is called *funa-dansu* (ship chest with drawers). In such instance it is a box for seals (documents, writing paraphernalia and ink stones) and money, featuring a single hinged door, typically ornamented with intricate metal fittings and various inner drawers or compartments with doors.

Our *ventó* outer surfaces feature a seamless isometric cube pattern in ebony, rosewood and ivory, with plain filleted frame of alternating ivory eight-petaled rosettes and ivory and rosewood lozenges, secured to the teak carcass by brass pins. When open it reveals a typical East Asian arrangement of six drawers over four tiers: two overlapping wide drawers for storing paper, two small

middle drawers and two square-shaped bottom drawers. All drawer fronts repeat identical isometric cube pattern framed by ivory fillets.

Its most striking feature is, nonetheless, its inner door decoration featuring a Portuguese heraldic shield that, albeit mistakenly inverted by the cabinet maker, is identifiable as belonging to the noble Manoel family who held the titles of Counts of Atalaia (1583) and Marquesses of Tancos (1751). Topped by a coronet, the shield's field is *party per cross*: the first and fourth quarters depicting a lion, the second and third featuring a winged hand brandishing a sword.

Given this production chronology, from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, it is likely that this cabinet was commissioned by Pedro Manoel de Ataíde (ca.1570–1628) who became 2nd Count of Atalaia following the death of his elder brother Francisco (1565–1624). Pedro travelled to India in 1591 and, upon his return to Portugal in 1621, was appointed Viceroy or Governor of the Algarve and later Captain-General of Portuguese-ruled Tangiers.<sup>1</sup>

Both the cabinet's raw materials and decoration, along with the pierced openwork fittings, point to a Thane manufacture.<sup>2</sup> A writing box of identical characteristics and similar decoration (15.6 × 26.7 × 36.0 cm), belongs to a private collection.<sup>3</sup> HMC

<sup>1</sup> MANOEL, Diogo Maria d'Orey, *Epítome da Família Manoel, Condes de Atalaya e Marqueses de Tancos*, Lisbon, 2020, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104; and *idem*, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), p. 154, cat. 55.



## 28

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE CABINET (*VENTÓ*)

Teak, ebony, ivory, bone, rosewood, sandalwood, brass and iron; gilt copper fittings  
 India, Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, probably Thane; 1600–1625

Dim.: 36.5 × 33.0 × 45.5 cm

F1441

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



A cabinet made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), veneered with Ceylon ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*), and embellished with inlays of ivory, green-dyed animal bone, North Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) and sandalwood (*Santalum album*).

This cabinet replicates, in its form, an East Asian prototype known in Portuguese as a *ventó*. The Japanese term *bentō*, which passed into Portuguese according to the first Japanese-Portuguese dictionary—the *Nippo jisho* published as *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam* in 1603—was, and still is, a word for a lunch box. The original Japanese model for the *ventó* is known as *kakesuzuri-bako*, or ‘portable writing box’. When fitted with a front door and strong-box-like fittings, it is called *funa-dansu*, or ‘ship chest’ with drawers. This type of chest was designed to store seals, documents, writing instruments, and ink stones, alongside money. It features a single front door with hinges, often adorned with intricate metal fittings, and an interior comprising various drawers or compartments concealed behind the door.

All exterior sides of this *ventó* display the same carpet-like decoration: a central field featuring a single flowering plant rising from a baluster-shaped vase, at times flanked by hares and peacocks, framed by a wide border of vegetal scrolls with star-shaped rosettes at the midpoints and crowned double-headed eagles (*gaṇḍabheruṇḍa*) at the corners. These elements are separated by friezes of quatrefoils, characteristic of this type of production. When opened, the cabinet reveals the typical East Asian arrange-

ment of drawers: two larger drawers at the top for storing paper, two smaller ones below on the right, and a larger square-shaped drawer bellow on the left, making a total of five drawers arranged in four tiers. The drawer fronts are similarly decorated with flowering plants flanked by hares or lions. The interior side of the front door features a central field with a large flowering plant rising from a vase, flanked by two male European figures. Interestingly, from the head down, these figures are depicted wearing female attire typical of women’s fashion from the turn of the seventeenth century. This large panel is framed by a narrow border of quatrefoils.

It is fitted with fire-gilt copper fittings, which include a large Chinese-style lock plate on the front door, three hinges also on the door, corner braces, a handle on the top, a lock plate on the square-shaped drawer inside, and drawer loop pulls. The fittings, particularly the lock plates and corner braces, are masterfully chased with birds and rampant lions among vegetation.

Both the materials, decoration, and intricate fittings of this cabinet point to its origin in the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, likely in Thane.<sup>1</sup> A comparable writing box (34.3 × 30.8 × 41.5 cm) from the same production, featuring similar decoration and likely made in the same workshop in Thane, is held in deposit at the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Oporto (inv. 41 Mob CMP/MNSR) from the collection of the Museu da Cidade (Câmara Municipal do Porto).<sup>2</sup> HMC

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104; and *idem*, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and ‘Lacquerware’ from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), pp. 91–94, figs. 51 and 54, cat. 45.



## 29

## A DOMINICAN INDO-PORTUGUESE COCHIN WRITING CABINET

Teak, ebony, rosewood, and iron; tinned iron fittings

India, Cochin; 1550–1650

Dim.: 15.8 × 23.3 × 18.0 cm

F1459

Provenance: S. F. collection, Oporto



This small fall-front writing cabinet or jewellery box was made in Portuguese-ruled Cochin (Kochi) in Kerala between the mid-sixteenth century and the mid-seventeenth-century.

Made in teak (*Tectona grandis*), this writing cabinet is veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) and decorated with ebonised East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) and ivory inlays. It bears the coat of arms of the Dominican Order on top, and on the exterior side of the fall-front a dog holds a torch in its teeth, also part of the order's heraldry. The fittings, all in tinned wrought iron, include the openwork escutcheon-shaped lock plate, the side handles, the round nails pinning the interior hinges of the fall front, and the drawer pulls. When open, the cabinet reveals four drawers, mimicking six, set in two rows.

Between 1503 and 1663, the Portuguese transformed Cochin into a major commercial centre in the Indian Ocean, challenging pre-existing trading networks. Portuguese trade established Cochin into the leading port on the Malabar Coast, with development concentrated in the southern part of the city (Lower Cochin or 'Cochim de baixo'), known today as Fort Kochi. Lower Cochin became a Portuguese city in its own right—with a hospital, warehouse, customs house, prison, city hall, the Episcopal Palace, and the captain's house—a statute it acquired in 1527.

While Portuguese Cochin is mainly recognised for the highly lucrative spice trade which made its residents prosperous, seminal

research by José Jordão Felgueiras has helped to identify the city as a production centre for furniture made from local hardwoods.<sup>1</sup> He demonstrated that trunks, travelling chests and large boxes made from anjili wood (*Artocarpus hirsutus*), known as angelim in Portuguese sources, were produced in or around Cochin. In addition to wood, the Kingdom of Cochin was rich in iron and steel, which were the material of choice for the fittings applied to furniture produced in the region. Thus, contrary to other Indian productions, the pieces made in Cochin have invariably tinned iron fittings.

From seventeenth-century accounts penned after the Dutch took control of the city in 1663, we know that in besides these pieces made from anjili wood, other more complex objects such as cabinets, fall-front writing cabinets and tables were made from teak and ebony (or dark rosewood).

Furniture made in Cochin combining ebony with teak falls into three different decorative styles: one characterised by straight narrow borders in ebony against the orange-like teak (sometimes highlighted with ivory fillets); another Islamicate, with large Timurid-style cartouches and motifs set in twofold symmetry; and a third, also highly stylised, in which the design is inspired by Mannerist *feronneries* and *arabesques*, derived from European decorative prints or even Western fabrics.<sup>2</sup> The first group is more abundant, while the second—to which this cabinet belongs—is rare; its decorative designs are similar to those deployed on Goan pieces, highlighting the same contrast between dark hardwood over a teak ground, without ivory decorative pins. Restrained in their style and decoration, and beautifully constructed, these pieces take advantage of the fine qualities of the woods employed, with the simple tinned iron fittings highlighting this unique, still underappreciated production.

A larger (25.0 × 41.0 × 32.5 cm) fall-front writing cabinet of the same group in a Portuguese private collection similarly bears the heraldry of the Dominicans, also highlighted with ivory inlays.<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> FELGUEIRAS, José Jordão, 'Arcas Indo-Portuguesas de Cochim', in *Oceanos* 19–20 (1994), pp. 34–41; and DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 82–89.

<sup>2</sup> On this production, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 129–140.

<sup>3</sup> DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, p. 58.



## 30

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE SACRISTY CHEST FROM THE CONVENT OF ST. AUGUSTINE, OLD GOA

Teakwood, ebony and brass fittings

Goa, 17th century

Dim.: 392.0 × 119.0 × 129.0 cm

A262

Provenance: M.H.R. collection, Lisbon

Published: *Artes e Leilões* (2009), *L+Artes* (2009) and *DIAS, Pedro, 'Mobiliário Indo-Português'* (2013)



Ruins of the Convent of  
St. Augustine, Old Goa

A truly exceptional Indo-Portuguese vestment chest (*arcas*) made by two Portuguese cabinetmakers, Diogo Moniz and Manuel Rodrigues (1620–1635), in charge of the woodworks at the Church of Our Lady of Grace in the Convent of St Augustine in Monte Santo, Old Goa.

It comprises two symmetric sections made from teak with ebony mouldings. The front, set with two doors on the sides in ebony inlay and gilded decorative nails, features two double headed eagles, the insignia of the Augustinian Order; four large drawers

are set in the centre with crenelated ebony mouldings. Given their size, the drawers slide on small ebony pulleys set on the inner rulers to facilitate their opening. It is set on top of lion-dogs carved from teak. While the structure is teak, the openwork fittings are gilded copper.

The construction of this monastery, the largest convent of Old Goa, started in 1587 and was completed in 1602. With the expulsion of the religious orders from Goa, it was abandoned in 1833, while the dome fell to the ground in 1842 and the frontispiece of the building finally collapsed in 1931. Originally there was a pair of vestment chest inside the sacristy of the convent, which were removed before it collapsed, the second one being in the Church of St Anne (Santana) in Talaulim, Old Goa, in a poor state of preservation.

In Prof. Vitor Serrão's words: (...) *it is a very important piece of Luso-Goan art from the time of D. Aleixo de Meneses and his cultural milieu in his so-called 'Rome of the East', and a very important testimony of the artistic heritage of the former Portuguese Empire, produced in the so-called Goan Mannerism, at a time when the city, then at the height of its splendor, was considered to be the 'Rome of the East' (...) the large vestment chest in exotic wood featuring a geometric design and set with emblems of the Order of Saint Augustin and decorated fittings, is a rare piece of liturgical furniture of the Counter-Reformation, conveying an erudite, deliberately austere taste, and yet with its mixed decoration, a testimony to an ancient grandeur. It belonged to the same Augustinian monastery of Our Lady of Grace in Goa where it decorated the large Sacristy, which composes the once sacristy chest, known from archival documents (Historical Archives of Goa), to be made in 1617 by two master carpenters, Diogo Moniz and Manuel Rodrigues, of which half was transferred in the nineteenth century—after the collapse of the church of Our Lady of Grace—to the sacristy of the church of Talaulim, where a fragment of the vestment chest still remains, of which we know that it comprised two sections which decorated the side walls of the sacristy. We owe to the art historian José Meco the identification of the origin of this second section in Talaulim, a key element for ascertaining the origin of the first section which is now in Lisbon (...).*

The architect Hélder Carita adds that: (...) *the first time I saw the Augustinian chest, I was somewhat stunned by the presence of such an exceptional piece in Portugal—I could not believe it. If in our museums and rich private collections there is an abundance of cabinets, chests, bedframes, tables and oratories, no similar artwork seems to have been preserved (...). With scholarly works, not only by Professor Pedro Dias, but also by Professor Vítor Serrão, we arrived at the conclusion that we were really in the presence of the old sacristy vestment from the Convent of the Augustinians (...).* ✎ MR



Insignia of Augustinian Order





## 31

**A TWO-DOOR INDO-PORTUGUESE CABINET ON STAND DEPICTING PORTUGUESE NOBLEMEN HUNTING SCENES**

Teak, ebony, rosewood, sandalwood, ivory, bone, brass, iron and gilt-copper

India, probably Thane; 1560–1630

Dim.: 127.0 × 97.0 × 52.2 cm

A609

Provenance: S. F. collection, Portugal



This large, imposing two-door cabinet on a stand is constructed from teak (*Tectona grandis*), veneered with Ceylon ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*), and decorated with East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), sandalwood (*Santalum album*), elephant ivory, and green-dyed bone inlays, all secured with small brass pins. It was likely produced in the Portuguese-ruled village of Thane.

The sumptuous inlaid decoration is further highlighted by numerous pierced openwork fire-gilt copper fittings, including corner braces, escutcheon-shaped lock plates, drawer pulls, hinges, cast spiralled handles for the sides and large stand drawers, and swirling, large dome-shaped nails.

This exceptional piece of furniture comprises two sections: a caisson fitted with two doors and many drawers on the inside, and an elaborate stand, with an arched void lower section and two drawers above.

The caisson is intricately decorated on all sides, except for the back and underside, following a carpet-like composition. All decorated exterior sides feature wide borders of repeating flowering

plants arranged symmetrically, framed by a narrow outer border of ivory quatrefoils and, inside, two friezes: one of alternating quatrefoils in ivory and lozenges in rosewood and sandalwood, and the other chequered in ebony and ivory. The central fields feature a seamless isometric cube pattern, alternating ebony, green-dyed bone, and ivory. The top is similarly decorated, but its central field is divided into three panels: a large flowering plant in the middle, and two panels of the cube pattern on either side.

When opened, the interior of the doors follows a similar carpet-like scheme, with a wide border of repeating flowering plants and narrower framing bands, but with a figurative square central field. Flanking a large flowering plant—blooming with differently shaped flowers and enlivened by perched birds—are two figures in local dress, male and female, underscoring the nuptial character of this and other luxury pieces made for export in Portuguese-ruled Asia.

The cabinet reveals twelve drawers set in four rows, with two square drawers at the sides occupying the two central rows.





The drawer fronts replicate the same carpet-like composition, with narrow quatrefoil friezes, and central fields with flowering plants flanked by deer—either in pairs or chased by tigers—on the top row; pairs of peafowl and pelicans on the two central rows; local couples on the two square drawers; and hunting scenes on the lower row depicting Portuguese nobleman shooting or brandishing spears at rampant tigers.

The open, arched stand features two large drawers in the upper section, their fronts decorated with paired flowering plants, while the spandrels are adorned with flowering branches. The voided interior the same type of wide floral border on the sides of the caisson. The legs, carved from solid rosewood and inlaid with ivory, sandalwood, and green-dyed bone, take the form of *nāgiṇī*—mythical beings depicted with the head and torso of a woman, with piercing ivory inlaid eyes, touching their breasts, symbolising fertility, and coiled serpents as their lower bodies.

In Hindu culture, *nāgas* and their female counterparts, *nāgiṇī*, are revered nature spirits associated with water. They are considered protectors of springs and wells, propitiators of rain, and symbols of fertility.<sup>1</sup> The *nāgiṇī* also serve an apotropaic function, warding off evil and protecting the valuables stored within such

furniture. The coiled lower bodies of the *nāgiṇī* rest on square prisms decorated with flowering plants.

Given that sixteenth-century Portuguese records mention the village of Taná, or Thane—today part of the city of Mumbai (Bombay)—as home to a flourishing community of Muslim craftsmen and a centre for producing precious marquetry furniture, it is highly probable that this cabinet originated in Thane, then part of the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.<sup>2</sup>

This exquisite two-door cabinet on a stand belongs to an exceptional group of rare early furniture made for the Portuguese market, whose geographical origin, decorative inspirations (Iranian, Ottoman, and European), and historical production context have only recently been identified.<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> OLDHAM, Charles F., 'The Nāgas. A Contribution to the History of Serpent-Worship', *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 33 (1901), pp. 461–473.

<sup>2</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see MENDIRATTA, Sidh Losa, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, Pius (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; IDEM, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104; and IDEM, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024.



## 32

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE DAIS TABLE

Teak, ebony, rosewood, sandalwood, ivory, dyed bone, brass and gilt-copper  
 Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, probably Thane; 1560–1620  
 Dim.: 50.7 × 65.2 × 46.0 cm

A619

Provenance: S. F. collection, Portugal



This exceptional dais table<sup>1</sup>, a type of furniture recorded in contemporary Portuguese documents as *bufete*, dates from the second half of the sixteenth century or the first decades of the seventeenth century. Likely made in Thane (in present-day Maharashtra) in the then Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, near Bombay, it represents the best marquetry furniture produced in this town under Portuguese rule.

Made from teak (*Tectona grandis*) and thickly veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*), with solid Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) legs, it is masterfully decorated with ivory, green-dyed bone, rosewood and sandalwood (*Santalum album*) inlays secured with brass pins. The gilt-copper fittings include openwork corner braces protecting the corners of the top, pierced openwork escutcheon-shaped lock plates, swirl pulls on the drawers' fronts, and decorative domed nails.

The decoration on the table's exuberant top, following a carpet-like composition, features a large central field with a central medallion boasting a polylobate, Islamic-style rosette flanked by flowering plants emerging from pots. The field is bordered by a wide border of floral sprays with stylised flowers, with crowned double-headed eagles set at the corners. The double-headed eagle, known locally as *gandabherunda*, is a Hindu mythological bird imbued

with magical strength used to ward off evil and protect the precious objects stored inside the drawers below. Between the central field and the wide border there are narrow borders with ivory rosettes set at tight intervals, a type of frieze used throughout the table, notably on the feet and stretchers. The wide border's floral decoration is also deployed on the front of the two drawers and on the sides of the waist of the table, in panels with ivory rosette friezes.

The legs and stretchers follow a European prototype, while the feet take the form of *jatayuh*, the vulture associated with Rama. *Jatayuh* (literally 'strong wind') is the 'devout bird' of Rama and a Hindu demi-god. The king of the vultures as portrayed in the epic *Ramayana*, *jatayuh* is the youngest son of Aruna, the vehicle of the sun-god Surya. This depiction, as with the double-headed eagles, has a clear apotropaic function, warding off evil.

This type of luxurious furniture was prevalent in the interiors of European noble and patrician households and portable writing and table cabinets, alongside tables and smaller dais tables of this type were a basic requirement for European officials, merchants and traders living and travelling in Asia.<sup>2</sup>

Small and precious, these were made in Asia with exotic and expensive materials and were much admired and avidly sought after in Europe due not only to their appealing design but also to

<sup>1</sup> A table that was placed on top of platforms, usually the height of a step, covered with rich carpets. Commonly used in Portugal, a country with Islamic roots, it was where the ladies of the court sat, propped up on cushions, for various tasks such as embroidery, writing, reading and conversation. Its use can be found in various documents from the 16th century and its reference extends mainly to the end of the 18th century.

<sup>2</sup> See JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002; and DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2006.



their technical perfection. Given that sixteenth-century Portuguese records mention the village of Taná, or Thane—today part of the city of Mumbai (Bombay)—in which a large community of Muslim craftsmen flourished, as the origin of precious marquetry furniture, it is highly probable that the centre of production of this dais table was precisely Thane, then part of the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.<sup>3</sup>

The present dais table belongs to an exceptional group of rare, early furniture made for the Portuguese market, which has only recently been securely identified in terms of its geographical origin, decorative sources of inspiration (Iranian, Ottoman, and European) and historical context of production.<sup>4</sup> *HMC*

<sup>3</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see MENDIRATTA, Sidh Losa, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, Pius (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.

<sup>4</sup> See Hugo CRESPO, Miguel, *Choices*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; IDEM, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104; and IDEM, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 8–24.

## 33

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE MARQUETRY THANE DAIS TABLE

Teak, ebony, East Indian rosewood, ivory and dyed bone; gilt copper elements

Portuguese State of India, Northern Province, probably Thane, Bombay (Mumbai), late 16th century

Dim.: 59.0 × 77.6 × 52.0 cm

A562

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



This precious table, of a typology recorded in contemporary sources as a *bufete* and probably made in Thane, near Bombay (present-day Maharashtra), is a worthy representative of the best marquetry furniture produced in that Portuguese controlled territory during the second half of the 16th century. Characterised by its ebony (*Dyospiros ebenum*) veneered teak (*Tectona grandis*) carcass and solid Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) legs, it is masterfully inlaid in ivory, green dyed bone and teak.

The table top decorative composition consists of a central field with isometric pattern of cubes, alternating ebony, rosewood, ivory and green dyed bone elements, framed by a broad foliage border, symmetrical and Persian in nature as is typical of this production, in a language often confused with Mughal influence. This mirrored decoration is repeated on the two drawers' fronts and on the lateral panels of quatrefoil borders, also characteristic of this earlier manufacture. The leg's stretchers adopt the original European prototype, albeit with *jatayu* shaped feet.

Luxurious furniture, and other imported exotic items, were prevalent in late-16th century European aristocratic and other wealthy households. These included portable writing and table top cabinets alongside a range of tables, such as the present example,

which were also basic requirements for European officials, merchants and traders settling or travelling in Asia.<sup>1</sup> Small sized and precious, these tables were made of exotic and precious materials, which were much admired, and avidly sought after in Europe, for their appealing design and technical accomplishment.

Given that contemporary Portuguese records refer the village of 'Taná', or Thane (now part of Mumbai), as a flourishing Muslim craftsmen community and source of valuable marquetry furniture, it is highly likely that this precious dais table originates from that production centre, then part of Portuguese India Northern Province.<sup>2</sup>

The present table belongs to the exceptional group of rare furniture made for the Portuguese market, which has only recently been identified in regards to its geographical origin, decorative inspiration sources (Iranian, Ottoman, and European) and historical production context.<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> See: JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002; and DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> On Portuguese-ruled Thane, see MENDIRATTA, Sidh Lusa, 'Two Towns and a Villa. Baçaim, Chaul and Taná: The Defensive Structure of Three Indo-Portuguese Settlements in Northern Province of the Estado da Índia', in SHARMA, Yogesh, MALENKANDATHIL, (eds.), *Medieval Cities in India*, New Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.

<sup>3</sup> See: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104.



## 34

## AN INDO-PORTUGUESE SINDH GAMES BOX

Teak, ebony, sandalwood, ivory, sadeli, and brass

India (present-day Pakistan), probably Thatta; 1580–1620

Dim.: 3.5 × 47.5 × 53.0 cm (opened)

F1474

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon



This games box was likely made in Thatta, in present-day Pakistan, between the last decades of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> Made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), it is veneered with Ceylon ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) and sandalwood (*Santalum album*) and inlaid with elephant ivory and *sadeli* (micro-mosaic).

Modelled on a prototype akin to earlier Spanish *taracea* games boxes, it features, when open, a board for chess, draughts, and Hispanic-style backgammon on one side, and on the reverse (the inside of the box), a board for the Italian-style backgammon, with elongated ‘tongues’ of alternating ivory and sandalwood. As with other known boards from this production based in Sind, including flat reversible game boards and folding game boards, this games box features highly elaborate arabesque borders and raised frames inlaid with eight-petaled rosettes.

Among the rarest and most fascinating objects produced in India for export to European markets in the early modern period, game boards epitomise the artistic confluence at work in the subcontinent during the so-called Age of Discovery, as reflected in their refined manufacturing techniques and decoration.<sup>2</sup> These include flat reversible boards, flat folding boards, games boxes (flat boards folding into a box), and boards folding into oblong boxes with drawers. Flat reversible boards represent the simplest form,

whereas flat folding boards, including games boxes with interior compartments for storing game pieces, were better suited to travel. While there are several examples of flat reversible boards and even of boards folding into oblong boxes from this production based in Sind, the present example is the only games box known to us.

The production of Indian game boards, typically made from precious woods and decorated with marquetry and inlay is inseparable from the contemporary tradition of fine cabinetmaking. Recent research, integrating contemporary documentary sources with in-depth analysis of surviving objects and paying special attention to materials, production techniques, and decorative repertoire, has illuminated the various production centres responsible for these remarkable artefacts.<sup>3</sup> Linking East and West, chess—thought to have originated in India around the sixth century—and chessboards were among the earliest items encountered by Europeans in India in the early sixteenth century. At the Portuguese court, chess was held in high regard, with King Sebastião I (r. 1557–1578) renowned as a skilled player.<sup>4</sup>

When the Portuguese ventured to the Indies, chess undoubtedly accompanied them as a favoured pastime. François Pyrard de Laval (c. 1578–c. 1623), in his detailed account of travels to India (1601–1611), observed in 1608 that the Portuguese exhibited ‘a great fondness for chess, draughts, and other board games’. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> Published in CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, ‘The Game of Empires: Indian Chessboards and Artistic Exchange in the Age of Discovery’, in HORTA-OSÓRIO, António, CRUMILLER, Jonathan (eds.), *The Horta-Osório Collection of Antique Chess Sets*. Volume 1. India, Lisbon, António Horta-Osório, 2025, pp. 364–424, 371, 378–379, figs. 8–10.

<sup>2</sup> For a recent overview of these boards, see IDEM, *ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> MARKL, Dagoberto L., ‘O Xadrez e os Descobrimentos. O Tempo de João de Barros (1496–1570)’, in *Oceanos*, 27 (1996), pp. 92–98.



# Ceylon



Map of Ceylon, A. Mallet, 1686

## SINHALESE-PORTUGUESE IVORIES

The Portuguese presence in Ceylon, known today as Sri Lanka, started in the early 16th century, and continued for over 150 years, till 1658. The political connections between the two kingdoms were strengthened when Ceylon's Ruler Bhuvaneka Bahu (1521–1561) was aided by the Portuguese king D. João III (1521–1557) in the defeat of his rivals. A Ceylonese embassy was sent to Lisbon in 1542, resulting in the symbolic coronation of the Sinhalese governor by D. João III and various precious objects, including some ivory pieces, were offered to the Royal Court of Portugal. From this date starts the artistic production intended for Portugal, initially from the royal workshops, but followed by other more generalized artisan producers.

These workshops and craftsmen produced pieces of the highest quality and great finesse, combining Ceylonese traditional forms and motifs with the imagery from the European engravings and sculptures from this period. These artistic influences were mainly controlled by the cultural and missionary spheres, as they need those votive and religious pieces for the ongoing process of education and evangelization. Primarily Jesuit, the role of various other Orders was influential in the production of this style of Sinhalese-Portuguese ivory.

The Ceylonese craftsmen and artists dedicated themselves to specializing in working in ivory, on items of great value, including sculpted and carved figures, caskets, writing boxes, and plaques in high and medium relief. The superb skills and mastery of these craftsmen were recognized and often mentioned in the literature of the period. In exclaiming these skills, the Dutch writer and traveler Jan Van Linschoten (1563–1611) said the skill talent and ingenuity of the indigenous Ceylonese working in ivory 'was a marvel to behold', and the island, with its prodigious abundance and quality of this material, due to the enormous number of elephants, was the best and most noble region of all India.

From this perfect symbiosis of craftsmanship and material, resulted the Sinhalese-Portuguese works of art, with an immense refinement, ingenuity and quality, which are recognized today as the most naturalistic and accomplished works the Portuguese State of India produced. ✓

### A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE TABERNACLE MASTERPIECE

Ivory and gilt copper; silver fittings

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka), possibly Colombo; 1590–1630

Dim.: 22.8 × 9.8 × 9.8 cm

F1374

Provenance: Hermann Baer, London; Mrs. B., Belgium after 1977



Exceptional and of impressive mastery, this tabernacle of pierced and finely carved ivory plaques construction, was produced in Ceylon, present day Sri Lanka, during the period of Portuguese rule.<sup>1</sup> The raw material whiteness and density suggests that it was extracted from Asian elephant tusks, in this instance the autochthonous subspecies *Elephas maximus maximus*.

On account of its superb carving quality, it is viable to propose the intervention of a single master carver on its main structure, while the essentially decorative elements, such as the moulded socle, entablature and other architectural details, were likely produced by another artisan from the same workshop.

The object's function, as an altar top tabernacle, is implicit in its reduced dimensions and architectural characteristics. The iconography featured in one of the triangular pyramidal roof panels—a chalice raised by two keeling Angels surmounted by the Communion Host and Cross, and crowned by the Holy Ghost—evidences its purpose: the safekeeping of the Communion Hosts, probably in a silver or gold round box or pyx. For its overall qualities it was intended for a small domestic chapel. Regrettably, the absence of inscriptions, heraldic or otherwise, prevents the identification of its owner or of the patron that commissioned it.

Of architectural design and parallelepiped structure, with a front door of two leaves and pyramidal roof, its format is reminiscent of the prayer houses destined for the protection of Hindu or Buddhist religious images.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the construction, of typical joinery techniques, reflects Ceylon's religious wooden buildings. Equally reminiscent of contemporary local architecture are the lotus flower petals frieze, evident on the stepped socle, and the complex pilasters of slender columns protruding from the corner edges.

<sup>1</sup> For carved ivories produced in Portuguese ruled Ceylon, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, 'The Pangolin Fan and the Ceylonese Ivory Carving Tradition', in CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, *The 'Pangolin Fan'. An Imperial Ivory Fan from Ceylon. Artistic Confluence and Global Gift Exchange between Sri Lanka and Renaissance Portugal*, Buenos Aires, Jaime Eguiguren Art & Antiques, 2022, pp. 109–219.

<sup>2</sup> For this type of religious structure, see: ZOYSA, Asoka de, JAYATHILAKA, Vajira Nalinda, *Buddhist Image Houses. The evolution of temple design from the Kandyan Era to Independence*, Colombo, Samkathana Research Centre, Faculty of Humanities, University of Kelaniya, 2015; and CHANDRASEKARA, Dhammika P., SILVA, Kapita D., *The Tāmpitavihāras of Sri Lanka. Elevated Image-Houses in Buddhist Architecture*, London, Anthem Press, 2021.



The tabernacle copious iconography refers to scenes of the Life of the Christ Child. The larger rectangular plaques that define the structure depict the Visitation, partitioned by the door's leaves, The Adoration of The Shepherds, The Circumcision and The Flight into Egypt. The four triangular roof panels, in turn, portray The Sleeping Child Jesus watched by The Virgin Mary, The *Salvator Mundi* flanked by Angels, The Virgin Mary with Christ holding The Cross and the Communion Host flanked by Angels.

Such compositions are inspired by printed sources originally engraved by the Wierix brothers and other contemporary Dutch artists, the Adoration of The Shepherds and the Sleeping Child being attributable to Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1619).<sup>3</sup>

The Ceylonese master carver interpretation of these contemporary Dutch prints, most certainly supplied by the Portuguese patron that commissioned the tabernacle, testifies to a consider-

able knowledge of the European artistic grammar. An object of major historic and artistic relevance as a Catholic art masterpiece produced in Ceylon and fully indigenized, its relevance is nonetheless reinforced by the craftsman mastery. Such level of artistic and religious confluence, or interlacing, associated to the clearly exceptional carving qualities, could only be achievable in Colombo, Portuguese ruled Ceylon capital city, while the iconographic sources point to a manufacture date between 1590 and 1630.

For its age, fragility and delicate openwork carvings, the structure reveals exceptional conservation condition. Despite the very light evidence of use, the minor losses, fractures, and polished surface wear, the tabernacle underwent minor restoration, probably in the 19th century, namely on the door pulls and top finial. These interventions became clear on dismantling the structure for research purposes, its reassembling being scientifically su-

<sup>3</sup> MAUQUOUY-HENDRICKX, Marie, *Les Estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier. Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, Bruxelles, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, 1978, p. 112 (cat. 627, illustration 83) for the Adoration of The Shepherds; and pp. 82–83 (cats. 459–462, and 464) for the Sleeping Jesus.



pervised to restore it to its original structural condition. As such, the replacement finial to the top of the roof replicates that on the Ceylon ivory temple (dim.: 69.0 × 31.5 × 23.5 cm) at the National Museum of Ancient Art, in Lisbon (inv. 1 Div), and the cast silver door fittings follow analogous elements from other extant objects of identical origin and dating.<sup>4</sup>

Close inspection of the structure inner surfaces revealed the presence of oxidized copper pins, which would have originally fixed gilt copper sheets to the openwork plaques, as seen in other contemporary objects currently in Lisbon, Vienna and Madrid collections. The current replacement of gilt copper linings were made according to materials and techniques identified in an ivory chest (14.8 × 48.4 × 30.3 cm) from Madrid's National Decorative

Arts Museum collection<sup>5</sup>, and identically goldleaf gilt and dark shellac coated.

Recently identified and since returned to its original aspect, this altar tabernacle embodies the most relevant addition to the current knowledge of religious carved paraphernalia produced in Portuguese ruled Ceylon. Jewel like, and unparalleled for its structural openwork plaques, it illustrates to perfection the novel type of devotional art introduced by the newly arrived Europeans, in the complex Ceylonese religious landscape. In addition, it is also a powerful testimony to the Tridentine reformed Liturgy in the Portuguese overseas territories, and to the process of artistic indigenization fostered by this religious encounter. *HMC*

<sup>4</sup> TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Mobiliário Português dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, pp. 174–175.

<sup>5</sup> SÁDABA, María José Cortés, BONILLO, Maite Rodríguez, 'Arquetas, cofres y cajitas', *Galería Antiquaria 210* (2002), pp. 58–64, in p. 61; and *Don Quijote de la Mancha. La sombra del caballero* (cat.), Madrid, Empresa pública Don Quijote de La Mancha, 2005, p. 341.

## 36

## A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CALVARY

Ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), probably Colombo; 1580–1620

Dim: 19.2 × 15.5 cm

F1461

Provenance: Fernando Távora, Oporto

This extraordinary ivory carving, depicting Calvary, was made in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon, probably around Colombo, between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

A sculptural group, it originally comprised several elements, some fully carved in the round, and a principal section—with a flat back and base—carved in high relief. Alongside the relief, and its projecting, scalloped ledge, the group comprised a Crucified Christ, carved in the round, crowning the relief in the centre, flanked by two bandits crucified alongside Jesus; Dismas, the ‘Good Thief’ on Christ’s right, and Gestas, the unrepentant thief, on Christ’s left. Of these elements, what survives is the large relief with its ledge and skull—carved in the round and sitting prominently in front of the scene—and one of the two criminals, on the viewer’s right, identified as the ‘Impenitent Thief’.

The relief is masterfully carved, showcasing the quintessential features of Ceylonese ivory carving, namely its meticulous attention to detail, restrained naturalism—especially noticeable on the crucified thief—and the virtuosic folds of drapery, with their sinuous hems.

Based on a contemporary European engraving—likely one of several prints of this theme produced by the Wierix brothers and widely disseminated in Portuguese-influenced Asia by Jesuit missionaries—it depicts, at its centre, Christ’s cross on Golgotha.

The cross is clasped with both hands by a kneeling Mary Magdalene, depicted with loose, cascading hair; nearby sits her usual attribute, the covered ointment pot. The anguished Magdalene is flanked on the left by a group of mourning ladies, all standing, their heads covered with mantles and all with nimbuses over their heads; it is thus curious that the Magdalene is not haloed, as in some surviving similar pieces. The ladies, alongside the prostrated Magdalene, are the Three Maries mentioned in the narratives of the canonical gospels, which include the Virgin Mary and Mary of Cleophas.

On the right, a single male figure, St John the Evangelist, similarly haloed with a nimbus, holding a book (the Gospel), looking up towards Christ and pointing to Him with his raised hand. Against the flat ground of the relief, the *Arma Christi*, or Instruments of the Passion—objects associated with Jesus Christ’s suffering and crucifixion—hover in a supernatural, unworldly manner. Apart from the cross itself, these include the ladder, set to the right of the cross and used for the Deposition; the nails; the hammer and pincers; and the scourge, all on the right; and, on the left side of the cross, the rooster and the lance (the spear used by the soldier Longinus to pierce Christ’s side). On the left side there are also bones hovering against the background, as a reference to Golgotha (literally, the ‘Place of the Skull’, traditionally understood either as a skull-shaped hill or as a site associated with Adam’s burial, and thus a symbol of victory over death. This explains the prominence and scale of the skull, identified as the ‘Skull of Adam’, beautifully carved in the round.

Among the religious ivory carvings made in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon, the most abundant are those related to the Passion of Christ, with figures of the Crucified Christ of different sizes and levels of carving quality, with hundreds of surviving examples.<sup>1</sup> Depictions of the Calvary, combining high-relief flat elements with fully sculptural elements such as the present piece, are much less frequent.<sup>2</sup>

This extraordinary carving was owned by the late Portuguese architect, Fernando Távora (1923–2005).<sup>3</sup> When it was first published by Bernardo Ferrão de Távora e Távora (1913–1982)—for decades the authority on religious Asian ivory carvings made for export to European, mainly Iberian, markets, and brother of the collector—he described it as the most complete example. The fragility of such sculptural groups has meant that few complete examples have survived.<sup>4</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> For religious ivory carvings made in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> *IDEM*, *ibidem*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Published in FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983, p. 131, cat. 170; and RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, p. 135, cat. 364.

<sup>4</sup> CRESPO, *An Altar Tabernacle*, p. 67, fig. 35, for a complete example.



## 37

**A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY ALTAR PLAQUE**

Ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), 17th century

Dim.: 15.8 × 8.8 × 1.0 cm

F705

*Provenance: Artur de Sandão collection**Exhibited: 'A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim', F. Gulbenkian, Lisbon, 1991, cat. 181, p. 83*

Rectangular ivory plaque, encased by a plain framing abasement. In the centre a detailed low-relief depicting Our Lady of The Rosary holding Baby Jesus in her right arm, and fully encircled by a rosary. In her left hand, the Virgin holds a lotus flower in a manner characteristic of Hindu iconography which extends to the elegantly tapered face, the long, thick-locked centre-parted hairstyle falling over her shoulders and back, and the carefully worked and detailed vestments which clearly allude to an Indian sari model.

Two angels holding the rosary fill the upper corners of the composition while at the lower corners, the void is filled by winged cherubs in a characteristically Ceylonese influenced interpretation: fine tight lips, delicately hooked nose and straight short hair.

This plaque can be confidently included in the group of typically 17th century imagery used in the spreading of the Christian cult and the praying of the Rosary, promoted in Europe from the mid 15th century onwards and popularized in the 17th century, when the demand for this specific imagery was at its height and widely available in a variety of media such as loose engravings or illustrations in prayer books, which were often reinterpreted by the Ceylonese workshops. ↗



## 38

## A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), probably Colombo; 1600–1630

Dim.: 18.5 × 7.0 × 6.0 cm

F1451

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



This remarkable figurine of the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd, carved in ivory in Portuguese ruled Ceylon, is a rare testimony to the development of this iconography in Asia.

Likely devised in Ceilão—as the Portuguese called it—at the turn of the seventeenth century and further elaborated in Goa, the seat of the Portuguese Sate of India, the iconography of the Good Shepherd bridges European and Asian religious traditions, merging Buddhist imagery (the sleeping and meditative Buddha) with Hindu iconography (Krishna Gopala, the cowherd). From South Asia, it extended into other regions of Asia under European influence. Its imagery alludes to the evangelical episode of the Good Shepherd, the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:10–14; Luke 15:1–7).

Composed of several pieces of ivory, the sculpture depicts the Good Shepherd seated upon a stylised human heart pierced by arrows, raised on a locally derived, squared, tiered, moulded pedestal—known in Sanskrit as *pitha* (literally ‘seat’). A small hole at the top of the Child’s head suggests that the figurine was once adorned with a metal halo, likely of silver. The meditative figure of the Child Jesus, with protruding curls of hair reminiscent of local Sri Lankan devotional images of the Buddha and half-closed almond-shaped eyes, rests his head on the palm of his right hand. He wears sandals and a knee-length shepherd’s tunic with ball-shaped fleece curls, fastened at the waist with a knotted belt from which hangs a gourd-shaped bottle. With his left hand, the Child

Jesus caresses a crouching sheep resting on his left knee, while other perches on his left shoulder.

This figurine’s iconography corresponds to one of the earliest stages in the development of the Good Shepherd type, exemplified by the rock-crystal figure now in the Wallace Collection, London, whose original form is known from a seventeenth-century engraving.<sup>1</sup> As with the present example, the Wallace Good Shepherd sits cross-legged and once rested upon a heart pierced with arrows, raised on a stepped pedestal. The most complete version of this stage in the development of the Good Shepherd iconography—retaining much of its original polychromy and gilding and housed in a contemporary Portuguese portable oratory—belongs to a private Portuguese collection.<sup>2</sup> Apart from its preserved polychromy, it differs little from the present sculpture, both in iconography and in the high quality of its carving. — HMC

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 59–61.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, pp. 42–45, fig. 18.



## 39

## A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory with polychromy and gilding

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), probably Colombo; 1580–1620

Dim.: 13.5 × 7.0 × 3.0 cm

F1450

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal

This small and rare ivory figurine of the Child Jesus as Good Shepherd was made in early seventeenth-century Ceylon and carved in two sections. The upper section depicts the Good Shepherd seated atop of a stylised human heart, while the lower is in the shape of an architectural pedestal.

The meditative figure of the Child Jesus, with gilded, raised curls of hair reminiscent of local Sri Lankan devotional images of the Buddha and half-closed almond-shaped eyes, gently inclines his head towards his right hand. He wears sandals and a knee-length shepherd's tunic, characterised by large fleece curls and a downward collar, belted with a knot at the front from which hangs a gourd-shaped bottle. The trimmings of the tunic, including the collar and cuffs, as well as the knotted belt, the strap suspending the bottle, and the sandals straps, are painted bright red and highlighted in gold. With his left hand, the Child Jesus caresses a crouching sheep resting on his left knee.

The stylised heart, depicted as an open, vertically sectioned form, is painted a vivid red, with a Latin inscription in gold running along its lower edge: 'COR M[EV]M VIGILAT'. The squared base, with a depression or square recess on top to hold the heart, features a prominent winged cherub at the front, bordered by a narrow-pearled frieze, and is topped on the left side with a recumbent sheep.

As recently discussed, this figurine's iconography likely corresponds to the earliest stage in the development of the Good Shepherd type, perfectly exemplified by the rock-crystal figurine now in the Wallace Collection, London, in its original form as known from a seventeenth-century engraving.<sup>1</sup> As the inscription on this unique example attests, the iconography derives from a print by Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1619) titled *Origo casti cordis* ('Origin of the Chaste Heart'), an engraving which includes a Latin

passage from the Song of Songs (5:2): '*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*' ('I sleep, but my heart keeps watch').<sup>2</sup>

Created in Ceylon seemingly under the watchful eye of Jesuit missionaries, the iconography of the Child Jesus as Good Shepherd would undergo a significant development in Portuguese-ruled India, particularly in Goa, where numerous examples in varied iterations were produced in large numbers both for export to the Iberian market and for local consumption among newly converted Christians.

As a rule in its general iconography, the Child Jesus is depicted as the sleeping shepherd after recovering his lost sheep, with one resting on his lap while another sits on his shoulder—an image corresponding to the first of the three parables of mercy (Matthew 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7).

Francisco Hipólito Raposo, in the 1991 exhibition he curated on the *Portuguese Expansion Overseas and the Art of Ivory*, showcased three complete examples of this type, with the Good Shepherd sited cross-legged over a heart, raised on an architectural pedestal prominently featuring a winged cherub's head.<sup>3</sup> While these three were classified as 'Indo-Portuguese' by the curator—meaning, in his view, that they were all produced in India—it is likely that the first and third were made in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon.<sup>4</sup> Their distinctive iconographic details, such as variations in the Child's tunic or the Buddhist-like curls of his hair, together with their superior carving quality, all suggest a Ceylonese origin. Another figurine, lacking its profiled base yet seemingly also made in Ceylon and sharing the same stylistic and qualitative traits, was likewise exhibited in 1991.<sup>5</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiguidades & Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 59–61.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, pp. 42–45, fig. 17.

<sup>3</sup> RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, p. 112, cats. 281–283.

<sup>4</sup> On the first example, which belonged to the collection of the Portuguese architect Fernando Távora (1923–2005) and survives with much of its original gilding and polychromy, see FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983, p. 85, cat. 112.

<sup>5</sup> RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, p. 114, cat. 286.



## 40

## A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka); 17th century

Dim.: 25.3 × 8.5 × 7.0 cm

F862

Provenance: M. H. Roque collection, Portugal

This delicate 17th century Sinhalese Portuguese ivory sculpture portrays the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Of very high carving quality, the Child features a serene dormant face, in meditative stance, with His reclining head resting against the right hand, following iconography characteristic of the first meditation of Buddha, as bodhisattva.

Among the tightly curled strands of hair, resembling cornucopias, the one on the forehead stands out, The Boudda *Urn* (Sanskrit: *ūrṇā*), representing a third eye or a whorl of white hair. It signifies divine wisdom, enlightenment, spiritual insight, and the ability to see beyond the ordinary world of suffering, usually found in local Sri Lankan devotional images.

He wears a traditional half-sleeved and knee-length shepherd's tunic, with a looped knot cord encircling his waist. The tunic is adorned with faceted diamond points simulating animal fleece and trimmed with smooth borders. He also bears His customary attributes: a pouch and a waist hanging gourd, as well as two lambs, one on his left shoulder and another on His lap, whose fleece is identical to the shepherd's garment.

Seated cross-legged, the Child rests upon a heart rising from a prismatic stand conceived as a throne. The front of the stand is adorned with a finely carved winged cherub, rendered with precise features, Sinhalese-style curled hair, and flowers upon its chest, all framed by a delicately beaded band. A frieze of diamond-shaped tips outlines the base.

This representation of the heart, which materialized at the end of the Middle Ages, probably has its roots in the theological meditation of Saint Augustine—'You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You' (Confessions, X:6,8)—and was for a long time considered one of the saint's attributes.<sup>1</sup> Its dissemination was further reinforced in the 16th century by the mystical experience of the Transverberation of the Heart of Saint Teresa of

Ávila (1560), as well as by the testimony of a Carmelite nun who claimed to have seen the Child Jesus resting on Saint Teresa's heart.<sup>2</sup>

However, the origin of this iconography may also derive from one of the engravings produced by the Wierix brothers, entitled *The Child Jesus, Savior of the World*, based on a 1577 composition by Diana Scultori (1547–1612), in which the Child is depicted seated cross-legged on a burning heart.<sup>3</sup>

This imagery may further be understood as a precursor to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was vigorously promoted by the Society of Jesus from the seventeenth century onwards, uniting mystical theology with practical spirituality.

The earliest documentary reference to this specific imagery appears in the 1682 inventory of Francisco da Gama (1565–1632), which records: '[...] *hũ menino Jesu de Marfim sobre hũ coração* [...]' (an ivory Child Jesus upon a heart).<sup>4</sup>

Unique to South Asia, the iconography of the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd appears to have originated in Ceylon in the late sixteenth century, from where it subsequently spread to Portuguese India. The increasing impact of the Good Shepherd theme led to the production of numerous carved ivory images, conceived not only as essential missionary tools but also for export. As a principal means of communication between the Catholic Church and the populations it sought to convert, this imagery frequently reveals deliberate iconographic adaptations and syncretic dialogue with native deities.

The dissemination of Christianity was a determining factor in the emergence of a broad artistic production fostered by the Portuguese presence in the East. The Good Shepherd, embodying the salvific mission of Christ, is a symbolic iconography repeatedly evoked in New Testament parables, most notably: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.' TP

<sup>1</sup> CARDOSO, Isabel Maria Alçada, "Da Humildade à caridade: o 'coração' em Santo Agostinho", *Revista Didaskalia*, vol. 47, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2017, pp. 163–167.

<sup>2</sup> OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Na Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus*, (...), Lisbon, São Roque Antiguidades e Galeria de Arte, 2024, pp. 42 and 43.

<sup>4</sup> BNP (National Library of Portugal), Códices, COD. 1986, fls 8V–20V.



## 41

**A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS SALVATOR MUNDI**

Polychrome ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka); late 16th–early 17th century

Height: 37.0 cm

F873

*Provenance: A.C.C. collection, Oporto*

Exceptionally large 16th century sculpture of remarkable sculptural quality, unquestionably a masterpiece of Ceylonese Christian imagery.

The figure is depicted standing in a majestic posture, with the raised right hand blessing, while holding the staff with the left. The right foot stands on a terrestrial orb. The socle shaft is elegantly shaped as a cherub.

The anatomy is robust but elegant, the head rounded, gently leaning forward, the expression serene. The hair evokes the snail-like curls characteristic of Buddha imagery and the almond-shaped eyes and curved brows convey a mystical and contemplative expression, reinforced by the narrow nose and small mouth. The slender body is shown nude, revealing the artist's confidence and refined technique in the interpretation of naturalistic anatomical details.

The right arm is raised shoulder height, with the second and third digits extended, blessing, with the left arm gently flexed at the elbow, hand tightly holding the staff. The legs taper towards the feet and display two naturalistic skin folds on the inner thigh. The right leg is raised and bent, the foot resting on the terrestrial globe; the left stands upright on the socle. The hands and feet are carefully detailed, with long, flattened well-defined digits and clearly outlined nails.

The figure stands on a short column shaped socle, coherent with a Ceylonese production. The square base supports a realistic cherub's head-shaped shaft, of detail and quality compatible with the figure above, suggesting a 16th rather than 17th century origin.

Beyond the conventions highlighted in the previous paragraph, more or less standardized in Ceylonese Christian art, there are other characteristics of this particular piece that convey its origins, namely the raised socle, an example of a rare Mannerist model evident in late-16th century works but not identifiable in extant contemporary Goan examples, which tend to be of less sophisticated aesthetics and detail.

The Portuguese presence in Ceylon lasted for 150 years (1505–1658), and had a considerable impact both on cultural and religious levels. This common interaction encouraged the manufacture of large numbers of ivory votive figures, essential tools for the process of propagation of the Christian faith throughout the Orient.

The theme of the Baby Jesus *Salvator Mundi* remained a favourite throughout the Baroque. More archaic models adhere to Flemish prototypes from the first half of the 16th century divulged by the Portuguese in India and Ceylon, which will be repeated until the Counter-Reformation movement introduces a revised and more conservative and conventional paradigm. *TP*



## 42

**A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE CHILD JESUS SALVATOR MUNDI**

Polychrome and parcel-gilt ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka); early 17th century

Dim.: 35.0 × 8.0 × 9.0 cm (figurine); 42.0 × 10.5 × 10.5 cm (with base)

F1182

Provenance: P.C. and A.P.T. collection, Portugal

A partially painted and gilt elephant ivory sculpture of the Child Jesus as *Salvator Mundi*, standing on a large orb, symbolising sovereignty over the world. The figure raises His right hand in blessing, while holding in the left, a later silver long staff cross.

On account of its iconography and stylistic features, the present figure belongs to a second, well defined group of Ceylonese ivory carvings conceived for private Christian devotion, being a particularly fine Mannerist example. It incorporates some of the most important features of this imagery: an egg-shaped globe, which contrary to other more common examples, is carved separately from the figure—a characteristic of later Goan devotional carvings, and a clenched left fist for holding a staff cross.

Albeit carved in two sections, and apart from the typically Ceylonese rendition of the Child's face, ears and Buddha-like hair curls, the figure's origin is unmistakable on the basis of the rare engraved orb decoration: bands of wavy foliage scroll motifs, carved in deep low relief and coated in gold leaf, a type of decorative detail which, even though unknown in surviving devotional ivory sculptures, is present on some rare ivory caskets from Ceylon intended for the Portuguese court. Such is the case of a recently published casket dating to the second-half of the 16th century, one other, possibly from the same workshop, in the Távora Sequeira Pinto collection in Oporto, and a box at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. 205–1879).<sup>1</sup>

Curiously the Child's hair was gilded using shell gold (ground gold particles suspended in a liquid medium), rather than gold leaf, a technique seen on Buddhist imagery surfaces when a matte surface was intended.

The long-lasting impression left by devotional Ceylonese ivory carvings made for the Portuguese market, was recorded first-

hand by Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611), author of the famous *Itinerario* published in 1596. While in Goa, in the service of the Portuguese archbishop Vicente Fonseca, the author refers to a Crucified Christ ivory sculpture about forty-five centimetres long, that had been offered to the prelate, as having been produced in such excellent and diligent way that his hair, beard, and face seemed as natural as if that of a living person, and so finely carved, with limbs so well proportioned, that one would fail to see similar pieces made in Europe.

Stemming from an ivory carving tradition promptly exploited by the Portuguese, whether missionaries willing to commission the imagery necessary for the indoctrination of new converts, or state officials in the Portuguese State of India, the production of Catholic cult figures in Ceylon achieved huge fame and prestige all over Asia, having been the starting point and dissemination centre for an industry that, once the island was lost to the Dutch in 1658, was most likely transferred to Goa.<sup>2</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> For the recently published casket, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *A Arte de Coleccionar. Lisboa, a Europa e o Mundo na Época Moderna (1500–1800). The Art of Collecting. Lisbon, Europe and the Early Modern World (1500–1800)*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2019, pp. 202–209, cat. 23.

<sup>2</sup> On Ceylonese ivory carvings, both secular and religious, see: FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1982; GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan; BELTZ, Johannes (eds.), *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon. Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507–1578)* (cat.), Zürich, Museum Rietberg, 2010, maxime cat. nos. 12, 18–119, 21–123, 50–152; VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, 'Engenho e Primor: a Arte do Marfim no Ceilão'. 'Ingenuity and Excellence: Ivory Art in Ceylon', in VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno (ed.), *Marfins no Império Português. Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Lisbon, Scribe, 2013, pp. 87–141; and SOUSA, Maria da Conceição Borges de, *Ivory Catechisms: Christian Sculpture from Goa and Sri Lanka*, in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred Art and Visual Splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 104–111.



## 43

**A SINHALESE PORTUGUESE VIRGIN WITH CHILD**

Carved ivory with traces of polychromy

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), probably Colombo; 1570–1600

Dim.: 24.5 × 7.0 × 5.0 cm (figurine); 32.5 × 8.5 × 8.5 cm (with base)

F1466

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon



This devotional sculpture of the Virgin with Child, finely carved from ivory, was made in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon during the last decades of the sixteenth century, most likely in Colombo.<sup>1</sup>

Raised on a carved ebony square stepped base—a tiered and moulded pedestal known in Sanskrit as *pitha* (literally ‘seat’)—the figure is executed in a single piece of ivory, incorporating not only the crown on the Virgin’s head and the crescent moon at her feet, but also the figure of the Child Jesus, blessing with his right hand while holding the orb as *Salvator Mundi* with his left.

Beautifully carved, this unusually large figurine (24.5 cm in height) displays the mastery for which the royal ivory carvers of *Ceilão*—as the Portuguese called the affluent island—were known and revered, most evident in the virtuoso folds of drapery and the sinuous hems, typical of this production. Alongside the characteristic stepped base, used locally as a pedestal for Hindu and Buddhist images (*mūrti*), the neck folds of both figures recall Buddhist devotional statuettes produced on the island before the arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century.

Emanating from an ivory-carving tradition swiftly harnessed by the Portuguese—whether by missionaries eager to commission images urgently required for the indoctrination of new converts, or even by courtly officials—the production of Catholic images in Ceylon achieved great fame and prestige throughout

Asia, becoming the point of origin and centre of dissemination for an industry that, after the island’s loss to the Dutch in 1658, probably shifted to Goa.

This important sculpture of the Virgin and Child—the Virgin firmly holding the Christ Child and crowned as the Queen of Heaven, still preserving traces of its original polychromy—stands apart from the more common Ceylonese productions, generally smaller and more schematic.

Given its superior carving quality, it was most likely a specific commission for a religious institution in Portuguese-ruled Ceylon, or for a wealthy court official or prosperous merchant living within the Portuguese State of India.

Although the iconography of the Virgin Mary is among the most frequent and subjects carved in ivory in Ceylon, works of this size and quality are rare. One of the finest examples, comparable to the present sculpture - measuring 32.5 cm in height, including its turned ivory moulded base - belonged to our collection and now belongs to the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore (inv. 2011–01506).<sup>2</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> For this production, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquities & Galeria de Arte, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> *IDEM*, pp. 23–24, fig. 7.



# Kingdom of Pegu

## BURMA LACQUERWARE

This rare group of objects have challenged the consensual identification of its producing centre. Bernardo Ferrão was one of the first authors to take an interest in this type of furniture, namely on the low-relief carved and gilded writing chests.

As qualities typical of this production, which he identifies as Indo-Portuguese, based on the alleged Mughal or Persian style of its decoration, Bernardo Ferrão mentions: the style and decoration, the lacquer coating and in some examples, the presence of coats of arms, inscriptions in Portuguese, figures and mythological scenes, from classical and Christian European culture, carved or painted, all following the canons of Renaissance art, which help us to posit a sixteenth century date for such pieces.

Besides these pieces of furniture, there are some bedsteads, trays, chairs and also shields (so-called Indo-Muslim), and which may be found in several international collections, featuring similar technique and decoration to the present one, recently studied by Ulrike Körber.

One other rare group of writing boxes and fall-front writing cabinets also presents the same type of carved low-relief decoration, lacquered in black and highlighted in gold. The inner sides are lacquered in red with gilded decoration of fauna and flora of typically Chinese repertoire. In addition, some of these objects have painted inscriptions in Chinese characters, such as the shield (54 cm in diameter) from the *Kunstammer* of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv. no. A915). One of the best documented examples of this second group of furniture clearly of Chinese manufacture is the so-called ‘Pope’s Chest’, today in the Museen des Mobiliendepots, Vienna, inv. no. MD 047590.

These two clearly distinct lacquerware productions, have been grouped into a single one, either according to the type of wood used, the *anjili* (*Artocarpus sp.*), as proposed for the first group by José Jordão Felgueiras for which he proposes Kochi for the place of production, a hypothesis followed by Pedro Dias or, based on stylistic and technical aspects, assigning the production to Southeast Asia as advocated by Fernando Moncada and Manuel Castilho. A more recent hypothesis, by Pedro Moura Carvalho, regarding the origin of this group assigns the production to India, specifically the Bay of Bengal region and the coast of Coromandel. However, much like the Kochi hypothesis, this latter one is not supported by contemporary sources and documents, and is indeed contradicted by the laboratory identification of the type of lacquer used on pieces from the first group, from the Kingdom of Pegu (present-day Burma, Myanmar), given that scientific analysis has revealed it to be Burmese lacquer or *thitsi*, from the sap of the *Melanorrhoea usitata* used in Southeast Asia. In this regard, it should be emphasised that on the Indian subcontinent none of the species required for the production of ‘true lacquer’ can be found. Not only does the material used originate in Southeast Asia, but so does the technique, as proven by scientific analysis, given that the stratigraphy of the lacquer coatings, and the additives (oils) used, correspond to lacquerware of Burmese and Thai origin. In addition, the decoration and decorative repertoire and the specific technique used (*shwezawa*) with gold leaf (*shweibya*), point to an exclusive origin in Southeast Asia for the first group, to which the present shield and folding table belong.

One highly important document gives us to some extent the key to clarifying this situation and to identifying the centres of production for these lacquered pieces, Pegu (Burma) and China. In fact, in



the post mortem inventories of Fernando de Noronha (ca. 1540–1608), third count of Linhares, and his wife Filipa de Sá (†1618), a significant number of Asiatic pieces of furniture is recorded: *one Chinese lacquered oblong box with two compartments (4.000 reais); another smaller writing cabinet from Pegu [lacquered] in gold and red fitted with drawers (2.500 reais); another writing cabinet from China [lacquered] in gold and white which has twelve drawers and is 44 cm in length (4.000 reais); one box from China [lacquered] in gold and black fitted with its nook (2.000 reais); one writing cabinet from Pegu gilded throughout (10.000 reais); two shields from China without arm supports, featuring their coat of arms, valued at 1.000 reais, to which another sixteen were added, valued at 9.000 reais; four trays from China, three of them featuring their coat of arms, lacquered in black and gold, to which another three were added, valued at 3.600 reais; another writing table from China, very old and featuring the Noronha coat of arms in the middle (1.200 reais); one gilded bedstead from China which has the Noronha coat of arms on the headboard (20.000 reais); one gilded daybed from China with balusters, frame and square feet (10.000 reais); another gilded daybed from China more used than the previous one (6.000 reais); one small gilded box from Pegu of over a palm in length and its silver lock (1.000 reais); one bedstead from China [lacquered] in gold and black (12.000 reais); one gilded chair and daybed from Pegu (5.000 reais) and another daybed from Pegu gilded throughout with six feet and headboard (10.000 reais).* HMC

'Map of the ancient Kingdom of Pegu', P. Bertius, 1616

## 44

**THE VICEROY OF PORTUGUESE INDIA D. DUARTE DE MENEZES PEGU WRITING CHEST**

Lacquered and gilt wood; wrought iron fittings

Kingdom of Pegu (Burma, present-day Myanmar); 1550–1588

Dim.: 13.6 × 39.8 × 29.5 cm

F1371

*Provenance:* Duarte de Menezes, Viceroy of Portuguese India (1537–1588); Francisco Hipólito Raposo (1933–2000) collection, Portugal

*Published:* DIAS, Pedro, 'Mobiliário Indo-Português', pp. 92–93

*Exhibited:* 'Os Construtores do Oriente Português, Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses', Oporto 1998 (cat. p. 303)

A rare anjili wood (*Artocarpus sp.*)<sup>1</sup> writing chest characterised by its Southeast Asian black lacquer (*thitsi*) and gold leaf outer surfaces and inner lid coating, and black lacquered interior. The chest has lost its original fall front and original fittings, the current ones being more recent replacements. The lower long drawer, set with central ring pull, is fitted with three partitions forming four nooks. Each outer surface, excepting the box underside, features low-relief decoration highlighted in gold, and foliage inspired scroll patterns and flat borders of gold leaf decoration on black lacquered ground, a technique characteristic of Burmese lacquerware (*shweizawa*). While the outer lid depicts a floral composition difficult to interpret, the inner decoration of foliage scrolls is based, like the other surfaces, on European engravings or visual models, and includes what appears to be part of a double-headed eagle, a protective symbol in the context

of Indian export furniture. This motif was probably misunderstood by the Burmese carvers, who incorporated it among the scrolls.

Alongside better-known Japanese lacquerware made for export and known as Nanban, a Japanese word of Chinese origin used to define the first Europeans to reach Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, other contemporary lacquered furniture productions were also exporting to the Portuguese market. These so-called Luso-Asian lacquers, which have challenged the consensual identification of its geographic origins, are somewhat heterogeneous in character and may be divided into two groups.<sup>2</sup> Bernardo Ferrão was one of the first scholars to take an interest in this type of production and identified several extant examples in public and private collections which are almost exclusively Portuguese. As characteristics of this production, which he wrongly

<sup>1</sup> Published in DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português, Moreira de Cónegos*, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 92–93. This author affirms the lid is fitted the wrong way round, but there is nothing that allows us to draw that conclusion, as the width of the inner rim is consistent with what would be expected.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. 22.



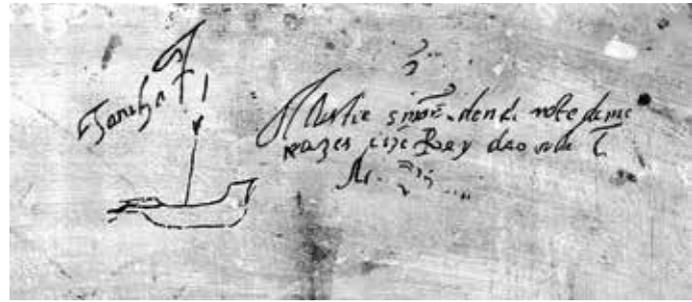
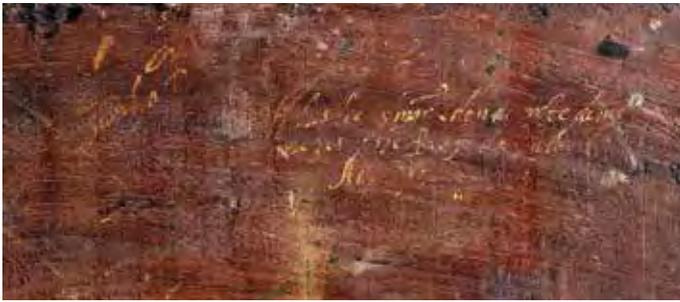


FIG 1 AND FIG. 2

Inscription O *Ilustre senhor Don D[u]arte de Me-/nezes vizo Rey da India/A c[om]prou?*

identified as Indo-Portuguese, the author mentions: ‘the style and decoration, the lacquer coating and in some examples, the presence of coats of arms, Portuguese inscriptions, figures and mythological scenes from classical and Christian European culture, carved or painted, all following canons of Renaissance art’.<sup>3</sup> The first group, to which this rare and important writing chest belongs, has been recently identified as Burmese and thus made in the Kingdom of Pegu, to the south of present-day Myanmar, given strong archival and material evidence (Burmese lacquer or *thitsi*, from the sap of the *Gluta usitata* used in Southeast Asia) as well as the lacquer techniques used in its production (the Burmese *shwei-zawa*), as evidenced from recent scientific analyses and art-history research.<sup>4</sup>

The added historical importance of this writing chest lies in a handwritten inscription present on the unlacquered drawer underside. Written in opaque yellow ink, a palaeographic analysis suggests that the inscription dates from the last decades of the sixteenth century, or possibly from the early seventeenth century. From the longer text, divided into three lines (fig. 1 and 2), we can read: ‘O *Ilustre senhor Don D[u]arte de Me-/nezes vizo Rey da India/A c[om]prou?*’ (‘The illustrious Duarte de Meneses viceroy of India bought (?) it’). A note on the left, written above a schematic drawing of a carrack in black ink, perhaps indicating the writing chest position as it was stowed aboard a ship returning to Lisbon, along with the longer text, allows us to infer that the piece belonged to Duarte de Meneses (1537–1588), the 14th Viceroy of the Portuguese State of India (r. 1584–1588). This is undoubtedly a mark

of ownership, though not in his own handwriting, as confirmed by comparison with contemporary documents confidently attributed to the viceroy. One of these, bearing his signature, is of great significance to the history of Asia and the political, cultural, and religious relations with Japan. It is a rare, illuminated manuscript from the viceregal chancery, dated from the year of the viceroy’s death and addressed to Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), concerning the suppression of Christianity in Japan.

Born in Tangier, Duarte de Meneses (†1539) grandfather, had also been Governor of the Portuguese State of India (r. 1522–1524). Meneses was captain of that Moroccan city under Portuguese rule (r. 1574–1577), a position almost hereditary in his family, and later of Asilah (r. 1577–1578). Imprisoned at the Battle of al-Qasr al-Kabir on August 4th, 1578, he was one of the Portuguese noblemen who identified young King Sebastião I (r. 1557–1578) body. Ransomed and returned to the kingdom, he was made Captain-General of the Algarve in 1580. Appointed Viceroy of Portuguese India in 1584, he arrived in Kochi on October 25th.

Little is known about the custodial history of this chest, though it more recently belonged to the important Francisco Hipólito Raposo (1933–2000) collection. Given its importance as a documented example of late sixteenth-century consumption of this type of Burmese lacquerware by the Portuguese elites, it has been published by several authors and featured in exhibitions such as *Os Construtores do Oriente Português*, held in 1998 at the Alfândega Building, in Oporto.<sup>5</sup> HMC

<sup>3</sup> FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Mobiliário Português. Dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, Vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. 22.

<sup>5</sup> FLORES, Jorge (ed.), *Os Construtores do Oriente Português*, Oporto, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses–Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1998, p. 303, cat. 68.



# The Islands of Timor

The Portuguese connection with the Islands of Timor, geographically located at the easternmost tip of Insulindia, dates back to the early-16th century, and developed in the aftermath of the conquest of the major outposts of Goa (1510), Malacca (1511), and the Protectorate of Ormuz (1515), whose control facilitated the opening of commercial maritime routes along the Asian coast.

To the north of Dili, East-Timor capital city, the small Atauro Island, positioned between the much larger Island of Timor and the volcanic islands of Indonesia, has been recorded in Portuguese cartography since 1512. The first landing in Atauro however, dates from 1515, in the reign of King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521), and was accomplished by Rui de Brito Patalim,<sup>1</sup> Captain of Malacca. The Portuguese presence on the Islands of Solor and Timor will eventually last until 2000, two years before the new country independence.<sup>2</sup>

Previous to the arrival of these first Europeans, Chinese, Malay and Javanese sailors had already sought to acquire the precious sandalwood autochthonous to these islands, and essential raw material for the production of the incenses widely used throughout the Southern China Sea regions in religious ceremonies and rituals, Buddhist rites and wealthier Hindus funeral pyres.<sup>3</sup> In fact, due to the secular interaction with Chinese and Arabian merchants, Timor was mentioned in the ‘Description of Foreign Peoples’, a Chinese treaty dating from circa 1225, as *Ti-wu*, a land abundant in sandalwood. Additionally, there is also a reference to trade in turtle shells from *Eretmochelys imbricata*, and some silver, both destined to supply China.<sup>4</sup>

White sandalwood (*Santalum album*), valued for its fragrance and medicinal qualities, was also utilised in art, being one of the most desired Timorese raw materials, only comparable to honey and wax. In some 16th century written records, namely those by Tomé Pires in *Suma Oriental* (1514–1515), and Duarte Barbosa (1516), there are also references to slave trade.<sup>5</sup> By supplying the Indian and Southeastern Asian markets, Portuguese merchants monopolised the sandalwood trade, predominantly carried out by an unofficial group of Portuguese brokers, known as *topasses*, in the islands of Solor and Timor. In exchange, the *topasses* would carry with them prestigious commodities, such as gold, porcelain, Indian textiles, iron made weaponry, tin and lead, as diplomatic gifts for local chieftains and rulers.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of the islands’ sociopolitical organization, Antonio Pigafetta recorded that the sole surviving ship from Fernão de Magalhães circumnavigation fleet, the *Vitória*, anchored at the northern coast of Timor in 1522. Magalhães secretary reported that the island western territories were ruled by kings to which the lesser chieftains owed allegiance, that the people wore no clothes, and that the women carried gold and brass bracelets up to their elbows.<sup>7</sup>

In the second half of the 16th century Dominican missionaries settled on the Island of Solor, between the Islands of Timor and Flores, with the purpose of initiating the evangelisation of local populations. In spite of the spreading of Christianity to neighbouring islands, Timor was left out of that early effort, the Portuguese presence only intensifying in 1702, upon the arrival of Governor António

<sup>1</sup> LOUREIRO, Rui Manuel, *Notícias de Timor nas Fontes Portuguesas dos Séculos XVI e XVII*, Revistas Científicas do UCP, 2015, pp.180–181; TELES E CUNHA, João M., ‘Timor e o Comércio do Sândalo’, *Os Espaços de um Império, Estudos, Ciclo de Exposições Memórias do Oriente*, 1999, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> The East Timor Portuguese Colony encompasses the period between 1596 and 1975.

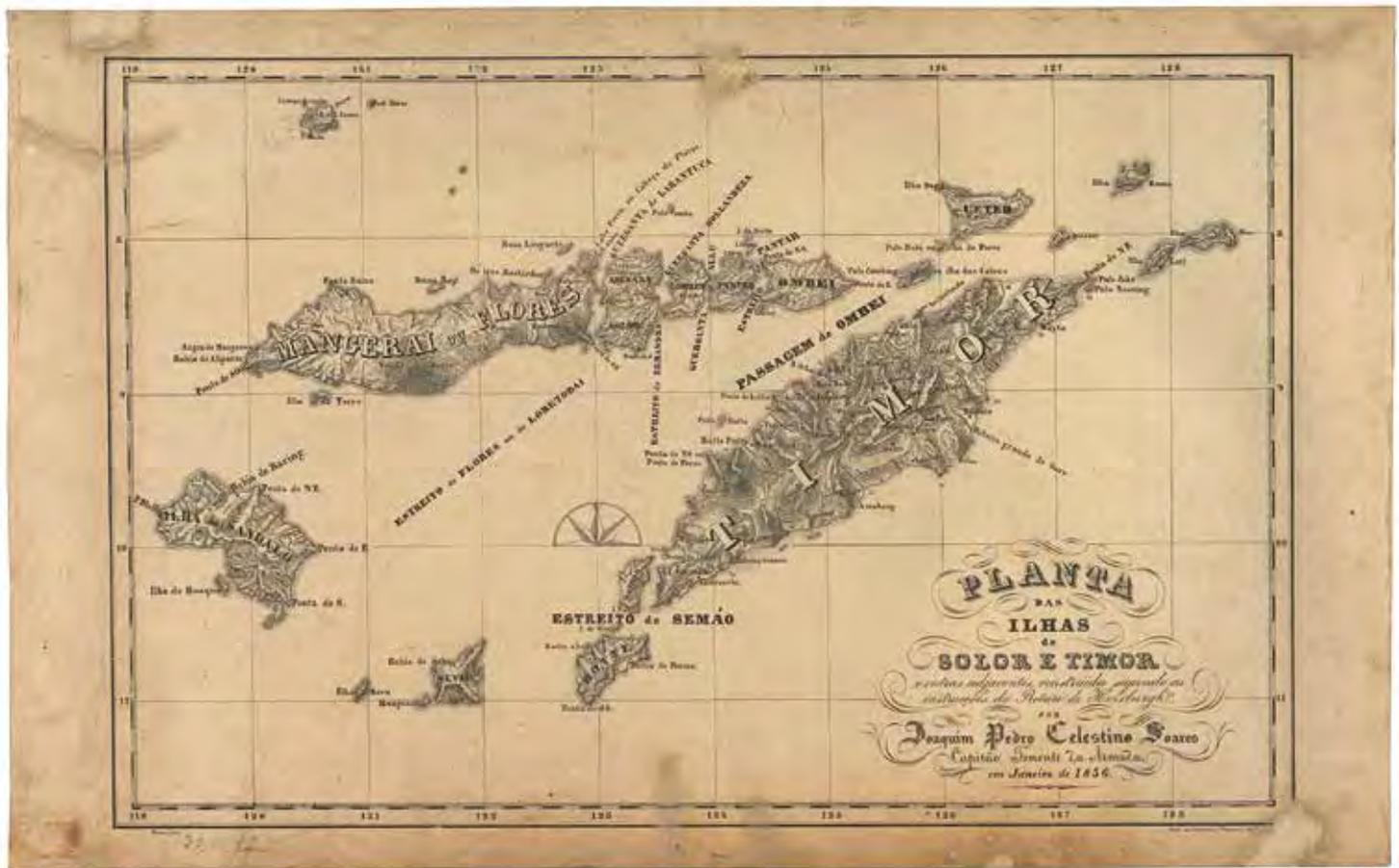
<sup>3</sup> LOUREIRO, Rui M., *Notícias de Timor nas Fontes Portuguesas dos Séculos XVI e XVII*, 2015, p.180, 182; TELES E CUNHA, João M., *Timor e o Comércio do Sândalo*, 1999, p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> ALPERT, Steven G., *The Carver’s Hand, Sculptural Arts of Timor and Atauro*, 2024, p. 3; TELES E CUNHA, João M., *Timor e o Comércio do Sândalo*, 1999, p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> LOUREIRO, Rui M., *Notícias de Timor nas Fontes Portuguesas dos Séculos XVI e XVII*, 2015, pp.180–181.

<sup>6</sup> IDEM, pp. 229–230.

<sup>7</sup> Pigafetta in LOUREIRO, Rui M., *Notícias de Timor nas Fontes Portuguesas dos Séculos XVI e XVII*, 2015, pp.181–183; Pigafetta in TELES E CUNHA, João M., *Timor e o Comércio do Sândalo*, 1999, pp. 228–229.



Coelho Guerreiro, who would order the building of the first fortification with the purpose of intensifying missionary activity. Atauro was colonised by Portugal from 1702 to 1975, occupied by Japan during World War II and subsequently, from 1975 to 1999, by Indonesia.<sup>8</sup>

From the 19th century onwards, the territory started to gain some autonomy from Portuguese India's government, eventually becoming dependant of Macao in 1844, and achieving administrative autonomy in 1894.<sup>9</sup> By the late 19th century, Timor's eastern region, including the Island of Atauro, would create links with other colonies. ✓

*Map of Timor and the surrounding islands, Joaquim Pedro Celestino Soares, Lieutenant Commander in the Portuguese Navy, 1836*

<sup>8</sup> A Treaty defining the border between Portuguese Timor (East Timor) and Dutch Timor (Western Timor) was signed in 1859, between Portugal and The Netherlands.

<sup>9</sup> DIAS, Pedro, *Extremo Oriente, Arte de Portugal no Mundo*, Editor Público-Comunicação Social, SA, 2009, pp. 133-134.

## 45

## AN EAST TIMOR FIGURE OF ANCESTOR—ITARA

Sandalwood (?)

Atauro Island, East Timor; late-19th–early-20th century

Dim: 10.5×3.5×30.0 cm

F1419

*Provenance: Alberto Telles de Hutra Machado collection since 1920, Portugal*

In a seated posture, with straight back and slightly forward leaning trunk, this male figure is characterised by arms belting its bent legs close to the abdomen. Wood carved, of accentuated stylised character, it represents a depiction of a distant ancestor that is characteristic of the Southeast Asian tradition.

Similarly to other anthropomorphic sculptures from Timor, it features a schematically carved physiognomy, from which stands out the shape of the head, flattened at the top and larger than the trunk. Of rather disproportionate legs in relation to the remaining body, it rests on a cylindrical stand, revealing a rather unusual image in its type, and even remarkably ‘modern’.

The sculpture’s synthetic style directs to the local cult of ancestors, in which funerary rites reflect the relevance mainly allocated to the elites’ dead members. These social rituals evidence respect and reverence towards the community’s ancestors, source of human existence, and essential for the wellbeing that is granted through observance and offerings.

This seated human depiction belongs to the region’s core imagery and is mostly linked to ideals of well-being and protection, particularly of the elite groups, who kept these sculptures on altars.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this itara unique artistic character, ancestor squatting figures are common amongst Austronesia’s traditional sculptures, such as those from the Philippines and the Moluccas Archipelagos. ✍ LLA

<sup>1</sup> HENKEL, David in CHON, Alan (ed.), *Devotion & Desire, Cross-cultural art in Asia, New Acquisitions*, ACM–Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapura, 2013.



## 46

## AN EAST TIMOR FIGURE OF ANCESTOR—ITARA

Sandalwood (?)

Atauro Island, East Timor; late-19th–early-20th century

Dim: 25.5 × 5.0 × 6.0 cm

F1460

Provenance: Manuel Castilho collection, Lisbon

Exhibited: 'Tribal Treasures in Dutch Private Collections', Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, Netherlands, 2008–2009 (cat. p. 131)

Published: CASTILHO, Manuel, 'Oriente, Ocidente. East, West.', *Manuel Castilho Antiguidades*, 2025, p. 8

This interesting patinated wood anthropomorphic sculpture, possibly carved in sandalwood in an almost 'cubist' linear style, depicts a distinguished male ancestor, a spiritual image commonly known as *itara* and characteristic from the Atauro Island production.

Defined by proportions that depart from naturalism, the stylised naked male figure presents a rather disproportionate head,

in relation to body, covered by a small hat of inverted bowl shape. Its facial details, angular and concisely outlined, are defined by a triangular nose and half-closed eyes, in introspective stance. The expression is reinforced by the horizontal incision outlining the mouth, whose downturned corners emphasise the figure's meditative character.

Of slight ventrally inclined posture, the sculpture features arms pending along the body—the arms and forearms seem to be separated by elbow bracelets—and linearly depicted trunk, nipples and penis. The cylindrical section legs, slightly bent, rest on rectangular blocks whose vertical grooves suggest the shape of feet.

Meditative and closed eyed, the figure motionless posture, in abandonment, intends to convey a state of trance in allusion to a dead individual—a distant ancestor, founder of a specific family lineage.

Usually accompanied by a female figure, forming a couple—originally tied with ropes and dressed—these images were placed in the homes of the heads of lineage, hanging from poles adorned with branches (*rumah tara*), for the purpose of gaining protection and familial wellbeing. The number of *itara* reflected the family ancestor status, and considering the ritual context of their use they could also embody a protective role against thieves.<sup>1</sup>

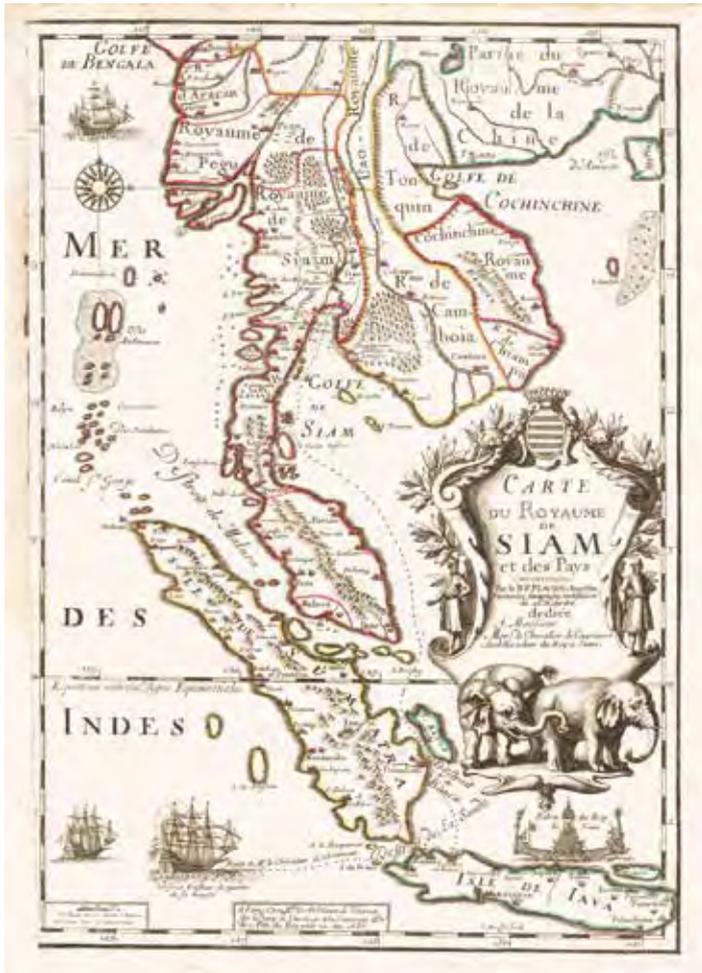
This *itara* was carved during the period of Portuguese presence in Timor and, despite the fact that it does not directly evidence that influence, it does reflect Atauro's sociocultural context in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. The reinforcing of political, commercial and administrative impositions on the colony bred a climate of revolt that would eventually turn Atauro into a prison island. This environment would have contributed to the reinforcement of traditional arts, as evidenced by the simplicity and, paradoxically, the expressivity of this sculpture.

Similar sculptures can be seen at Paris's *Musée du Quai Branly*, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Denver's Art Museum. ✍ LLA

<sup>1</sup> ROSSEL, Siebe, WENTHOLT, Arnold (eds.), *Tribal Treasures in Dutch Private Collections*, AFdH Publishers, 2008, p. 131.



# Kingdom of Siam



Kingdom of Siam, R. P. Dechaussé, 1686.

The relationship between Portugal and Thailand, the kingdom of Siam, grew from 1511, with the conquest of Malacca by Afonso de Albuquerque, a territory previously held by a vassal of the Siam king. By courtesy, the Viceroy of India sent the Emissary Duarte Fernandes to the Siamese capital Ayutthaya, where he was very well received. Not only there was no opposition to the conquest, but also the Ruler send a diplomatic envoy to help solidify the relationship.

The King of Siam gave a parcel of land of his capital to the Portuguese, giving rise to a Luso-Siamese community, who had freedom for their religious practice and exemption from certain commercial taxes. This area is known as *Bang Portuguet*, or the Portuguese Quarter of Ayutthaya.

Thailand is a country with a long history and has never been colonized, either by the Portuguese or any other European country. The Thai people has always maintained firm friendship and strong commercial and diplomatic relations with Portugal.

There still exists many testimonies to the influences Portugal left behind in Thailand, in all sorts of different areas, and notably in the language and food. Portugal is famous for its 'Doces Conventuais', traditional sweet delicacies originating from the monasteries and convents, and they have their equivalent in Thailand. 'Fios de ovos' is known in Thai as *Foi Thong* as well as several other similar dainties found in both lands. Some Thai words with Portuguese roots are *sala* (room), *sabu* (*sabão*—soap), *mát-sa-yi*, (mesquite—mosque), *café*, *chá*, (coffee, tea), amongst others.

The Thai or Siam People originate in Southwestern China. Expelled from their lands in the 12th century they settled in the Indochina Peninsula adopting Buddhism as their religion, albeit one with strong Hindu influences brought in by Indian travelers and settlers in the region.

After the conquest of Galle in the Southwestern tip of the Island of Ceylon in 1505, and of Goa in western India in 1510 the Portuguese landed in Malacca, whose Sultan was a vassal to the King of Siam. In 1511 the Portuguese government in Goa negotiated an agreement with Siam allowing the establishment of permanent trading outposts in that territory which would give the Catholic Church an enclave from which to spread its faith in the whole of the Far East.

Those early missionaries relied heavily upon visual imagery, mainly through a myriad of artistic portable objects, to divulge and interpret the sacred scriptures and the Christian iconography in an attempt to overcome language and cultural barriers, while attempting to develop common cultural and religious dialogue, which would eventually result in a new, but unintentional hybrid artistic language.

The humanist and introspective theme of the Good Shepherd finds strong parallels in the figure of Buddha, adapted to various local aesthetics throughout the reach of his cult since his earliest representations in Northwest India, where depictions of the reclining Jesus, in a pose allusive to Buddha or Shiva, are also well identified.

The iconography of the Good Shepherd, revealing the innocence and purity of the Child, reappears in European art at the time of the Counter-Reformation, and in a particularly evidenced manner in India in the 17th and 18th centuries as a way of conveying to Buddhists and Hindus the encompassing remit of the Christian faith in its openness and acceptance for conversions. ✍

## 47

### A LUSO-SIAMESE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

Kingdom of Siam, Ayutthaya period; late 16th–early 17th century

Length: 23.0 cm

F1130

Provenance: M.J.G. collection, Portugal

Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtaines Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux, France 2019 (cat. p. 32)



Large ivory Baby Jesus sculpture, produced in a late-16th century Luso-Siamese workshop.

The image is reclined on its right over a jasmine flower bed, with His head resting on the right palm, the expressive and serene rounded face of closed almond shaped eyes, expressing an impenetrable and meditative smile. The hair, of spiralled snail-like and tightly aligned curls, alludes to the superior intelligence of Buddha.

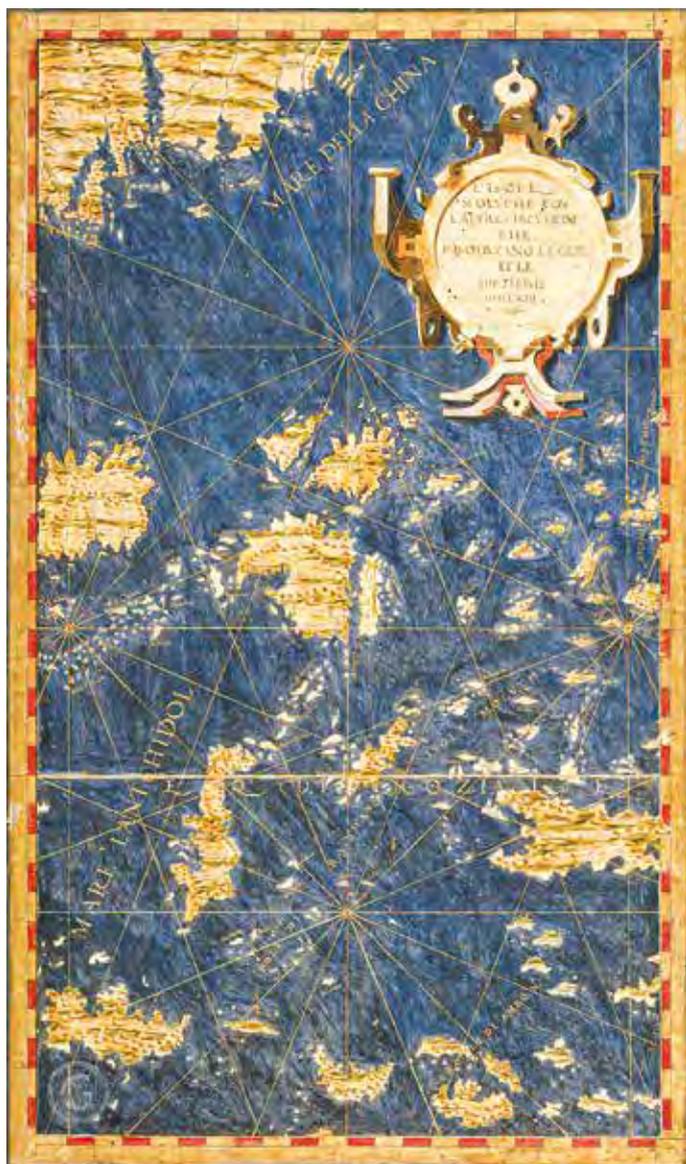
With is left arm leaning over His chest, Jesus strokes the *Agnus Dei* that sits on the Bible, the Sacred Book. The legs are gently folded, the left over the right. The figure wears a skirt, the *antaravassaka* or *sabong*, rope tied at the waist, and a shepherd's tunic exposing the shoulder and the abdomen, a typically Thai monk's costume.

The position in which Jesus is represented, has direct correspondence to Thailand's (former Siam) adopted iconography of the dying Buddha about to enter Nirvana, the higher state in which one reaches peace of mind through purity of thought.

This rare production has only recently been defined as Luso-Siamese. The art historian Pedro Dias compares these figures

to the Ayutthaya reclining Buddha. More recently Hugo Miguel Crespo refers the similarities between the Baby Jesus facial expression and other contemporary Thai imagery, highlighting also the costume analogies with Buddhist monk vestments. Additionally, this historian has identified in a similar sculpture, a representation of an endemic species, a wild pig or Thai wild boar (*sus scrofa jubatus*) taking the place of the *Agnus Dei*, a proposition that reinforces the Siamese origin of this production. ➤ TP

# The Philippines



Map of the Philippines, I. Danti, 1570

European iconographic models that reached those far away lands through the exchange of objects or printed images from Europe, that were then reinterpreted following local aesthetic models such as their common oriental physiognomic traits. ↗

The establishing of the Spanish Colony of the Philippines in 1565, created a new eastern trade route for spices and exotic goods, designed to fulfil the ever-growing needs and demands of a European and Latin American elite avid of these sophisticated products. The development of this important Spanish commercial settlement in Asia was in the origin of a rapidly expanding evangelization movement assisted by the arrival of the most relevant religious orders—Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits and Augustinians.

The exchange of traditions and beliefs that ensued, would promote the development of a specific art type, combining European religious iconography with native styles and materials, whose elements were successfully reproduced in large quantities. The Spanish Philippines islands assumed particular importance in the production of ivory works characterized by their Sino-Christian character, made by the so-called *Sangleyes*, local resident Chinese that traded their works in the market, especially in the so called *El Parián*, built in 1581 by the Governor Gonzalo Ronquillo in order to control the *Sangleyes* trade.

Similarly to what happened in the Portuguese Eastern Territories, Christian imagery had an important role in the diffusion of Christianity and conversion of local peoples, and, in the Philippines the role of producing those evangelisation tools fell on the local Chinese population of Manila, the main Spanish trading outpost in the East, as documented by the Dominican Friar, Fr. Domingo de Salazar, first bishop of Manila (1581–1594), in a letter to King Philipe II (Philipe I of Portugal), highlighting the quality of the ivory carvings provided by the *Sangleyes*: ‘...en viendo alguna pieza hecha de official de España la sacan muy al próprio y algunos Niños Jesús que yo e visto en marfil me parece que no se pueden hacer más perfectos (...) y según la habilidad que muestran al retratar las ymágenes que bienen de España, entendo que antes de mucho no nos harán falta las que se haçen en Flandres.’

The Luso-Asian ivory carving production began considerably earlier than the homologous Hispano-Philippine, and within European parameters filtered by Portugal in miscegenation with the elements of the various indigenous cultures encountered in the East.

Macao, the first Portuguese outpost in the Far East had regular contact with Manila and for this reason, in this constant exchange network, the Hispano-Philippine ivory imagery production was certainly familiar to the Portuguese traders and clientele.

Unsurprisingly, by proximity these two ivory productions have some obvious traits, namely in the adoption of

## FILIGREE WORK

Alongside sheets made by hammering, wire work in precious metals such as gold and silver has a rich and complex history that traces its origins to ancient civilizations. Since the Bronze Age, jewellers made metal wire either by hammering an ingot until wire with a more or less round and even section was produced or by twisting and rolling a square hammered rod or twisting a strip of metal. Skilled artisans in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Etruria employed techniques such as applied or openwork filigree and granulation to create delicate jewellery and other precious objects. Later techniques, documented since the early medieval period and still used, involve gradually reducing the thickness of a rod, usually from an ingot, by pulling it through a metal 'draw-plate' or wire-drawing die containing a series of tapering, diminishing holes.

While jewellery decorated with wirework dates back to early times, openwork filigree has a much more complex history. Emerging in many different places far and wide and sharing similar stylistic features, given their mutual decorative repertoire of geometric motifs (circles, figures of '8', and coils), filigree is notoriously difficult to pinpoint as to its origins. Although used in Ancient Greek, Roman, and Byzantine jewellery, filigree work reached a peak in technical and stylistic superiority in Fatimid Egypt and Syria between the tenth and twelfth centuries. The strong artistic exchanges between East and West fostered by the Silk Road and the Mongol conquest of China in the early thirteenth century prompted the circulation of advanced jewellery techniques, namely filigree. In the late medieval period, it was practiced from Europe, namely the south of the Iberian Peninsula, to China and the Islamic lands in between in the Middle East and Central Asia. Documentary records show how filigree excelled on both sides of the Persian Gulf, namely in Hormuz—soon afterward ruled by the Portuguese in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The same is true with late Yuan and Ming China, where the technical sophistication of filigree work reached new heights—as seen from the wire mesh and intricate filigree of Emperor Wanli's gold crown. Although applied filigree is documented in India in ancient times, only towards the eighteenth century did filigree objects emerge as an Indian art in Karimnagar in the present-day state of Andhra Pradesh, and later in Cuttack, in Odisha.

When the Portuguese ventured into Asia in the early sixteenth century, the most prolific centres of filigree production were located in Safavid Iran, China, the Philippines (with a Chinese-origin community of craftsmen), and Indonesia. Recent research in Portugal and the Netherlands has dismissed a Goan origin for the silver and gold filigree objects made in Asia for export to the European market. Archival research and in-depth analysis of these cross-cultural objects have proposed new identifications, although not always in agreement. In addition, the craze for filigree works in seventeenth-century Europe prompted the revival of an artistic tradition which increased in the nineteenth century. It is thought that some objects previously considered to be of Asian origin may have been made in Europe by European craftsmen. ✍

## 48

## A PAIR OF GILT FILIGREE CRUETS

Silver and gilt silver

The Philippines; 17th century

Dim.: 13.9 × 11.0 × 6.6 cm; Weight: 638.0 g

B319

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



The present parcel-gilt silver and silver filigree altar cruets were conceived for using in Christian liturgical ceremonies, and produced in pairs, one destined to hold holy water and the other wine. Both feature unidentified and part worn hallmarks.

Characterised by rosette shaped stands and hemispherical feet fixed to the body by wire thread, the vessels are cylindrical, and rounded in their lower sections, and exhibit protruding spouts, 's' shaped handles and hinged covers of stepped flower shaped pommels and cast openwork thumbpieces.

Of double walls, the cruets have a plain double-faced gilt silver inner lining and an outer silver filigree openwork structure of flattened twisted thread, featuring horizontal bands of large, eight petalled rosettes, and narrow serpentine friezes, as well as other floral elements, to the feet, spouts, covers and handles. Cast and gilt silver quatrefoils, fixed to the white silver structure, decorate both cruets' feet, bodies and covers.

The size of such liturgical vessels reflects the small quantity of wine they were destined to hold, most probably in a wealthy merchant or aristocratic private chapel context. Manufactured in Asia for exporting to Europe, their shape seems to derive from widely circulated, and lower priced, pewter made prototypes. A pair of identically shaped pewter cruets, made in the Netherlands during the early 18th century, belongs to the Victoria & Albert Museum collection, in London (M.548–1926). Another pair of closely related containers, but with their original stand, is recorded in a private collection. Unlike the present pair, they feature filigree 'V' and 'A' initials, for *vinum* and *aqua*, Latin terms for wine and water, surmounting the respective thumbpieces.

Following earlier and more traditional approaches regarding Asian filigree production centres in the Modern Era, our pair of cruets has been published as being made in Portuguese ruled Goa.<sup>1</sup> Subsequent documental and archaeological research suggests The Philippines as the likely origin for these containers, as well as for other objects of identical filigree, shape and decorative elements.<sup>2</sup> However, even considering the differences in liturgy, the possibility of a Dutch Batavian production, present day Jakarta, cannot be completely excluded.<sup>3</sup> HMC

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jóias da Carreira da Índia* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015, pp. 76–78, cat. 56.

<sup>2</sup> For Philippines produced filigree for exporting, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 366–381, cat. 32. For Philippines gold filigree collected from well dated and identified submerged archaeological contexts, see: CHADOUR, A. Beatriz, 'The gold jewelry from the Nuestra Señora de la Concepción', in MATHERS, William M., PARKER Henry S., COPUS Kathleen (eds.), *Archaeological Report. The Recovery of the Manila Galleon Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion*, Sutton, Pacific Sea Resources, 1990, pp. 133–395.

<sup>3</sup> VEENANDAAL, Jan, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, A Haia, Waanders Uitgewers Zwolle—Gemeentemuseum, 2014, pp. 122–133.



## 49

**A FILIGREE CASKET**

Silver filigree

South China (?), The Philippines, Manila (?), 17th century

Dim.: 10.5 × 12.0 × 7.0 cm; Weight: 226.0 g

B256

*Provenance: Private collection, Oporto*

A small rectangular filigree trunk shaped casket of scroll and openwork design.

Round topped coffer of parallelepiped case, supported on four round feet, with two side handles and blossoming lotus flower lock.

The dense decorative scheme covers the entirety of the case, consisting of juxtaposed rectangular plaques, each filled by a four-petalled flower, and outlined by double thread curved zig-zagging bands. The filigree design employs thick square-section wire for the structural framework, in deliberate contrast to the fine twisted wires used for the infill.

The handles are designed as two large inverted and juxtaposed commas suspended from a hollowed ring. The casket stands on four rounded feet each formed by superimposed rounded corollae.

The filigree decoration of this unique and precious object may be regarded as characteristic of filigree produced for export by

a Chinese artisan from southern China or the Philippines in the seventeenth century. Its substantial weight is likewise a defining feature of this production, standing in contrast to the lighter pieces produced in Goa.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jóias da Carreira da Índia*, p. 135.



## 50

**A FILIGREE CASKET**

Silver and gilt-silver filigree

Indonesia, Batavia (present-day, Jakarta); 18th century (?)

Dim.: 10.0 × 18.0 × 13,5 cm; Weight: 573.0 g

B229

*Provenance: Vitor Duarte collection, Cascais*

Beautiful reliquary casket in silver and gilded silver filigree. Rectangular in shape, with a trapezoidal lid, the four Doric columns enrich its edges. The entire body is filled with foliate and scrolls inserted on textured lace-like cartouches, surrounded by cords. In the centre of each cartouche stands a flower, whose corolla is formed by a small, gilt silver square. The clasp, a single piece rosette-shaped, has a spring-loaded opening system. The coffered lid repeats the same decorative pattern as the body of the casket, with its edges highlighted by strings of pearls. It has a rope-thread handle on each side, adorned with a gilded corolla in the centre. It rests on four spherical feet formed by two curved corollae. The interior is in gilded silver decorated with lozenge motifs executed in a combination of matte and polished finishes.

Designed to resemble a Renaissance building, a *tempietto*, it features a small foundation or pedestal on which the pilasters are placed. This is a fine example of miniaturized architecture, conceived with the help of a ruler and a set square, and constructed

from delicate panels of rope filigree (wire design) set on a square wire frame.

The object is attributed to the eighteenth-century and bears a Dutch import mark, a feature that supports the hypothesis of its production within a Dutch colonial context. Silver filigree works of this type are thought to have been produced either by Chinese silversmiths active in colonial centres in Southeast Asia or India, or by master craftsmen working in Batavia (present-day Jakarta). Such objects were subsequently traded to Europe through the Dutch East India Company (VOC).<sup>1</sup> A closely related casket of the same type, incorporating Doric columns, may be found in the Kunstkammer Museum in Vienna (inv. no. 999; *Exotica* catalogue no. 106). ↪ TP

<sup>1</sup> See MENSHIKOVA, Maria, *Silver: Wonders from the East. Filigree of the Tsars*, pp. 12–13.



## 51

## A PHILIPPINE PIERCING OF JESUS' SIDE ALTAR PLAQUE

Ivory with remnants of polychrome and gilt decoration

The Philippines, Manila; early 17th century

Dim.: 13.5 × 10.5 × 2.5 cm

F1289

Provenance: M.P. collection, Portugal



This delicately carved ivory plaque, intended for personal devotion and depicting *The Piercing of Jesus' Side* (John 19:33–34), was produced by Chinese craftsmen in the Philippines (Manila). Similarly to other such plaques of complex religious imagery, it was conceived as a visual aid for devotional practices promoted by Jesuit missionaries in Asia, or for exporting to Central and South America and the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>1</sup> Recent archaeological research, namely on assemblages recovered from the Manila galleon *Santa Margarita*, shipwrecked in 1601 off the Mariana Islands (*Ladrones*), has yielded a wealth of information on the chronology and production of devotional ivories in the Philippines in the early-17th century, an industry that predates Goan ivory carving production by half a century.<sup>2</sup>

Remarkable for its carving and aesthetic quality, the present plaque was made from several ivory segments joined together as in a jigsaw.<sup>3</sup> In an exercise of great virtuosity, given the raw material fragility, some of its iconographic elements project dangerously forward from the ground, as is evident in the long spear and in

Longinus horse's legs. Albeit with some omissions, the composition replicates a contemporary engraving by Johan Sadeler I (1550–1600), after a drawing by Maarten de Vos (1532–1603), which amazingly survives in Frankfurt's Städel Museum (inv. 2744). Dated 1582, the print illustrates the Calvary scene of *The Piercing of Jesus' Side*, in which Longinus, the Roman soldier (depicted as a centurion) on horseback, spears the crucified Christ's chest with the Holy Lance. Additionally, the composition includes the two crucified thieves flanking Jesus and, to the right hand side foreground, the kneeling Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist. A similar plaque survives in the Capilla, or Iglesia, de la Vera Cruz, in Salamanca, Spain, having been recently published by the late Margarita Estella Marcos.<sup>4</sup> *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> See: CHONG, Alan, 'Christian ivories by Chinese artists. Macau, the Philippines, and elsewhere, late-16th and 17th centuries', in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 204–207. See also BAILEY, Gauvin Alexander, 'Translation and metamorphosis in the Catholic Ivories of China, Japan and the Philippines, 1561–1800', in VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno (ed.), *Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Lisbon, Scribe, 2013, pp. 233–290; MARCOS, Margarita Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España y Portugal*, Ciudad de México, Espejo de Obsidiana, 2010; and TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Propaganda and Luxury: Small-scale Baroque Sculptures in Viceroyal America and the Philippines', in PIERCE, Donna, OSAKA, Ronald (eds.), *Asia and Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850*, Denver, Denver Art Museum, 2009, pp. 151–163.

<sup>2</sup> See: TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601', in *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5, 2013, pp. 446–462.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of comparable carving quality and identified European inspirational sources see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *The Art of Collecting. Lisbon, Europe and the Early Modern World (1500–1800)*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2019, pp. 334–338, cat. 49.

<sup>4</sup> See: SPÍNOLA, Gloria Espinosa, MARCOS, Margarita M. Estella, MARTÍN, Cristina Esteras, *Visiones de América. Arte desde el confín del mundo. Colección Francisco Marcos* (cat.), Burgos, Fundación Caja de Burgos, 2018, p. 350.



## 52

## A PHILIPPINE ADORATION OF THE MAGI ALTAR PLAQUE

Carved ivory

The Philippines, Manila; early 17th century

Dim.: 20.5 × 12.0 × 2.0 cm

F1377

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



This rare ivory plaque, depicting *The Adoration of the Magi* (Matthew 2:1–12) and intended for private worship, was finely carved by Chinese craftsmen in Manila, in the Philippines. The plaque, carved from a single transversally cut section of elephant tusk, is remarkable for its sculptural and modelling quality, as well as for its fine polished surface.<sup>1</sup>

While the printed source from which it was replicated has yet to be identified, given the vast corpus of similar imagery produced within this chronology, its composition is analogous to an engraving by the Netherlandish artist Hendrik Goltzius (1558–1617), published in 1594 as part of a set on *The Life of the Virgin*. A copy of this print can be seen in The British Museum collection (inv. 1958,0712.14).

Evident from the characteristic treatment of the clouds, the almond shaped eyes of the figures—featuring the quintessential eyelid fold—, and the drapery geometric schematization, is the carver’s Chinese origin. Additionally, the gabled panel top points

to it being the central panel of a folding triptych, of which the wings have been lost.

Such plaques, of complex religious iconography, were conceived as visual aids for devotional practices, and their production promoted by the Society of Jesus priests in their missionary activities in Asia, as well as for exporting, particularly to Central and South America and the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>2</sup>

Recent archaeological evidence, particularly from the shipwreck of the Manila galleon *Santa Margarita* (1601), sunken off the Mariana islands (*Ladrones*), has yielded abundant data on the chronology and production of such ivories, which, made in early-17th century Philippines by Chinese and Filipino master carvers, predate by several decades the Goan ivory carving production.<sup>3</sup> HMC

<sup>1</sup> For comparable carving quality examples of identified European printed sources, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *The Art of Collecting. Lisbon, Europe and the Early Modern World (1500–1800)*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2019, pp. 334–338, cat. 49.

<sup>2</sup> CHONG, Alan, ‘Christian ivories by Chinese artists. Macau, the Philippines, and elsewhere, late 16th and 17th centuries’, in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 204–207. See also: BAILLEY, Gauvin Alexander, ‘Translation and metamorphosis in the Catholic Ivories of China, Japan and the Philippines, 1561–1800’, in VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno (ed.), *Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Lisbon, Scribe, 2013, pp. 233–290; MARCOS, Margarita Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España y Portugal, Ciudad de México*, Espejo de Obsidiana, 2010; and TRUSTED, Marjorie, ‘Propaganda an Luxury: Small-scale Baroque Sculptures in Viceregal America and the Philippines’, in PIERCE, Donna, OSAKA, Ronald (eds.), *Asia and Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850*, Denver, Denver Art Museum, 2009, pp. 151–163.

<sup>3</sup> TRUSTED, Marjorie, ‘Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601’, in *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5, 2013, pp. 446–462.



## 53

## A PHILIPPINE CIRCUMCISION ALTAR PLAQUE

Carved ivory

The Philippines, Manila; 1610–1630

Dim.: 14.5 × 10.5 × 1.0 cm

F1439

Provenance: Migliorini and Casati collection, Italy



This religious plaque, depicting the New Testament episode of The Circumcision (Luke 2:21), and intended for personal devotion, was delicately carved in ivory by Chinese craftsmen in the Philippines (Manila).

The present plaque, carved from a single transversely cut section of elephant ivory, is remarkable for the quality of its carving, modelling, and fine final polishing.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese origin of the carver is evident in the typical treatment of the clouds, the almond-shaped with their distinctive eyelid folds, and the geometric schematism of the drapery folds.

Unlike many other similar carved ivory plaques made in the Philippines, ours does not strictly follow a specific printed composition. Its design, which may be considered original, seems to draw from two engravings by Heinrich Ulrich the Elder, produced between 1590 and 1621. These engravings are part of a series of thirty-two small prints (approximately 8.0 × 7.0 cm) depicting *Scenes from the Life of Christ*, published under the title *Vita, passio et resurrectio Jesu Christi*. Heinrich Ulrich the Elder (1567–after 1621), was born in Nuremberg, where he worked since 1595, later moving to Wolfenbüttel (1600–1602) and Vienna (1613–1619), where he published numerous prints. Some of these were based on compositions by Netherlandish artists such as Maerten de Vos (1532–1603) and Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617).

From Ulrich's print of the *Circumcision* (no. 5), the carver borrowed the figure of Christ Child, though the position of the

legs has been inverted, as well as the priest holding the child. The vertical arrangement of two male figures holding torches and the general form of the curtain on the right also reflect this engraving.<sup>2</sup> From the print of *The Presentation in the Temple* (no. 7), the carver adapted the kneeling Virgin, now empty-handed, and St Joseph standing behind her, along with the standing high-priest. This print also provided much of the architectural setting, though the arches in the interior scene were somewhat misunderstood by the local carver.<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with Jewish law and as a testament to his obedience to Biblical law, Jesus was circumcised eight days after his birth during the *Brit milah* ceremony, where he was given his name. This event has traditionally been regarded as the first time the blood of Christ was shed, marking the beginning of the redemption of humanity and demonstrating that Christ was fully human.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Circumcision of Christ held particular significance in missionary work in Asia, aligning with Counter-Reformation thought. As Christ's first act of obedience to divine law, the episode symbolised humility and submission, providing a model for the newly converted to embrace Church authority and submit to its teachings. In the context of the Counter-Reformation, this reinforced loyalty to the Catholic Church amid Protestant challenges. The event, interpreted as the first shedding of Christ's blood and prefiguring the Passion and the establishment of a universal covenant, underscored the

<sup>1</sup> For comparable examples regarding the quality of the carving, some whose engraved sources of inspiration of European origin have been identified, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *The Art of Collecting. Lisbon, Europe and the Early Modern World (1500–1800)*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2019, pp. 334–338, cat. 49.

<sup>2</sup> An example of this print belongs to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. RP-P-OB-54.903).

<sup>3</sup> An example of this print in the Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-54.905).



importance of sacramental participation. Missionaries paralleled this with baptism as the rite of initiation into the new covenant's and ultimately as necessary for salvation.

This and other similar plaques, with complex religious imagery, were not only intended as visual aids for devotional practices promoted by the Jesuits in Asia but also as items for export, particularly to Central and South America and the Iberian Peninsula.<sup>4</sup> Recent archaeological finds, notably from the shipwreck of the

Manila galleon *Santa Margarita* (1601) off the Mariana islands (Ladrones), have yielded valuable information on the chronology and production of devotional ivories made by Chinese and Filipino master carvers in the early seventeenth-century Philippines, pre-dating by several decades the Goan ivory carving industry.<sup>5</sup> HMC

<sup>4</sup> CHONG, Alan, 'Christian ivories by Chinese artists. Macau, the Philippines, and elsewhere, late 16th and 17th centuries', in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 204–207. See also BAILEY, Gavin Alexander, 'Translation and metamorphosis in the Catholic Ivories of China, Japan and the Philippines, 1561–1800', in VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, (ed.), *Ivories in the Portuguese Empire*, Lisbon, Scribe, 2013, pp. 233–290; MARCOS, Margarita Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España y Portugal*, Ciudad de México, Espejo de Obsidiana, 2010; and TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Propaganda an Luxury: Small-scale Baroque Sculptures in Viceregal America and the Philippines', in PIERCE, Donna, OSARA, Ronald (eds.), *Asia and Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850*, Denver, Denver Art Museum, 2009, pp. 151–163.

<sup>5</sup> TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601', in *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5, 2013, pp. 446–462.

# China

Sino-Portuguese relations had their origins in the trade and commerce of private Portuguese merchants, along the coastal regions of Asia and in the geographically strategic ports such as Malacca, Canton and Fujian, in the early part of the 16th century during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). These relations flourished with the establishment of the Portuguese in Macao in 1544, which facilitated the easy access to continental China. Alongside the trade and commerce, missionaries, especially the Jesuits, dedicated themselves to the spiritual conquest of China resulting in closer contacts with the local communities and ultimately an introduction to the Court of Peking.

In the 16th century, during the Ming Dynasty, China had become the center of the dialogue of artistic cultures and religious syncretism, between Christianity and the two principal religions, the Buddhism and Taoism. The confluence of the streams of dialogue and artistry combined techniques, styles and themes with the availability of a diversity of precious materials, where the crafting of small portable pieces in ivory, a skill that had reached its apex with the carvings of Chinese deities was used for producing equally fine pieces for the Christian faith, principally from workshops in Fujian province.

The brilliance of these ivory pieces created by indigenous craftsmen, is exemplified by the fact they managed to subtly imbue these works with a Chinese flavour while working in the style the commissioning missionaries required, essentially one drawn from European statuary and engravings yet paying respect to the extant representations of sacred Chinese subjects. Examples of this affinity between Buddhist and Christian imagery are the ivory sculptures of the Virgin and Child that have strong parallels with the Chinese goddess Guanyin, commonly depicted as a maternal figure holding a child in her lap, helping to integrate Christian ideology into the Sino-Portuguese iconography, devoted to the Virgin Mary.

It was the habit of the European missionaries to use visual aids, through art, to explain the Holy Scriptures, to question the Catechism through imagery and to convert the heathen by selecting iconic statuary to best serve these aims. It was through this that the representations of Virgin Mary and the Baby Jesus, *Salvator Mundi*, who according to Matteu Ricci, functioned as ‘the standards of the mission to disseminate Christianity throughout the New World’, the testimony to this being the pictures Ricci presented to the Emperor Wanli in 1601, depicting the Virgin and the Baby Jesus. ✍



*Map of the Ming Empire, c. 1389*

## 54

## A SINO-PORTUGUESE RHINOCEROS' HORN CUP

Rhinoceros horn and silver filigree

South China, and The Philippines; 1600–1630

Dim: 9.4 × 7.0 × 7.0 cm

F1486

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon

This rhinoceros horn cup was likely made in South China, with its silver filigree mounts probably added by Chinese craftsmen in the Spanish-ruled Philippines in the first decades of the seventeenth century.

The rhinoceros horn—probably a posterior horn of a Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*)—was carved on a lathe in the shape of a perfectly round cup and, following local Chinese metal and ceramic prototypes, may originally have had an integral foot ring on the underside. Following a contemporary European model of a stem cup or chalice, a stem with its knob and circular base, as well as a scalloped rim in silver filigree, was added to the rhinoceros horn cup. The filigree decoration consists of a thick square-section wire for the frame, filled with flattened twisted wire forming O-shaped curls typical of contemporary Chinese filigree objects and jewellery, and also of those made in the Philippines by craftsmen of Chinese or *mestizo* origin.<sup>1</sup>

Objects similar to this cup have in the past been wrongly identified as Goan in manufacture. Although applied filigree in gold jewellery is documented in India in ancient times, only towards the eighteenth century did silver *ajourée* filigree objects emerge as an Indian art in Karimnagar in the present-day state of Andhra Pradesh, and later in Cuttack, in Odisha. When the Portuguese ventured into Asia in the early sixteenth century, the most prolific centres of filigree production were located in Safavid Iran, China, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Recent research has dismissed a Goan origin for the silver and gold filigree objects made in Asia for export to the European market. Archival research and in-depth analysis of surviving objects have proposed new identifications, although not always in agreement.

In China, rhinoceros horn cups were prized collector's items, often gifted to successful scholars. Their carving, particularly in

workshops in southern cities such as Guangzhou, flourished from the late Ming to the early Qing dynasties, that is, from the late sixteenth century to the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Worked in China from the Tang dynasty (618–907) onwards—possibly as sacrificial vessels—and treasured in Asia since Antiquity for their antidotal qualities and supposed magical powers, rhinoceros horn cups were highly sought after in late Renaissance Europe. Archival research shows that such cups, along with whole horns imported in bulk, were avidly collected at the Lisbon court in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> The use of a prized material such as rhinoceros horn for the manufacture of this stem cup, possibly made to serve as a chalice for Communion, may have stemmed not only from the material's price and status as a luxury commodity, but also from its longstanding supernatural virtues, which would be known to the recently-converted Filipino population under Spanish influence. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> On silver filigree made for export in The Philippines, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2016, cat. 32, pp. 366–381. On gold filigree also made in The Philippines, from dated archaeological shipwrecks, see CHADOUR, A. Beatriz, 'The gold jewelry from the Nuestra Señora de la Concepción', in MATHERS, William M., PARKER, Henry S., COPUS, Kathleen (eds.), *Archaeological Report. The Recovery of the Manila Galleon Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion*, Sutton, Pacific Sea Resources, 1990, pp. 133–395.

<sup>2</sup> On this production, see CHAPMAN, Jan, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, Christie's Books, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *At The Prince's Table. Dining at the Lisbon Court (1500–1700). Silver, Mother-of-pearl, Rock Crystal and Porcelain*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2018, pp. 232–237, cat. 30.



## 55

**TWO SINO-PORTUGUESE SAINTS (ST. LUKE? AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST?)**

Polychrome wood with remnants of gilding

South China, possibly Macao; 1600–1650

Dim.: 63.0 × 41.0 × 24.0 cm; 64.0 × 43.0 × 28.0 cm

F1433

Provenance: Private collection, Germany

These two carved and polychrome wooden sculptures depicting male Saints are a rare testimony to seventeenth century, European commissioned, Chinese made Christian art.

Depicted as barefoot seated figures, both Evangelists are bald-headed and feature closed eyes as if in meditation. They are attired in long tunics fastened with belts at the waist. Over the open tunic, the left-hand side figure wears a voluminous mantle fastened by a square-shaped clasp and rests the left hand on the left knee while holding the draping cape over the opposite leg. The second figure, to the right, rests the face on the left palm while holding a box-like book (a codex) with the other.

The most unusual stylistic feature of both images is the angular rendition of the drapery folds, and particularly of the billowing fabric over the shoulders. Given their unfinished, hollowed backs, they must have been placed high in a church, in individual alcoves, and it is possible that they were once part of a group representing the four Evangelists and their attributes, the latter now lost or perhaps originally depicted in an alternative medium or form. The figure on the left possibly represents Saint Luke, who is sometimes portrayed beardless but often with a book, while the one on the right, hand over a book (the Gospel), may be identified as Saint John, the youngest of the four Evangelists.

The sculptures were likely made by a Chinese sculptor practised in the carving of large figures destined for Daoist and Buddhist temples. Our bald-headed Evangelists of serene meditative expressions, being similar to portrayals of the Eighteen Arhats (or *luóhàn*). In Chinese Buddhism, these are seen as the enlightened disciples of the Buddha (*arhat* in Sanskrit) and are venerated for their wisdom and spiritual achievements. Free from worldly cravings, the *luóhàn* are tasked with protecting the Buddhist faith. They are typically portrayed as meditative elders—bald, eccentric vagabonds and beggars with sagging cheeks and high noses, draped

in long robes of characteristic folds. As is the case with one of our figures, in some depictions, *luóhàn* are holding Buddhist scriptures scrolls (sutras). Our sculptures can also be compared with images of Daoist immortals, known as *xiān*, particularly that of Laozi, a semi-legendary ancient Chinese philosopher and author of one of the foundational Daoism texts, who is often depicted as an older, bald-headed man.

As with Christian Saints, Buddhist *luóhàn* and Daoist *xiān* embody wisdom, spiritual strength and enlightenment, their age and appearance symbolising their deep knowledge and mastery over life and spiritual matters. What stands out from the Evangelists postures and physical traits is a latent, yet meaningful, ambiguity. This either results from the master carver experience and familiarity with Buddhist and Daoist iconography or reflects instead a deliberate attempt by the European commissioning patron to adapt Christian subjects to Chinese sensibilities—a form of visual or artistic accommodation, as was conceived by the Society of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Very little Chinese Christian sculpture from the early modern period, made under European patronage in the context of missionary activity, survives. This shortage of extant examples hinders a better-informed art historical analysis that could help in providing the exact context for the commissioning and manufacturing of these two Evangelists. Nonetheless, comparison between the two figures and the bronze sculptures ornamenting the façade of the so-called St. Paul's Church ruins in Macao, provides significant parallels that enable a more accurate chronology and geography. The only surviving structure of the former Jesuit College of the Mother of God, or '*Colégio da Madre de Deus*'—the so-called College of St. Paul—corresponds to the façade of the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady (*Igreja da Assunção de Nossa Senhora*).<sup>2</sup> The richly decorated building, carved in stone by local Chinese, and possibly Japanese sculptors and stonemasons, is

<sup>1</sup> DEMATTÈ, Paola, 'Christ and Confucius: Accommodating Christian and Chinese Beliefs', in REED, Marcia, DEMATTÈ, Paola (eds.), *China on Paper. European and Chinese Works from the Late Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2007, pp. 29–52.

<sup>2</sup> PEREIRA, Fernando António Baptista, 'As ruínas de S. Paulo: História e Arte. St. Paul's ruins (Macao): History and Art', in PEREIRA, Fernando António Baptista (ed.), *As Ruínas de S. Paulo. Um monumento para o futuro. St. Paul's Ruins. A monument towards the future* (cat.), Lisbon, Macao, Instituto Cultural de Macau, Missão de Macau em Lisboa, 1994, pp. 62–85.



considered one of the most relevant testimonies to European and Eastern artistic confluence, particularly in relation to Christian art in the Portuguese-ruled Asian territories. The temple, as conceived by the Italian Jesuit and architect Carlo Spinola (1564–1622) between 1601–1603, was consecrated in 1603, but the carved façade construction was not begun until 1636.

The bronze figures, which include the four canonised and beatified founders of the Society of Jesus, as well as images of the Virgin of the Assumption, the Child Jesus *Salvator Mundi*, and the Holy Spirit dove, were cast by Manuel Tavares Bocarro (ca. 1605–1652), master of the Macao Foundry.<sup>3</sup> Born in Goa, during his long stay in Macao (1625–1652) Bocarro cast numerous artillery pieces in iron, bronze, and copper, undoubtedly assisted by Chinese specialist metallurgy craftsmen. While unequivocally cast by him, the monumental figures were likely modelled by local artisans due to their evident Chinese stylistic features. They were once gilt, excepting for their heads and hands, which were painted in skin tones. Beyond the rendition of the faces, and despite their hieratic stance, possibly emulating European wooden prototypes, their Chinese character can be assessed by the angularity of the draperies. These dynamic folds of insinuated movement, seem almost alive. The billowing and flowing folds wrapping the *Salvator Mundi* particularly, are comparable to those in our wooden sculptures.

By 1576, on the establishment of the Diocese of Macao, nineteen years after the official founding of the city, the structure necessary for the launching of missionary activities in Southern China was already in place.<sup>4</sup> It included four churches, the university-level Saint Paul's College, oldest Western-type university in the Far-East, the Senate, two hospitals, and the '*Santa Casa da Misericórdia*', a lay charity institution. For the Society of Jesus priests, Macao served as the base for the learning of the Asian languages essential for evangelisation, and as a launching pad to the missionary activity throughout Asia.

Led by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), the spreading of Christianity in China began in Zhaoqing (Province of Guangdong) followed by Nanchang (Province of Jiangxi capital city), Nanjing (capital city of Jiangsu), and finally in 1601, by the Imperial capital, Beijing. From approximately 2,500 converts in the early seventeenth century, and despite severe persecution (1664–1671), by the time of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) collapse, Chinese Christian converts amounted to more than 100,000. This increase resulted not only from Jesuit evangelisation but also from the activity of other Religious Orders

settled in China, such as the Dominicans and the Franciscans, from 1631 and 1633 respectively. Freedom of worship to all Christians in the Empire was granted by the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661–1722) in 1692, two years after the founding of the Dioceses of Nanjing and Beijing. In the early nineteenth century, the number of converts had reached 200,000, eventually reaching 300,000 by 1840. This steady increase triggered a growing demand for religious iconography, namely that produced by local Chinese artists.

These two sculptures do likely date from the earlier period of the missionary activity developed in coastal Southern China provinces. Scientific tests carried out by CIRAM, a renowned French laboratory specialised in scientific analysis of artworks, have reinforced the sculptures proposed dating while simultaneously providing the xylological identification of the raw material.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the former, radiocarbon dating testing has revealed a 95.4% probability that the wood for the figures was felled between 1414 and 1466. However, it should be noted that the samples were taken from the central core of the trunk, which is older; the established dating may therefore be affected by the 'old wood effect' (*effet vieux bois* in French), meaning the tree's felling could have occurred various decades later. A felling in the late sixteenth century would better align with the stylistic analysis and the historical missionary activity context in China. It is also possible that the master carver used older or recycled material.

The wood was identified as *Tilia japonica*, commonly known as Japanese lime or Japanese linden, a tree native to eastern China and Japan. This medium-sized shade tree grows up to twenty meters in height, and its wood is easy to work and ideal for detailed carving, having a tendency not to crack if properly dried. It is often used for furniture making and, due to its straight grain, for veneering. *HMC*

<sup>3</sup> COUCEIRO, Gonçalo, 'Manuel Tavares Bocarro e a Casa da Fundação de Macau. Manuel Tavares Bocarro and the Macao Foundry', *Oriente*, 2 (2002), pp. 111–118.

<sup>4</sup> BROCKEY, Liam Matthew, *Journey to the East. The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724*, Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Report under the call number CIRAM0924-OA-1467R-1, by Stéphanie Castandet and Olivier Bobin; Xylological analysis by Joey Montagut.



## 56

## A CHINESE MING DYNASTY CHILD JESUS WITH THE HOLY NAILS

Ivory with traces of polychromy and gilding  
 South China, probably Zhangzhou; 1590–1620  
 Dim.: 8.0 × 3.6 × 2.5 cm  
 F1448

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal

This diminutive figure of the Christ Child with the Holy Nails was carved from elephant ivory in South China, likely in Zhangzhou (Fujian Province), between the last decade of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Zhangzhou, one of the most important coastal cities in Fujian Province, was a notable centre for ivory carving in late Ming China. The tradition of carving secular and religious figures (for Buddhist and Daoist private shrines) in ivory in southern Fujian was bolstered by the emergence of a new appreciation for and consumption of luxury goods among the urban elite. Europeans with access to the Fujian markets—together with their local and hinterland agents, merchants and Christian missionaries alike, and probably some newly-converted locals—began commissioning religious ivory carvings and this demand was quickly met by Chinese craftsmen.

Although ivory is not specifically listed among the products of Fujian for that period, by 1573 Fujianese merchants were bringing crucifixes for sale in Manila.<sup>2</sup> More heavily Sinicised devotional ivories, such as the present example, were likely carved in Fujian in this context, with some—such as those from the shipwreck of the *Santa Margarita* (1601)—making their way to the Philippines and then onward to Acapulco aboard the Manila galleon.<sup>3</sup>

Other carvings, commissioned directly by the new clientele, particularly Spanish missionaries settled in the Philippines, were likely produced in Manila and conformed more closely to contemporary European aesthetics. The demand was so high, and the profit margins so enticing, that increasing numbers of Fujianese craftsmen and merchants settled in Manila from the 1580s onwards.

Among the Christian religious ivory carvings produced in Asia under European influence, the most abundant are those related to the Passion of Christ, featuring figures of the Crucified

Christ in various sizes and levels of carving quality, amounting to hundreds of examples. This is not surprising, given that the Crucifixion is central to Christian theology, symbolising Christ's sacrifice for humanity's salvation. For missionaries working in Asia at the turn of the seventeenth century, the image of the Crucified Christ was a powerful tool to communicate Christianity's core tenet—redemption through suffering and death.

While no other examples of the present iconography are known, the present statuette shares many similarities with a small group of seated figures of the Christ Child as the Saviour of the World (*Salvator Mundi*) that have survived as heirloom pieces and also as archaeological finds, most notably from the *Santa Margarita*.<sup>4</sup>

Superbly carved, the present figurine wears the same type of tunic and adopts the same meditative pose as the *Salvator Mundi* examples, with the right hand placed near the temple. However, the inclusion of the three nails of the Crucifixion in the Child's left hand—replacing the orb—reveals a deeper theological meaning: the meditation on Christ's Passion and suffering on the Cross. Noteworthy are traces of gilding on the nails, hair, and hem of the tunic, as well as the polychromy on the lips and eyes of the Christ Child.

Other iconographical types combining the imagery of the Saviour of the World with that of the Good Shepherd were also recovered from the *Santa Margarita* shipwreck, notably a representation of the Naked Christ Child. Crouched, the Child's posture similarly symbolises meditation on the Passion. — HMC

<sup>1</sup> Published in CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Chinese Christian Art. From the South China Sea to the Imperial Court (1580–1900)*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2025, pp. 14–15, fig. 5.

<sup>2</sup> GILLMAN, Derek, 'Ming and Qing Ivories: figure carving', in WATSON, William (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing* (cat.), London, The Oriental Ceramic Society–British Museum, 1984, pp. 35–52, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> For the carved ivories of the *Santa Margarita*, see TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601', *Hispanic Research Journal* 14.5 (2013), pp. 446–462.

<sup>4</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Chinese Christian Art. From the South China Sea to the Imperial Court (1580–1900)*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2025, pp. 11–15, figs. 1–6.



## 57

## A MING DYNASTY SLEEPING CHILD JESUS

Ivory

South China, probably Zhangzhou; 1600–1620

Dim.: 3.0 × 12.0 × 4.5 cm

F1427

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

This *Sleeping Christ Child* was made in South China during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Masterfully carved from elephant ivory, the Child is depicted completely naked, reclining in a partially twisted supine posture. He lies horizontally, with his face and torso facing upwards (supine position) but slightly rotated to the right (lateral recumbent). His lower limbs are asymmetrical, forming a 'figure-four position' or 'semi-recumbent twist', with the right leg nearly extended and the left slightly bent over it. The placement of his upper limbs is equally distinctive: the left hand rests on his chest, while the right arm is bent, with the hand almost touching His temple. This nuanced pose conveys both serenity and subtle dynamism. The relaxed alignment of the lower limbs suggests an unguarded state, the left hand evokes introspection, and the hand at His temple hints at a pensive or protective gesture.

The body's asymmetry, with one leg bent over the other and one arm touching the temple, may subtly allude to the future Passion. Meanwhile, the slightly turned posture suggests an intermediate state—neither fully at rest nor fully alert—paralleling the Christ Child's role as an intermediary between Heaven and Earth.

During missionary work in China at the turn of the seventeenth century, the reclining, vulnerable posture symbolised Christ's humanity and prefigured his Passion, aligning with Jesuit efforts to emphasise Salvation through his suffering. The nuanced depiction of the infant Christ, balancing serenity and dynamism, encapsulates his dual nature as both divine and human, resonating with Chinese Neo-Confucian ideals of harmony (*hé*) between the spiritual and material realms.

Made from luxurious ivory with refined artistry, the figure must have appealed to Chinese aesthetic sensibilities, facilitating cultural accommodation and enhancing its efficacy in private devotion and theological instruction. Through its tactile and sym-

bolic qualities, this ivory carving fostered meditative prayer while visually conveying key tenets of Christianity.

The iconography of the sleeping Christ Child appears to have been devised by Giacomo Francia (ca. 1447–1517) in the early sixteenth century, exemplified by an engraving in which the Child is depicted as having fallen asleep on the cross.<sup>1</sup> In a tablet above the Child, a Latin inscription reads '*Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat*', a verse from the *Song of Songs* (5:2), meaning 'I sleep, but my heart waketh'; while below, beside a crown of thorns (one of the *Arma Christi*), a scroll bears the words '*In somno meo requies*', or 'In my sleep, I find rest'. The Child's sleeping posture in the engraving, however, differs significantly from that of the Chinese ivory. In the engraving, the Child is depicted in a left recumbent position, slightly rotated downwards, with bent lower and upper limbs, the arms serving as a pillow. Alluding to the contemplative soul that remains watchful even as the body sleeps, the engraving can also be interpreted in Marian terms, as a reference to Mary's protective role. From the moment of his birth, Mary was aware of her son's destiny, a theme subtly evoked by the imagery.

This Marian association can also be observed in late sixteenth-century European prints, which are known to have circulated in Asia and served as models for local depictions. Among these is *The Sleep of Jesus* by Hieronymus Wierix, likely published just before the turn of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup> This iconography also appears in a 1591 painting by Francesco Vanni (ca. 1563/1564–1610) for the *cataletto* of the Compagnia di Santa Caterina in Siena, which Vanni later reproduced as an etching in 1598, accompanied by the Latin inscription '*Ego dormio e[t] cor meum vigilat*'.<sup>3</sup> The highly influential and widely circulated prints by the Wierix brothers must have provided the source for the gesture of touching of the right temple, as seen in the Chinese carving. Based on an earlier engraving by Diana Scultori (1547–1612), Hieronymus published

<sup>1</sup> For this print by Francia, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 262–273, cat. 23, on p. 269, fig. 2.

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024, p. 89, fig. 51.

<sup>3</sup> An example of this etching belongs to the collection of the British Museum, London (inv. V,3.31). On Vanni, see MARCIARI, John J., BOORSCH, Suzanne, VANNI, Francesco. *Art in Late Renaissance Siena* (cat.), New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, Yale University Press, 2013.



a print title *Origo casti cordis* ('Origin of the chaste heart'), which also featured the same biblical text.<sup>4</sup>

In Iberia, this theme and iconography were further developed by the renowned Baroque painter Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1618–1682), active in Seville. Murillo created a series of images depicting the infancy of Jesus, which over time became deeply ingrained in Spanish art, both in painting and sculpture. His variations on the theme—including a c. 1660 painting at the Museo del Prado, Madrid (inv. P001003), showing the Christ Child in a similar posture with bent legs and his left hand resting on his chest—often incorporate attributes of his martyrdom, refiguring his Passion and death. These works function as visual metaphors, designed to prompt viewers to contemplate profound theological themes.

It is possible that this figurine of the sleeping Christ Child originally rested on an ivory-carved pillow or, alternatively, on a carved wooden base, similar to those found on rare contemporary figurines of the *Sleeping Christ Child as the Good Shepherd*.<sup>5</sup> Another Sleeping Christ Child, depicted as the Good Shepherd (19.4 cm in length), with an open fleece tunic and its original pillow adorned with four tasselled corners, is known and has been published as a rare Chinese carving from the seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> Comparable in carving quality and specific stylistic details, such as knuckle dimples, is a figurine (16.4 cm in length) from the collection of the late Portuguese architect Fernando Távora (1923–2005) in Oporto. Like the present example, this figurine also lacks a pillow.<sup>7</sup>

The Chinese origin of this rare ivory carving is evident in its distinctive style, particularly the curls of the hair, which closely resemble those found on securely attributed Chinese carvings.<sup>8</sup> Among these is an important ivory figurine (19.5 cm in height) in the Hermitage, St Petersburg (inv. JH–939), depicting *Avalokiteśvara*, the *bodhisattva* of Compassion, locally known as *Guānyin* ('Perceiver of Sounds').<sup>9</sup> Reflecting a later development in *Guanyin's* iconography, this Hermitage figurine depicts her seated and holding a male child, a type known as *Guanyin* as the Bringer of Sons (*Sòngzi Guānyin*).

At the turn of the seventeenth century, during the growing presence of Catholic missionaries in South China, sterile Chinese women prayed to the Virgin Mary for sons. This local iconography may have been intended as an ambiguous portrayal of the Virgin and Child. Jesuit missionaries referred to *Guanyin* as the 'Goddess of Mercy', highlighting the parallels between her imagery and that of the Virgin Mary. Notably, the Hermitage *Guanyin's* hairstyle, with its linear carving, as well as the treatment of the nose, eyelids, and mouth, closely matches the carving style of the *Sleeping Christ Child* analysed here. ➤ HMC

<sup>4</sup> See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, 'Rock-crystal carving in Portuguese Asia: An Archaeometric Analysis', in GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, LOWE, K.J.P. (eds.), *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2015, pp. 186–211, on p. 200, fig. 195; and IDEM, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024, pp. 42–43, fig. 17.

<sup>5</sup> In recent years, such figurines have been identified as products of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya (in present-day Thailand). See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 262–273, cat. 23; and IDEM, 'Two reclining figures of the Child Jesus as the Good Shepherd from the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand)', in GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, LOWE, K.J.P. (eds.), *The Global City. Lisbon in the Renaissance* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga–Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, p. 311.

<sup>6</sup> RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, p. 96, cat. 236. The figurine is here said to belong to the collection of the Portuguese architect José Lico, Lisbon.

<sup>7</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, p. 93, cat. 228.

<sup>8</sup> For Christian ivory carvings made in China for European consumption between the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, carved alongside figurines for the local Chinese market, see GILLMAN, Derek, 'Ming and Qing Ivories: figure carving' in WATSON, William (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, London, The Oriental Ceramic Society–British Museum, 1984, pp. 35–52.

<sup>9</sup> A similar, although less Sinicised image of the seated Virgin and Child (11.1 cm in height) belongs to the collection of the Casa-Museu Frederico de Freitas in Funchal, Madeira (inv. 2.0018). See SOUSA, Francisco António Clode de, (ed.), *A Madeira nas Rotas do Oriente* (cat.), Funchal, Câmara Municipal do Funchal, 2005, p. 112, cat. 84.

## 58

## TWO MING DYNASTY SEATED CHILD JESUS SALVATOR MUNDI

Ivory

China, Ming dynasty; late 16th–early 17th century

Height: 9.0 cm and 9.0 cm

F970 + F821

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtains Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux, France, 2019 (cat. p. 42)

These two pieces Sino-Portuguese from the 16th–17th century, both of finely sculpted ivory, represent the seated Baby Jesus in contemplation, absorbed in His meditation.

The physiognomy of the face belies the Chinese influence with its serenity and expression, denoting deep spirituality and mysticism. The head has a high forehead, the hair with a central parting, is styled in the Buddhist manner with large curls to the front, a sign of superior intelligence, with the locks falling to the shoulders carved in fine parallel lines, terminating in stylized ringlets. The eyes are round and slightly protruding, set in deep sockets, with the mouth beautifully delineated and lips slightly parted.

One hand holds the terrestrial Globe as befits the Saviour of the World, and His face rests lightly on the other, with the index and middle fingers extended in the way of blessing acknowledged as dignified and majestic in Europe.

He is seated in an Oriental manner vested in a simple tunic without decoration, yet crafted in a way that delineates His body and shows the seated form and crossed legs. The feet are crossed yet remain side by side, in the Chinese fashion.

The iconic image of the Infant Jesus, *Salvator Mundi*, was originally spread throughout Europe of the 15th century from the Flemish city of *Malines* (Mechelen) in the province of Antwerp, and became a symbol of the *Devotio Moderna*, the new movement to encourage the devotion to God in the homes and lives of the people through contemplation and meditation of the humanity of God.

It was religiously themed images and engravings, that in the 16th and 17th Centuries travelled from Europe to the Orient,

firstly by the Portuguese discovers, traders and missionaries, and used to the evangelization of the people of the Orient in a manner most easily understood.

The two pieces presented here receive the influence of the European style while showing the influence of the Buddhist model of the image of the Baby Jesus as The Good Shepherd from the Indo-Portuguese Iconography: Jesus seated with legs crossed, not standing on His feet as in the Mechelen Babys and the overall aspect of the posture of deep contemplation from the Indo-Portuguese art.

Bernardo Ferrão remarks that, contrary to the Baby Jesus from Indo-Portuguese origin, this two seated Infants are extremely rare in the Luso-Oriental Imagination.

Identical pieces can be found in the collection of architect José Lico and are reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (1991, p. 116). ➤ TP



## 59

## A MING DYNASTY VIRGIN AND CHILD

Ivory

China, Ming dynasty; late 16th–early 17th century

Dim.: 11.5 × 6.0 × 4.5 cm

F1077

*Provenance: P.T. collection, Portugal**Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtaines Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux, France, 2019 (cat. p. 43); 'Three European Embassies to China', Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, 2019*

A rare Sino-Portuguese sculpture in ivory, from the Ming Dynasty at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries representing Our Lady with the Baby Jesus.

The head of the Virgin has a high forehead, the face is round with a serene and mystic expression and shows a subtle Chinese influence in the physiognomy. The eyes are half closed, wide and almond-shaped. The nose wide and with finely defined nostrils, shows some small defects. The mouth is half open, the parted lips small and finely delineated. She is seated in the oriental fashion, the volume of her dress is softened by wide smooth panels with folds and wrinkles. She is wearing a simple tunic, with a 'V' neck and reaching down over her crossed legs with the cloth pleated and curving down to her feet. A wide veil covers the head of the Madonna with lateral openings for her ears, strongly figured and with elongated earlobes in the Buddhist-style.

The Virgin holds the Infant on her left arm, covered with a pleated mantle, cradling Him with her right arm, stylized and long, with elongated fingers in the Chinese manner.

The Baby is bare-headed with Buddhist-style ears and a physiognomy similar to His Virgin Mother. There are some signs of light damage to the face and He is holding a flower in his right hand whilst pulling on the mantle that covers the left arm of the Virgin.

The theme of the Mother-God cradling a child in her arms is particularly important in the south of China, the cult of *Guanyin*, a female manifestation of *bodhisattva Avalokitesvara*—and *Mazu*, a Tao divinity, protector of fishermen and their wives, and venerated like the reincarnation of the goddess *Guanyin* on Earth.

There are also possible links to the Chinese cult of Xi Wangmu, the Chinese goddess known as the Queen Mother of the East, popular during the Tang Dynasty, and also of the Buddhist cult developed in China in the 7th century of *Kishimojin*, the goddess protector of children.

The missionaries recognized these symbols of fertility, maternity and protection, and drew significant parallels with the importance of Our Lady the Virgin. This is referred when the Jesuits Michelle Ruggieri, and Matteo Ricci wrote to the *Company General Claudio Aquaviva* soliciting images of the Virgin and the Infant Saviour, due to the great devotion and curiosity of some magisterial Chinese to the image of the Virgin and Child in the Oratorio of the House of Jesuits in the Chinese Mission.

This piece is an important and rare example of a Christian model, inspired by this artistic symbiosis that links Chinese goddesses with the Virgin Mary. As the most important center in the production of ivory sculptures in the 15th century was in the South of China, in Fujian province, we attribute the origins of this fine and rare piece to this locality. The iconography of this work clearly indicates the craftsmanship of native Chinese.

There is a similar example in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, inventory no. LN 939. *TP*



## 60

## A MING CRUCIFIED JESUS CHRIST

Ivory with traces of polychromy, ebony and iron

South China, probably Zhangzhou; 1590–1620

Dim.: 64.5 × 37.5 × 7.5 cm

F1430

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

This figure of the Crucified Christ was carved from elephant ivory in South China, likely in Zhangzhou (Fujian Province), between the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century.

Depicted as already dead, with his head lowered and inclined towards the right shoulder, Christ's facial features are heavily Sinicised, notably the high forehead, long straight hair (painted brown), arched eyebrows, heavy closed almond-shaped eyes, flat nose, and thin lips. The slightly angular treatment of Christ's finely carved loincloth, with its numerous folds of drapery, is typical of contemporary Chinese sculpture. His right foot is nailed over the left and the outstretched arms are carved separately and attached.

The ivory figure is attached to its original wooden cross, made from two pieces of Ceylon ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) joined and pinned together. In addition to ivory finials decorating the ends of the arms, the cross is embellished with ivory fillets. The finely carved hands and feet are nailed to the cross with wrought iron nails.

Among the Christian religious ivory carvings produced in Asia under European influence, the most abundant are those related to the Passion of Christ, featuring figures of the Crucified Christ in various sizes and levels of carving quality, amounting to hundreds of examples.

The Crucifixion is central to Christian theology, symbolising Christ's sacrifice for humanity's Salvation. For missionaries working in Asia at the turn of the seventeenth century, the image of the Crucified Christ was a powerful tool to communicate Christianity's core tenet—redemption through suffering and death.

The Sinicised features of the carving would have made the figure more acceptable in a culture unfamiliar with Western religious depictions, while also serving to highlight Christ's divinity and humanity, illustrating his role as the intermediary between Heaven and Earth. The image would also link Christ's suffering to Chinese philosophical ideas, such as sacrifice for the greater good or the purification of the soul, offering a familiar framework for understanding Christian doctrine. Concepts like *dà yì* ('the greater good') and precepts such as *shě j wèi rén* ('sacrifice oneself for others') embody the Confucian ideal of self-sacrifice, while *xiū shēn* ('self-cultivation') and *chán dīng* ('meditation') focus on the puri-

fication of the soul through cultivation and meditation, aimed at achieving moral clarity and spiritual enlightenment. These ideas could have been used by missionaries in their effort to adapt and translate complex Catholic principles. The Crucified Christ could also be interpreted as a symbol of mercy and compassion, virtues valued both in Catholicism and Chinese thought, particularly Neo-Confucianism, which emphasised harmony, sacrifice, and the well-being of others.

The heavily Sinicised appearance of this Crucified Christ, together with the design of its original cross—distinctly different from the crosses seen on similar figurines carved around the same period in the Philippines by Chinese craftsmen settled in Manila, locally known as *sangleyes*—suggests it was made in mainland China, likely in Zhangzhou.<sup>1</sup> This city, one of the most important coastal cities of Fujian Province, was a notable centre for ivory carving in late Ming China. The tradition of carving secular and religious figures (for Buddhist and Daoist private shrines) in ivory in southern Fujian was bolstered by the emergence of a new appreciation and consumption of luxury goods among the urban elite. This shift, far removed from the more austere tastes of the literati and rooted in the gradual dissolution of Ming social conventions, coincided with the appearance of a new European clientele. In 1592, Gao Lin, a merchant and dramatist from Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province, recorded that 'In Fujian ivory is carved into human forms, the workmanship of which is fine and artful; however, one cannot put them anywhere, or give them as a decent present'.<sup>2</sup> This seemingly new tradition was poorly accepted by the old-fashioned elite of scholarly connoisseurs to which Gao Lin evidently aspired. Figural ivory carvings were considered unsuitable as gifts and unworthy of artistic appreciation, viewed as novelties, only appropriate for social climbers and foreigners.

Europeans with access to the Fujian markets and their local and hinterland agents—merchants and Christian missionaries alike—and probably some newly-converted locals, likely began commissioning religious ivory carvings. This demand was quickly met by Chinese craftsmen. Although ivory is not specifically listed among the products of Fujian for that period, by 1573 Fujianese merchants were already bringing crucifixes—undoubtedly similar to the *Crucified Christ* analysed here—to Manila for sale.<sup>3</sup> More

<sup>1</sup> For Christian ivory carvings made in China for European consumption between the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, carved alongside figurines for the local Chinese market, see GILLMAN, Derek, 'Ming and Qing Ivories: figure carving', in WATSON, William (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, London, The Oriental Ceramic Society–British Museum, 1984, pp. 35–52. For the typical wooden crosses of figures of the Crucified Christ made in the Philippines in the early modern period, see PARAMIO, José Manuel Casado, *Marfiles Hispano-Filipinos*, Valladolid, Museo Oriental de Valladolid–Caja España, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> CLUNAS, Craig, *Chinese Carving*, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Sun Tree Publishing, 1996, pp. 18–19.

<sup>3</sup> See GILLMAN, Derek, 'Ming and Qing Ivories: figure carving', in WATSON, William (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, London, The Oriental Ceramic Society–British Museum, 1984, pp. 35–52, on p. 37.



heavily Sinicised devotional ivories were likely carved in Fujian in this context, some—such as those from the shipwreck of the *Santa Margarita* (1601)—making their way to the Philippines and then onward to Acapulco aboard the Manila galleon.<sup>4</sup> Other carvings, commissioned more closely by the new clientele, particularly missionaries settled in the Philippines, were likely produced in Manila and adhered more closely to contemporary European aesthetics. The demand was so high, and the profit margins so enticing, that more and more Fujianese craftsmen and merchants settled in Manila from the 1580s onwards. The growing Fujianese population led to the establishment of a Chinese quarter—aptly called *Párian* in local Tagalog (from the verb *pariyán*, ‘to go [to a certain place]’), meaning ‘market-place’—where many religious ivory carvings were produced to meet the increasing European and colonial American demand.

A comparable *Crucified Christ* (29.0 cm in height), lacking its original wooden cross, yet so similar in proportions, facial features, treatment of the folds of drapery, and overall carving quality that it must have been produced in the same ivory carving workshop, belongs to the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore (inv. 2012–00383). According to the museum, the carving was made in Japan or is ‘probably’ Japanese.<sup>5</sup> This attribution, however, is problematic. No documented tradition of ivory carving existed in Japan before the late seventeenth century, and even then, it was confined to small objects (mostly *netsuke*) made from various types of ivory.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, given the existence of a small but notable number of similar pieces, distinctly Catholic in character and emerging within a context of significant religious intolerance and persecution in Japan, the opportunity to establish a fully developed ivory carving tradition *ex nihilo* seems highly improbable. While some argue for its origin within the Jesuit ‘art academy’ established in Japan in the late sixteenth century, evidence suggests this was

primarily a Painting Seminar, as indicated by contemporary documentary sources. There is no support in the historical record for the production of such carvings under European supervision and patronage within that framework. — HMC

<sup>4</sup> For the carved ivories of the *Santa Margarita*, see TRUSTED, Marjorie, ‘Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601’, *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5 (2013), pp. 446–462.

<sup>5</sup> CHONG, Alan et al., *Devotion and Desire. Cross-Cultural Art in Asia. New Acquisitions* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2013, p. 78, cat. 76 (catalogue entry Clement Onn); CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, p. 189, cat. 77 (catalogue entry by William R. Sargent).

<sup>6</sup> See CHAIKLIN, Martha, *Ivory and the Aesthetics of Modernity in Meiji Japan*, Basingstoke–New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 5–7.

## 61

## A SOUTH CHINA ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI RECEIVING THE STIGMATA ALTAR PLAQUE

Mother-of-pearl with remnants of polychrome decoration

South China, or The Philippines; 1580–1620

Dim.: 8.2 × 6.7 × 0.6 cm

F1431

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

This small, highly detailed mother-of-pearl plaque carved in South China or in The Philippines ca. 1580–1620, depicts Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata.

Two years before His death, in 1224, Saint Francis (ca. 1181–1226) received the Stigmata—the bodily wounds corresponding to Christ's Crucifixion wounds—while praying on the mountain retreat of La Verna, near Arezzo, in Italy. The event was accepted as a sign of his deep unity with Christ's suffering and became a powerful symbol of Christian devotion.

At the centre, body turned to the right, the masterfully carved kneeling Saint raises his arms while receiving the Stigmata wounds from a hovering Crucifix. Saint Francis appears to levitate above the barren rocky landscape, from which stand out, on the right foreground, human bones and a skull. Also on the right, an egret climbs a hill on which clouds seem to hold and elevate the otherworldly Crucified Christ occupying much of the upper corner. Between the egret—likely the Chinese *Egretta eulophotes*—and the clouds, there seems to appear a book. In the upper left corner, a cluster of similarly dense clouds.

Carved as if a framed composition, the plaque features a shallow engraved border of delicately incised clouds, contrasting with the deeper carved central scene in which the figures of Saint Francis and the Crucified Christ protrude from the polished background. Only part preserved in recessed and difficult-to-access points, traces of the original vibrant polychrome decoration are still evident on the light rays striking the Saint, on the rocky hill, and on both figures' hair and beard. Black pigment is also preserved on the *Titulus Crucis*, the 'Title of the Cross' label set on the crucifix upper arm, which reads 'INRI'—*Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum* (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews).

The carver's Chinese origin is perceptible, not only for the figures anatomical details but, most conspicuously, for the stylised rendition of the rocky hill with its distinctive broken contour, reminiscent of scholar's rocks (*gōngshí*), and the quintessentially Chinese depiction of the *rúyì* shaped clouds, on both the low-relief scene and the incised frame. The *rúyì* derives from the head of the *língzhī*, or mushroom of immortality (*Ganoderma sichuanense*), and symbolises power, good fortune, and fulfilment of wishes. The Chinese word *rúyì* means literally 'as you wish', and the motif, along with its derivative forms, such as the cloud-collar (*yúnjiān*), is associated with spiritual authority and the attainment of blessings

or desires. Linked to immortality through the *língzhī*, in Daoism the *rúyì* symbolises longevity and eternal life.

Although the carver clearly followed a European engraving as the basis for his work, the visual source has not yet been identified. Nonetheless, a strikingly similar composition was published ca. 1514 by the Netherlandish painter and engraver Lucas van Leyden (ca. 1494–1533). It features Saint Francis in identical posture, receiving His Stigmata from swooping light rays that connect the hovering Crucifix to His wounds.<sup>1</sup> This engraving is one of Lucas van Leyden's most praised devotional images.<sup>2</sup> The narrative elements are reduced to a minimum, with the focus on the Saint's Franciscan habit, His Stigmata, His vision of the crucifix ('a man like a seraph with six wings', according to the original Franciscan texts), and His belt with its three knots representing the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity. It has been suggested that this engraving was printed for the members of the sewing, knitting, and clothing guilds of Saint Francis. As in our carving, there is a book, bound in a characteristically late medieval bag-cloth bookbinding, laying on the ground by the Saint, alluding to His meditative existence and to the weeks of intense prayer spent at the mountain retreat, alongside his Franciscan companion, Leo, who is also featured in the engraving.

Van Leyden's print does not include the egret, bones, or skull as attributes, nor the rocky hill and clouds as scenery, depicting a forest instead. The former iconographic elements, also absent from narratives of this major episode in the Saint's life, may have been added by the carver or, alternatively, proposed by the patron who commissioned this rare plaque. While the skull and the book are common in other contemporary depictions of the mystical event, the egret, along with a hare, appears in an earlier Netherlandish engraving from ca. 1470–1485, animals being associated with Francis as Patron Saint of birds.<sup>3</sup>

In Christian iconography, the symbolism of human bones is often linked to mortality and the transience of life, perhaps reflecting Saint Francis's deep spirituality, his embrace of poverty, and his humility in the face of death. Similarly, in Chinese Buddhism, bones represent the impermanence of life, reminding one of the inevitabilities of death and the importance of spiritual liberation. In Taoist thought, such imagery could reflect the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth, or the idea of shedding physical form to attain spiritual immortality.

<sup>1</sup> Two such prints at the British Museum, London, invs. D,5.35, and Kk,6.124.

<sup>2</sup> JACOBOWITZ, E.S., STEPANEK, S.L., *The Prints of Lucas Van Leyden & His Contemporaries*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1993, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> British Museum, inv. 1851,1213.9; a woodcut by the so-called Master of Jesus in Bethany.



Egrets, like birds in general, can symbolise purity or spiritual ascension in Christian iconography. In Chinese culture, particularly in the Taoist and Buddhist traditions, egrets are often associated with purity, transcendence, and spiritual freedom, symbolising the soul's journey toward enlightenment, or immortality.

When connected with Saint Francis Stigmata, these elements—human bones and egret—may emphasise his deep identification with suffering, mortality, and the transcendence of worldly attachments. Thus, by incorporating them, the Chinese master carver seems to be combining Christian ideals of sacrifice and humility with Buddhist or Taoist concepts of impermanence, spiritual ascension, and quest for enlightenment.

For sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Christian believers, particularly those within the *devotio moderna* movement, the mystical event depicted in this plaque was understood as a powerful symbol of personal and inner piety, and of emulation of Christ's own suffering. It encouraged a deeper emotional connection with God through humility and meditation on the Passion of Christ, aligning with the movement's focus on affective devotion.

In the context of missionary practices in Asia, particularly in China and the Philippines, the Stigmata were presented as signs of divine favour and sanctity. Missionaries highlighted this mystical event to reinforce the depth of Christian spirituality, aiding conversion by linking suffering, holiness and divine grace. In the

Philippines, the devotion to Christ's Passion became fundamental, with practices such as Holy Week processions and self-flagellation reflecting this influence. Saint Francis Stigmata strengthen these traditions, fostering strong identification with Christ's suffering, a devotion that persists today.

Carved mother-of-pearl plaques of such high quality and size, regardless of the uniqueness of its iconography, are exceedingly rare. Based on its thickness, golden body colour and iridescence, the raw material was most likely extracted from the gold-lip variety of the *Pinctada maxima* pearl oyster shell, the largest pearl oyster species that can grow up to 20–30 cm in diameter and weigh between five and six kilos.<sup>4</sup> The *Pinctada maxima* pearl oyster occurs naturally in the warm tropical South Pacific waters of the Arafura Sea (off Northern Australia), eastern and northern Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, northern Thailand, and further east to Fiji and Tahiti.

As with local varieties from the Persian Gulf, these oysters usually produce pearls larger than 10 mm diameter, with some reaching 16–17 mm and being known as South Sea pearls. Given its style, it is likely that the shell used for carving this plaque originated off the coast of the Philippines, possibly as a byproduct of pearl fishing, though little is known about this practice in such an early period. More likely, it was sourced for its meat (the adductor muscle), which is considered a delicacy and highly prized in Asia for its medicinal properties.

Only two other devotional plaques similarly carved in mother-of-pearl are known. One, slightly smaller, depicts *The Crucifixion* (8.8 × 6.7 cm, incl. frame) and was likely modelled after an early sixteenth century European engraving. It once belonged to the José Carlos Telo de Moraes collection, in Coimbra. Encased by a lacquered wooden frame, it was acquired to the painter Alberto Hébil (1913–1998) and now belongs to the Museu Municipal de Coimbra (inv. MMC–1–30E).<sup>5</sup> Another plaque, now in the Távora Sequeira Pinto collection, in Oporto, replicates a print depicting Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552), by the Netherlandish artist Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1519).<sup>6</sup> Inside an oval medallion, the Saint, wearing the Jesuit habit, is shown looking upwards with hands

crossed over the chest. Beneath it, the carver mistakenly inscribed 'S. FRAN DE BORiA', suggesting a likely commission to create a companion plaque depicting Saint Francis Borgia (1510–1572), for which Wierix also published an engraving.<sup>7</sup> The 'S.' at the beginning of the inscription suggests this carving was based on a later version of Wierix's portrait, likely made after Francis Xavier's and Francis Borgia beatification, on October 25th, 1619, and November 23rd, 1624 respectively.

Based on a much earlier printed source, our mother-of-pearl carving depicting *Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata* was likely carved earlier than the plaque of Saint Francis Xavier, probably between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century.

It is challenging to pinpoint the exact place of manufacture for these plaques, given that Chinese craftsmen and *mestizo* artists of Chinese ancestry based in the Philippines, also produced comparable devotional works in ivory of similar style and quality. However, the distinctively Chinese stylistic features and quintessentially Chinese motifs, such as the *rúyì*-shaped clouds, strongly suggest an origin in the Southeastern coast of China, such as the Provinces of Fujian or Guangdong.

The art of mother-of-pearl carving in China is ancient. Apart from its earliest uses during the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BC), mother-of-pearl carving reached a higher level of sophistication during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) when minutely engraved inserts in the shape of animals and flowers were inlaid onto luxury mirror backs, furniture, musical instruments, and decorative combs. During the Ming and early Qing dynasties, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, finely carved and engraved nautilus shells (*Nautilus pompilius*) were highly prized by European princely collectors and were often decorated with secular, sometimes figurative imagery.<sup>8</sup> Religious carvings conveying Christian iconography, however, must have been rare. *HMC*

<sup>4</sup> SOUTHGATE, Paul S. et al., 'Exploitation and Culture of Major Commercial Species', in SOUTHGATE, Paul S., LUCAS, John S. (eds.), *The Pearl Oyster*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2008, pp. 303–355, maxime pp. 313–328.

<sup>5</sup> FLORES, Jorge Manuel, 'Um Império de Objectos', in FLORES, Jorge Manuel (ed.), *Os Construtores do Oriente Português*, Oporto, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses–Câmara Municipal do Porto, 1998, pp. 14–55, ref. pp. 32–33; and PIMENTEL, António Filipe (ed.), *Telo de Moraes. Coleção. Mobiliário, Escultura, Pratas, Cerâmica e Outras Peças*, Coimbra, Câmara Municipal, 2016, p. 57 (catalogue entry by Maria da Conceição Borges de Sousa).

<sup>6</sup> Print of this engraving at the British Museum, inv. 1859,0709.3232.

<sup>7</sup> Print of this engraving at the British Museum, inv. 1859,0709.3222.

<sup>8</sup> CLUNAS, Craig, *Chinese Carving*, London, Sun Tree Publishing Ltd, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1996, p. 32; and GRASSKAMP, Anna, 'The Frames of Reflection: "Indian" Shell Surfaces and European Collecting, 1550–1650', in CREST, Sabine du (ed.), *Exogenèses. Objets frontière dans l'art européen, XVIe–XXe siècle*, Paris, Éditions de Boccard, 2018, pp. 71–85.

Alongside better-known Japanese lacquerware made for export and known as Nanban<sup>1</sup>, a production which has been better studied, while being easier to identify from the decorative repertoire and manufacturing techniques used, other lacquer productions made for the Portuguese market remain little studied.

These so-called Luso-Asian lacquers, which have resisted consensual identification of its place of production from art historians, conservators and museum curators, are somewhat heterogeneous in character and may be divided into two groups.<sup>2</sup> Bernardo Ferrão was one of the first authors to take an interest in this type of production, and identified several extant examples in public and private collections which are almost exclusively Portuguese.<sup>3</sup> As characteristics of this production, which he identifies as Indo-Portuguese, being based on the alleged Mughal or Persian style of its decoration, Bernardo Ferrão mentions: ‘the style and decoration, the lacquer coating and in some examples, the presence of coats of arms, inscriptions in Portuguese, figures and mythological scenes, from classical and Christian European culture, carved or painted, all following the canons of Renaissance art, which enable us to date them to the sixteenth century’.<sup>4</sup>

The first group has been recently identified as Burmese in origin, thus made in the Kingdom of Pegu, in the south of present-day Myanmar, given strong archival and material evidence (Burmese lacquer or *thitsi*, from the sap of the *Melanorrhoea usitata* used in Southeast Asia) and the lacquer techniques used (the Burmese *shwei-zawa*) in their production, as evident from recent scientific analyses and art-historical research.<sup>5</sup> As for the second group, which consists mainly of writing chests and writing boxes, and also carved trays and portable oratories, it features the same type of carved decoration in bas-relief with black lacquer highlighted in gold. Some of the surfaces, namely the interior of the chests and writing boxes, are lacquered in red with gold decoration depicting fauna and flora of typically Chinese repertoire.

One highly important document gives us significant evidence regarding both productions, indicating Burma (Pegu) for the first group, and South China (and Ryukyu Islands) for the second. In fact, in the post-mortem inventories of Fernando de Noronha (c. 1540–1608), third Count of Linhares, and his wife Filipa de Sá († 1618), a significant number of Asian lacquered and gilded pieces of furniture are recorded, such as:<sup>6</sup> one ‘long lacquered box from China made in two’; ‘another smaller writing cabinet from Pegu [lacquered] in gold and red fitted with drawers’; another ‘writing cabinet from China [lacquered] in gold and white which has twelve drawers’ and is 44 cm long; ‘one box from China [lacquered] in gold and black fitted with its nook’; ‘one writing cabinet from Pegu gilded throughout’; ‘two round shields from China without arm supports with their coat of arms’, to which other twelve were added; ‘four trays from China, three of them featuring their coat of arms, lacquered in black and gold’, to which three more were added; ‘one other display table from China very old and with the Noronha coat of arms in the middle’; ‘one bedstead from China gilded throughout which has on the headboard the Noronha coat of arms’; ‘one small gilded box from Pegu of over a palm in length and its silver lock’; ‘one gilded bedstead from China [lacquered] in gold and black with its frame’; ‘one gilded chair and daybed from Pegu’, and one other ‘daybed from Pegu gilded throughout with its feet and headboard’. The most frequent pieces recorded in the inventory are in fact Chinese in manufacture, featuring an excessive use of gilding<sup>7</sup> and clearly coated in rich, strong red and black lacquer. ✍

<sup>1</sup> A Japanese word used to characterize the first Portuguese and Spanish merchants, missionaries and sailors to reach Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which would become synonymous of the different types of lacquerware and other products commissioned in Japan either for their domestic market or for export following Western tastes and modelled after European prototypes.

<sup>2</sup> See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. no. 22.

<sup>3</sup> See FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Mobiliário Português. Dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, Vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, pp. 153–172.

<sup>4</sup> See IDEM, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup> See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. no. 22.

<sup>6</sup> See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Global Interiors on the Rua Nova in Renaissance Lisbon*, in GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan; LOWE, K. J. P. (eds.), *The Global City. On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2015, pp. 121–139, ref. p. 123.

<sup>7</sup> Something that was subject to regulation by sumptuary laws which in Portugal were difficult to enforce given the private nature of such domestic display of magnificence.

## 63

**A PAIR OF SINO-PORTUGUESE ALTAR CANDLESTICKS**

Lacquered and gilded wood

South China, probably Guangzhou (Canton); 1600–1630

Dim.: 38.0 cm

F1485

Provenance: Private collection, France

These baluster candlesticks, finely carved, lacquered, and gilded, were made in South China, probably Guangzhou (Canton), in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Modelled after late Renaissance Iberian prototypes in precious metals, each candlestick features a cylindrical nozzle, a moulded baluster stem annulated with mouldings and a bulbous knob and is raised upon a dome-shaped circular base.

As with their metal prototypes, each candlestick was turned on the lathe and carved: the nozzle, some mouldings, and the base bear long spiked leaves, whereas the remaining mouldings feature lotus-petal friezes. Between the larger lower disc-shaped moulding and the base runs a meandering frieze or Chinese-fret motif. The lower part of the nozzle, cylindrical and plain, is lacquered in vivid cinnabar red, in strong contrast to the overall black, gilded appearance of the candlesticks.

As with contemporary lacquered furniture made in South China for both local and export markets, the candlesticks are made of a lightweight, unidentified exotic wood. The carved floral decoration is similar to that seen on coeval pieces of furniture made for export to the European market, combining a typical Chinese ornamental repertoire with Western motifs inspired by engravings.<sup>1</sup>

The generous size of these candlesticks points to their religious, ceremonial use in church, as altar candlesticks, undoubtedly commissioned under the influence and in the context of Catholic missionary work carried out in China. As such, they are a unique addition to the limited number of surviving Christian objects made in early seventeenth-century China.<sup>2</sup>

Altar candlesticks proclaim Christ as the 'Light of the world', sacramentally made present upon the altar. Their steady flame delineates the altar as the site of divine action and watchful prayer. Historically they provided real illumination, but their continued use expresses honour, purity, and the ascent of prayer, with precious, costly beeswax being consumed as a sacrifice. Their number and

placement signal rank and solemnity, manifesting festivity when in greater numbers.

In Western traditions, usage ranges from two, for simple days, to six or more for high feasts. The materials used in their making—often silver or gilded brass—underscore the altar's dignity. At Mass or in procession, altar candles frame the mystery, accompany the Gospel and the Sacrament, and visually proclaim presence, sacrifice, and joy.

Carved and lacquered, our candlesticks would fully embody the concept and practice of accommodation, as proposed by European missionaries in Asia. To a Chinese audience, lacquer signalled purity, durability, and courtly or temple refinement, whereas the local floral motifs, including lotus-petal friezes, carried an auspicious charge. Set upon the altar, their flames are thus read within local codes of *ming* (brightness, moral clarity) and *li* (ritual propriety), aligning Christian 'light' with accepted ritual rather than a foreign novelty. Their less costly materials also orient them towards the literati and temple spheres, softening the claim of a new cult by framing it in familiar craftsmanship and decorum. These candlesticks make Christianity legible and respectable within the Chinese ritual imagination.

This unique pair of altar candlesticks stands as a powerful testament to the vitality of the newly converted Chinese communities in late Ming China. *—HMC*

<sup>1</sup> For a rare example of this production for export to the Iberian market, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 288–303, cat. 25.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Chinese Christian Art. From the South China Sea to the Imperial Court (1580–1900)*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2025.



## 64

A SINO-PORTUGUESE VIRGIN AND CHILD (*OUR LADY OF GRACE*) PAINTING

Reverse painting on glass

China, Guangzhou; 1770–1800

Dim.: 30.0 × 23.0 cm; 35.0 × 28.0 cm (framed)

D1977

Provenance: M. Conceição Ferrão and Antbal Vieira collection, Portugal

Painted in South China in the final decades of the eighteenth century, most likely in Guangzhou (Canton—Province of Guangdong), this reverse painting on glass depicts *The Virgin and Child*. A lower centre gilt inscription in Portuguese identifies it as 'N. S. DA GRASA' (Our Lady of Grace).

Although such Chinese artworks bearing Portuguese inscriptions have traditionally been identified as from Macao, there is no evidence of reverse glass painters at work in that Portuguese outpost. As such, it seems more likely that a probably Portuguese client, providing the visual source along with the accompanying inscription, commissioned it to be painted in one of the many documented workshops in the city of Canton, a well-known production centre for such paintings.

Given the inscription, it is also possible that the painting was intended for the church of the Augustinian convent in Macao, originally *Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Graça* (Church of Our Lady of Grace) and now Church of Saint Augustine. Founded by Spanish Augustinians and transferred to the Order Portuguese branch in 1589, the church, whose construction began in 1591, was completed in the seventeenth century. Destroyed by fire in 1872 it was subsequently rebuilt and still stands today.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike common painting techniques, this depiction of the Virgin and Child was painted on the reverse of a glass plate possibly imported from Europe.<sup>2</sup> Although viewed through the

transparent glass surface, the image was in fact painted from the back, in reverse. Often copying a predetermined composition, the technique requires that the artist prioritizes the smallest details and highlights, before filling larger coloured areas. Such process was illustrated in a contemporary depiction of a Chinese glass painter artist, one of a set of one hundred watercolour and ink paintings on paper from ca. 1790, portraying trades and occupations in Canton.<sup>3</sup> In it, the painter artist is shown seated at a table, where, set in a wooden frame, the glass plate lies flat. Brushes of various sizes, a porcelain inkwell, and a palette are featured nearby. Vertically positioned facing the painter, a likely European print is copied in full colour onto the glass back surface. The artist hand rests on a narrow strip of wood placed over the frame, allowing for control of brushwork without smudging the freshly painted layers.

Known as *bōlǐ bēihuà* (painting on the back of a glass sheet) or *jìngghuà* (mirror painting), Chinese reverse painting on glass encompassed works on plain glass and on mirrored glass.<sup>4</sup> The latter process involved scratching out the tin and mercury amalgam applied to the back of the glass and filling the voids with coloured pigments. In our portrait, excepting the background areas of sky, the entire surface was painted, a technique known as *liúbái* (leaving the void). This rare example of Christian imagery was produced in the traditional *gōngbǐ* 工筆 style (delicate brushstroke) characterised by meticulously applied, bright and vivid pigment layers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> VALENTE, Maria Regina, *Churches of Macao*, Macau, Instituto Cultural, 1993, pp. 28–31; and DIAS, Pedro, *A Urbanização e a Arquitectura dos Portugueses em Macau, 1557–1911*, Lisbon, Portugal Telecom, 2005, pp. 162–167.

<sup>2</sup> See AUDRIC, Thierry, *Chinese Reverse Glass Painting 1720–1820. An Artistic Meeting between China and the West*, Bern–New York, Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2020; and by the same author, a condensed version of recent research, Idem, 'A brief history of Chinese reverse glass painting', in GIESE, Francine, et al. (eds.), *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023, pp. 257–268.

<sup>3</sup> The painting (42.0 × 35.0 cm) belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. D.107–1898).

<sup>4</sup> See LIU, Lihong, 'From virtuosity to vernacularism. Reversals of glass painting', in GIESE, Francine, et al. (eds.), *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023, pp. 17–32, ref. p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> In the more recent bibliography, specifically the 2023 book *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, not a single example of Chinese reverse glass painting with Christian imagery is mentioned or discussed. In Thierry Audric's doctoral dissertation, religious themes in Chinese reverse mirror painting are addressed in only two pages. See AUDRIC, Thierry, *Chinese Reverse Glass Painting 1720–1820. An Artistic Meeting between China and the West*, Bern–New York, Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2020, pp. 97–98. According to the author, whose corpus includes 'only a few Christian religious scenes', namely three (cats. 319–321), including one *Crucifixion*, it is possible that 'very few of these works were commissioned from Chinese reverse glass painters, since the missionaries were only in Canton temporarily. But it is equally possible that these paintings, being intended for the Chinese rather than the European market, remained in China and subsequently vanished'.





Schelte Adamsz. Bolswert, after Peter Paul Rubens, *The Virgin and Child*, ca. 1600–1659; burin engraving printed on paper (13.3 × 9.1 cm). The British Museum, London (inv. 1891,0414.1167) ©Trustees of the British Museum

Although Virgin and Child and Holy Family depictions became increasingly intimate and realistic in their portrayal of motherly love, it is rare to find early modern prints featuring The Child Jesus embracing and caressing His Mother's face. This gesture, nonetheless, derives from depictions of Our Lady of Grace, particularly from the much-revered Cambrai Madonna (*Notre-Dame de Grâce*). This Italo-Byzantine Madonna, painted around 1340 as a replica of the icon of the *Virgin Eleousa* (Virgin of Tenderness or Compassion), was taken to Cambrai in 1451, as an original painting by St Luke.<sup>6</sup> The iconography, showing the Christ Child nestled against His Mother's cheek would exert considerable influence in the Latin West.

Notable example of this iconography is an engraving by Schelte Adamsz. Bolswert (ca. 1586–1659), after an original by Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)<sup>7</sup> [fig. 1], which possibly inspired our reverse glass painting, or perhaps the unknown printed source that served as its prototype. Created in the first half of the seventeenth century as part of a series of ninety devotional engravings (*Vélins*) based on Rubens' designs, its small size (13.3 × 9.1 cm) may have aided its global diffusion.

Although in general our reverse glass painting follows Rubens' composition, it departs from the original in one significant detail: the addition of an orb under The Child's right foot, alluding to His role as *Salvator Mundi*. The orb, pierced by evil snakes, emphasises His triumph over sin and world's governance. It is likely that this detail copies an engraving by John Faber the Younger (ca. 1684–1756) after an original by Robert Browne (ca. 1672–1753), published in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

Dating Chinese reverse glass paintings is remarkably challenging due to the lack of provenance details or original frames. Although the first examples of Chinese-painted 'looking glasses' arrived in Europe in the 1730s, a peak in imports documented between 1740 and 1770, the derivative style and overall quality of this painting suggest a dating from between 1770 and 1800.<sup>9</sup> HMC

<sup>6</sup> EVANS, Helen C., (ed.), *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261–1557)* (cat.), New York–New Haven–London, Metropolitan Museum of Art–Yale University Press, 2004, pp. 582–584, cat. 349 (catalogue entry by Maryan W. Ainsworth).

<sup>7</sup> Print of this engraving in the British Museum, London (inv. 1891,0414.1167).

<sup>8</sup> Print of this engraving in the British Museum, London (inv. 1866,1114.256).

<sup>9</sup> On the early imports of these objects, namely into Great Britain, see FERGUSON, Patricia F., 'Reflecting Asia. The reception of Chinese reverse glass painting in Britain, 1738–1770', GIBSE, Francine, et al. (eds.), *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023, pp. 157–174.

## A SINO-PORTUGUESE VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH THE CRUCIFIGATION CROSS PAINTING

Painting on parchment

South China, 1770–1800

Dim.: 41.0 × 31.2 cm

D1945

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

This rare and unusual painting, depicting *The Virgin and Child with a Cross*, was made in South China in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Likely commissioned by a Catholic European, it shows the standing figure of the Virgin holding the Christ Child with her right arm and hand, while supporting the base of a cross held by the Child. Partially covered by drapery, He stands naked on top of a table, and, as the Saviour of the World (*Salvator Mundi*), blesses with his right hand while grasping a cross with his left. Set in a domestic atmosphere, the background features a marbled pilaster on the left and a crimson valance with drapery from above.

In early modern China, a depiction of the Virgin and Child, with Christ as the Saviour of the World would hold profound theological and missionary significance. The cross serves as a prefiguration of the Passion, subtly introducing the salvific narrative of Christ's sacrifice, a core Christian doctrine, while the blessing gesture reinforces his divine authority. This anticipatory symbol underscores the redemptive purpose of his incarnation. Simultaneously, the Virgin's presence reflects maternal compassion, resonating with the Chinese reverence for familial piety and making the image a strategic tool for missionaries to convey the universal message of salvation in a culturally relatable manner.

With the exception of the added background elements, which are not merely decorative but also enhance its opulence, this

depiction faithfully reproduces [Fig. 1] a large engraving (39.9 × 27.8 cm) by the Italian painter and engraver Giovanni Antonio Faldoni (1689–ca. 1770), active in Venice, based on an original composition by Agostino Masucci (1691–1758), an Italian late-Baroque painter active in Rome.<sup>1</sup> A pupil of Andrea Procaccino (1671–1734) and a member of Carlo Maratta's (1625–1713) workshop, Masucci worked for the House of Savoy and received commissions from King João V of Portugal (r. 1706–1750). Working for the Portuguese king, Masucci made the models for the three main mosaic panels in the Chapel of St John the Baptist at the Jesuit Church of São Roque in Lisbon, designed by Luigi Vanvitelli (1700–1773) and Nicola Salvi (1697–1751).<sup>2</sup> Faldoni's print, which includes the Latin inscription '*Mater Sanctae Spei*' ('Mother of Holy Hope'), was published between 1720 and 1768. Although the inscription is absent from this Chinese painting, it further emphasizes the Virgin Mary's role as a source of hope in salvation, linking her maternal intercession to humanity's trust in Christ's redemptive mission.

Sharing almost the same dimensions as its printed model, which facilitated the copying process, the painting departs slightly from the engraving by further covering the Christ Child's naked body, completely enveloping his thighs, and raising the Virgin's neckline—both adjustments likely made to preserve a sense of decency. It also omits the Child's halo.

<sup>1</sup> An example of this engraving belongs to the British Museum, London (inv. 1871,0429.223).

<sup>2</sup> SALERNO, Carlo Stefano, 'Paintings and mosaics', in VALE, Teresa Leonor M. (ed.), *The Chapel of St John the Baptist in the Church of São Roque. The Commission, the Building, the Collections*, London–Lisbon, Scala–Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, 2017, pp. 46–65.



Giovanni Antonio Faldoni, after Agostino Masucci, *The Virgin and Child with a Cross*, ca. 1720–1768; engraving printed on paper (39.9 × 27.8 cm). The British Museum, London (inv. 1871,0429.223) ©The Trustees of the British Museum, London

The Chinese origin of the painting is most evident in the slightly Sinicised facial features of both figures and, more prominently, in the added decorative elements of the Virgin's attire. These include the gold embroidery on the hems of her blue mantle and pink tunic, which feature stylised lotus flowers, as well as the multi-coloured embroidered floral decoration adorning the crimson valance above. This valance, along with its draped curtains, frames the Virgin on the right side of the composition.

A particularly curious addition is the Virgin's chequered yellow sash, reminiscent of contemporary chintz. Such decorative details are also seen in contemporary reverse glass paintings produced for European consumers in South China, particularly in Guangzhou (Canton).<sup>3</sup>

An unusual feature of this painting is its support: parchment, a material not traditionally used in Chinese painting. It is

true that animal hides, usually from donkey or cow, are used in the making of traditional shadow puppets, which are crafted from the most translucent material, cut, carved, punched, and painted in bright colours, mostly in Shandong, Shaanxi, and Henan provinces.<sup>4</sup> However, these productions are found in northern and central China. This choice of material may reflect an experiment with Western materials and could suggest that the painting was made in a Western-influenced environment. *HMC*

<sup>3</sup> For Chinese reverse glass painting, see AUDRIC, Thierry, *Chinese Reverse Glass Painting 1720–1820. An Artistic Meeting between China and the West*, Bern–New York, Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2020; and GIESE, Francine, et al. (eds.), *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> For Chinese shadow puppetry and its materials, see CHEN, Fan Pen Li, *Chinese Shadow Theatre. History, Popular Religion, and Women Warriors*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007.



## 66

## A CHINESE HOLY FAMILY PAINTING

Ink and colour on paper, silk

China, probably Beijing; 1750–1770

Dim.: 84.0 × 63.0 cm

D1958

Provenance: Acquired around 1930 by Bernard Jacobson of the Dutch East Indies; Anita Gray, *Oriental Works of Art*, London; private collection, Switzerland

This large painting in ink and colour on paper, likely Chinese mulberry paper or *xuān*, depicting *The Holy Family*, was made in China in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Fully Sinicised in their facial features, the painting shows the Christ Child, half-naked and seated on a round table, extending a small loaf of bread to his parents, who lovingly embrace him from both sides, entirely filling the composition. Apart from their facial features, the Holy Family is portrayed as a modest rural European family of the eighteenth-century. The elderly father wears a white linen shirt and layers of loose-fitting over garments (a long-sleeved green jacket and a salmon-coloured nightgown); his sword is set vertically against the wall behind him, with his green and black felt tricorne hat hanging from the sword's crossguard. The Virgin, much younger, is similarly dressed in everyday indoor attire, wearing a low-neckline frilled shirt (*chemise*) with its frilled cuffs, a green bodice, and a white petticoat fastened at the waist by a narrow blue sash; over this, she wears a crimson *robe de chambre*. The Virgin's hair is covered by a narrow strip of printed white cloth tied with a green ribbon.

Only the man's hat provides sufficient evidence for approximating the date of the painting. A three-cornered hat with a standing brim, the tricorne—then known as a cocked hat—evolved alongside wigs in the late seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> As wigs grew larger, the brims of the then-fashionable broad-brimmed round hats began to fold upwards. When folded, or 'cocked', in three places, it became the tricorne, which was typically worn with one point forward. Made from animal fibre—more expensive versions being made from beaver-hair felt and more economical ones from wool felt—tricornes reached the height of fashion in the mid-eighteenth century. However, they fell out of style by the early 1800s, evolving into bicornes.

Likely original in its composition and iconographic details, this Chinese painting appears to have been based on two Italian

engravings. One [fig. 1], produced between 1685 and 1740 by Cosimo Mogalli (1667–1750) after a drawing by Francesco Petrucci (1660–1719), reproduces a painting of *The Holy Family* by Giulio Romano (1499–1546) at the Palazzo Pitti in Florence. The engraving is part of a series titled *Raccolta de' quadri dipinti dai più famosi pennelli posseduti da S. A. R. Pietro Leopoldi*, which reproduces paintings from the gallery of the Grand Duke in Florence. First commissioned by Ferdinando de' Medici (1663–1713), the series was finally published in 1778 as a set of 148 plates with a title-page. The other [fig. 2], published before the mid-eighteenth century and created by Giovanni Girolamo Frezza (1671–ca. 1748) after a composition by Carlo Maratti (1625–1713), depicts *The Holy Family* with the Child St John the Baptist.<sup>2</sup> From the first engraving, the Chinese painter adopted the general pose of the seated Christ Child, differing only in the position of the feet, with the Child's hand now holding a small loaf of bread; St Joseph's hand also closely resembles the Virgin's hand from the print. From the second engraving, the painter borrowed the general pose of the Virgin, particularly the head and her left hand, which is faithfully copied; the figure's low neckline seems have influenced the final composition. The figure of St Joseph unusually depicted embracing the Virgin and the Child Jesus, along with his sword and tricorne—typical of a man-at-arms from the first half of the eighteenth century—must have been derived from a different visual source, likely non-religious. These added details suggest that while the composition was executed by a Chinese artist, the composition was probably based on an original design conceived by a European artist.

The updating of such a significant religious scene into a depiction of a contemporary family aligns with other similar works of the period that emphasise the humble social origins of the Holy Family and the family values underpinning Christian belief. In the context of eighteenth-century missionary work in China, this

<sup>1</sup> A man's tricorne hat made from black melusine felt (from beaver fur) and dated between 1775–1800, belongs to the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. T.5C–1937). On the tricorne hat, see SICHEL, Marion, *History of Men's Costume*, New York, Chelsea House, 1984, p. 43; and PENDERGAST, Sara, PENDERGAST, Tom, *Fashion, Costume, and Culture. Clothing, Headwear, Body Decorations, and Footwear Through the Ages*, vol. 3, Detroit, UXL, 2013, pp. 532–533.

<sup>2</sup> Of the original edition of the engraving, an example belongs to the collection of the Harvard Art Museums (inv. R2891). On Maratti, see AGRESTI, Alessandro, *Carlo Maratti (1625–1713). Eredità ed evoluzioni del classicismo romano*, Rome, De Luca editori d'arte, 2022.





type of depiction highlighted the virtues of poverty, humility, and familial devotion, reflecting Christian teachings while resonating with Confucian ideals such as simplicity and moral integrity.

The bread in the Christ Child's hand carries rich symbolic significance. In Christian iconography, bread often symbolises the body of Christ, particularly in reference to the Eucharist, where Christ is portrayed as the 'bread of life'. By including it, the artist may have been foreshadowing Christ's future role in the sacrament,

emphasising his divine nature even in infancy. Additionally, bread is a common symbol of sustenance, both physical and spiritual. Its presence in the child's hand could symbolise Christ as the provider of spiritual nourishment and the sustainer of life for believers. The act of offering the bread to his parents might evoke Christ's mission to offer salvation to all, even from an early age. In the Chinese missionary context, the loaf of bread might also serve to bridge cultural and religious meanings, creating a visual link between Christian teachings and local practices of offering food as a gesture of respect, sharing, or devotion. This detail could make the Christian message of Christ as the source of spiritual nourishment more relatable to a Chinese audience. The portrayal of a Sinicised Holy Family thus worked to bridge cultural divides, presenting Christianity as universal while making it accessible and relevant to Chinese viewers.

Based on its size, high-quality materials, and the skilful integration of traditional Chinese painting techniques with European aesthetic conventions, this painting was likely produced in Beijing within the context of the work and teachings of Jesuit missionaries, particularly Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1768).<sup>3</sup> Known at the imperial court as Lang Shining, Castiglione served three emperors and

<sup>3</sup> In recent years there has been growing interest and research on Castiglione and his work at the imperial court. See CARTIER, Michel (ed.), *Giuseppe Castiglione dit Lang Shining, 1688–1766* (cat.), Paris–Taipei, Favre–National Palace Museum, 2004; PIRAZZOLI-T'SERSTEVENS, Michèle, *Giuseppe Castiglione, 1688–1766. Peintre et architecte à la cour de Chine*, Paris, Thalia Édition, 2007; NAQUIN, Susan, 'Giuseppe Castiglione/Lang Shining *Láng Shining*, A Review Essay', *T'oung Pao*, 95.4–5 (2009), pp. 393–412; MUSILLO, Marco, 'Reconciling Two Careers: the Jesuit Memoir of Giuseppe Castiglione Lay Brother and Qing Imperial Painter', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42.1 (2008), pp. 45–59; ANDREINI, Alessandro, VOSSILLA, Francesco (eds.), *Giuseppe Castiglione. Gesuita e pittore nel Celeste Impero. Jesuit and Painter in the Celestial Empire*, Panzano in Chianti, Edizione Feeria, Comunità di San Leolino, 2015; MUSILLO, Marco, *The Shining*



trained many local artists in Western painting techniques. While he and other Jesuits were prohibited from painting Christian works at court, they and some converted Chinese artists likely produced religious paintings under their artistic tutelage in Jesuit colleges. This persisted despite the persecutions by Chinese authorities and the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1759, followed by its abolition in 1773, after which the Jesuits continued their work clandestinely in China.

Given its heavily Sinicised features—in format (the hanging scroll, known as *guàzhóu*, or *lìzhóu*), technique and style—the painting's author was almost certainly Chinese. However, the complete absence of a known corpus of similar works makes it impossible to attribute this painting to a specific follower of Castiglione or any of his fellow European Jesuit painters active in the Forbidden City. These include the Roman-trained Frenchman Jean-Denis Attiret (1702–1768), who arrived in Beijing in 1738; the German-Bohemian Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708–1780), who joined in 1745; the Italian Giuseppe Panzi (1734–ca. 1812); and the Frenchman Louis Antoine de Poirot (1735–1813) who arrived alongside Panzi at the imperial capital in 1771.<sup>4</sup> HMC

**FIG. 1**  
Cosimo Mogalli, after a drawing by Francesco Petrucci, copying Giulio Romano, *The Holy Family*, ca. 1685–1740; engraving printed on paper (35.6 × 26.2 cm). British Museum, London (inv. 1861,0608.313) ©The Trustees of The British Museum, London

**FIG. 2**  
Giovanni Girolamo Frezza, after Carlo Maratti, *The Holy Family with the Child St John the Baptist*, 1773; engraving printed on paper (25.1 × 32.3 cm). British Museum, London (inv. 1869,0410.1341) ©The Trustees of The British Museum, London

*Inheritance. Italian Painters at the Qing Court, 1699–1812*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2016; and ERANO, Isabella Doniselli (ed.), *Giuseppe Castiglione. Un artista milanese nel Celeste Impero*, Milano, Luni Editrici, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> For a general overview, see LOEHR, George Robert, 'European Artists at the Chinese Court', in WATSON, William (ed.), *The Westward Influence of the Chinese Arts from the 14th to the 18th Century*, London, Percival David Foundation, 1972, pp. 333–342; and BEURDELEY, Michel, *Peintres jésuites en Chine au XVIIIe siècle* (cat.), Arcueil, Anthèse, 1997. On Attiret, see VEIT, Veronika, 'Jean-Denis Attiret, Ein Jesuitenmaler am Hofe Qianlongs', in *Europa und die Kaiser von China 1240–1816* (cat.), Frankfurt am Main, Insel, 1985, pp. 144–155. And on Sichelbarth, see OLIVOVÁ, Lucie, 'Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708–1780), a Jesuit painter in China', in ČERMUS, Petronilla (ed.), *Bohemia Jesuitica, 1556–2006*, vol. 2, Prague–Würzburg, Karolinum, Echter Verlag, 2010, pp. 1431–1450.

## 67

## A CHINESE ST. MARY MAGDALENE PAINTING

Ink, watercolour and gold on paper

China, possibly Shanghai; 1860–1900

Dim.: 77.0 × 25.5 cm

D1959

Provenance: Private collection, Spain



This seemingly simple depiction of the repentant *St Mary Magdalene* is painted with ink, watercolour, and gold on Korean paper. From its shape, it may have been mounted on silk as a vertical or hanging scroll, known in China as *lǐzhóu* or *guàzhóu*. Known today as *hanji*, Korean paper—referred to as *Gāolǐzhǐ* by the Chinese during the Goryeo dynasty (935–1392)—was renowned for its high quality and was regularly sent as tribute to China.<sup>1</sup> As with other Asian papers, such as the Chinese *xuān* or the Japanese *washi*, Korean paper is made from the inner bark fibres of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), known locally as *dak*, combined with the mucilage from the roots of the flowering plant *Abelmoschus manihot*, which serves as a fibre dispersal agent. Unlike Chinese papermaking, where the mould was traditionally made from a wooden frame with a stretched piece of woven cloth, Koreans early on developed a wooden mould with a screen made of bamboo or grasses joined to create long laid lines. These lines run parallel to the mould's length, forming the distinguishing feature of *hanji*. This ribbed texture bears similarity to Western laid papers, although in the latter, the ribbing effect is much more pronounced.

Painted with washes of colour using a very limited palette of earth tones, blue, pale green, and highlights of opaque white,

the painting includes a seal impression in bright red. Starting from the lower right, it reads *chàn qī yú shēng*, or 'Repenting sorrow in the remaining life'. If starting from the upper right, the seal reads *qī chàn yú shēng*, or 'A sorrowful repentance in the remaining life'.<sup>2</sup> The first reading emphasises repentance (*chàn*) as the primary theme, followed by the sorrow (*qī*) it evokes, applying this mood to the remainder of life. The second reading leads with sorrow, setting a mournful tone, followed by repentance, suggesting that sorrow compels the act of repentance throughout one's remaining life. The first reading, slightly more refined in placing repentance first, aligns more closely with Confucian and Buddhist ideals, which prioritise moral and spiritual awakening. Weeping for her past transgressions and longing for redemption, this depiction of St Mary Magdalene, in connexion with the Chinese text of the seal, reflects her transformation from a life of sin and worldly attachment to one marked by profound sorrow and commitment to repentance. The inscription eloquently encapsulates Magdalene's emotional and spiritual journey, where her remaining life is dedicated to expressing sorrow for her past actions and pursuing redemption through Christ's forgiveness. It highlights the depth of her penitence, the emotional weight of her sorrow, and a life redefined by acts of spiritual renewal.

With the exception of the rocks and vegetation in the foreground and the tall rock formation topped by a tree behind the saint, this painting closely [fig. 1] reproduces *The Holy Magdalene* by Johann Gebhard Flatz, housed in the Alte Nationalgalerie, part of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (inv. NG 19/79). This oil-on-panel work (97.5 × 76.0 cm), dated 1858 and reminiscent of Leonardo da Vinci's style (1452–1519), depicts St Mary Magdalene in soft, yet vivid colours, wearing a greyish-blue tunic and a red skirt.<sup>3</sup> Flatz created several versions of this composition, including an altar

<sup>1</sup> See SONG, Minah, Jesse Munn, 'Permanence, Durability, and Unique Properties of Hanji', *The Book and Paper Group Annual*, 23 (2004), pp. 127–136; and LEE, Oh-Kyu, KIM, Seokju, LEE, Hyung Won, 'Evolution of the Hanji-making Technology, from Ancient Times to the Present', *Journal of the Korean Wood science and Technology*, 51.6 (2023), pp. 509–525.

<sup>2</sup> I wish to thank Clement Onn, director of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore, for reading the seal.

<sup>3</sup> WESENBERG, Angelika, VERWIEBE, Birgit, FREYBERGER, Regina (eds.), *Malkunst im 19. Jahrhundert. Die Sammlung der Nationalgalerie*, 2 vols., Petersberg, Imhof, 2017, p. 242 (catalogue entry by Birgit Verwiebe).



Johann Gebhard Flatz, *The Holy Mary Magdalene*, 1858; oil painting on wooden panel (97.5 × 76.0 cm). Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin (inv. NG 19/79) ©Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/Andres Kilger

painting in 1837 for the Parish Church of St Margaret in Flaurling near Innsbruck, and a smaller version painted in Rome in 1847, now in the Vorarlberg Museum, Bregenz. A replica of the Berlin painting, executed in 1876 on canvas (96.5 × 75.5 cm), is part of the Belvedere collection in Vienna (inv. 2976). The composition also circulated in a print made in 1850 by Julius Allgeyer (1829–1900), which presents the saint reversed in a mirror image. It is likely this print inspired the composition of our Chinese painting. Flatz (1800–1881) was born in Wolfurt, Austria, into a poor family, though his artistic talents were recognised early. He secured a painting apprenticeship, completing it at the age of fifteen. In 1816, Flatz travelled to Vienna to work as a journeyman painter and, after four years of struggle and even hunger, was finally accepted into the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1827, he left Vienna to settle in Bregenz and later Innsbruck, where he specialised in portraiture. A trip to Rome in 1833 brought him in contact with the Nazarene movement, after which he divided his time between the Eternal City and Innsbruck, mentoring students along the way. Following the Capture of Rome in 1870, Flatz relocated to Vorarlberg. The Nazarene movement was an early nineteenth-century German Romantic school of painters seeking to revive spirituality in art. Reacting against Neoclassicism, they drew inspiration from artists of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For the Nazarene movement, see FRANK, Mitchell Benjamin, *Romantic Painting Redefined. Nazarene Tradition and the Narratives of Romanticism*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2001; and GREWE, Cordula, *Painting the Sacred in the Age of German Romanticism*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.



Left unsigned, it is difficult to determine the authorship, date, and exact context of production of our Chinese painting. While it faithfully reproduces Flatz's composition, the style of this painting is far less Sinicised than works by the renowned early twentieth-century painter Chen Yuandu (1902–1967), who typically painted hanging scrolls on silk. Under the influence of Cardinal Celso Constantini (1876–1958), appointed in 1922 as the first Apostolic Delegate to China, Chen—born in Guangdong province and baptised as Luke Chen in 1932—played a key role in the Sinicization of Christian art in modern China.<sup>5</sup> As with Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766) in eighteenth-century Beijing, this process involved adapting Christian themes and iconography to align with Chinese artistic traditions. Trained in traditional Chinese painting, Chen taught at the art department of the Catholic University in Beijing (Furén Dàxué) until the government closed its Christian art classes in 1952. Based on a mid-nineteenth century composition, this painting on Korean paper—one of the preferred materials at the imperial court in the second half of the eighteenth century by European artists such as Castiglione (1688–1766), Jean Denis Attiret (1702–1768), and Louis Antoine de Poirot (1735–1813)—must predate the Christian paintings produced under Chen Yuandu's influence.

The nineteenth century was a particularly turbulent period in Chinese history, characterised by widespread social and political upheaval that fuelled unrest in both urban and rural areas.<sup>6</sup> Aggressive foreign trade policies led to the first Opium War (1839–1844), which, following China's defeat, opened the country to the West. This coincided with a renewed interest in sending Christian missionaries—including Catholics, Protestants, and Russian Orthodox—to China. These missionaries, who founded missions in fourteen provinces for the first time, aimed to establish congregations along with orphanages, hospitals, and schools.<sup>7</sup> They also entered the 'business' of running detoxification centres for local opium addicts, seizing the opportunity to proselytise and convert. It is likely that this painting was created during this period, either in Beijing or elsewhere, as the semi-foreign treaty port

of Shanghai was emerging as a stronghold of Roman Catholicism. Located near the sea and committed to becoming China's leading commercial centre, Shanghai's relative safety following the Taiping Civil War (1850–1864) attracted numerous artists who were increasingly influenced by newly imported innovations such as photography, lithography, and mass-circulation newspapers. Its cosmopolitan environment fostered the emergence of a distinctive new painting style.<sup>8</sup>

Painters trained in centuries-old traditional techniques were quick to embrace these aesthetic innovations, catering to newly found patrons—wealthy Chinese, foreign merchants, and compradors (Chinese middlemen who operated between locals and foreigners)—far removed from the literati and connoisseurs of earlier times. Painters of this new style, later referred to as the School of Shanghai—such as Zhao Zhiqian (1829–1884) and the 'Four Rens', including the most famous, Ren Yi, better known as Ren Bonian (1840–1895)—embraced greater exaggeration of form and a brighter palette, prioritising visual impact over symbolism or narrative content. They responded to the new demands of the consumer market, which included paintings of Christian subjects, such as this depiction of St Mary Magdalene, created for a Catholic clientele. Instead of being commissioned, artworks were, for the first time, freely available for direct purchase in calligraphy and painting shops, as well as art supply shops known as 'fan shops', where artists could lodge and earn a living by selling their art directly.<sup>9</sup> This shift completely transformed the art business in China, as paintings were no longer reserved for the learned elites of the past but became accessible to anyone who could afford them. Lacking any accompanying calligraphy and bearing only a seal unusually stating the painting's title rather than the painter's signature or markers of ownership, it is likely that this depiction of St Mary Magdalene was made for Western consumption. *HMC*

<sup>5</sup> See LAWTON, Mary S., 'A Unique Style in China: Chinese Christian Painting in Beijing', *Monumenta Serica*, 43.1 (1995), pp. 469–489; and WONG, Stephanie M., 'Roman Catholicism. Painting, Printing, and Selling Morality in Modern China', in Daryl R. Ireland (ed.), *Visions of Salvation. Chinese Christian Posters in an Age of Revolution*, Waco, TX, Baylor University Press, 2023 pp. 185–200.

<sup>6</sup> For this period of profound turbulence and crisis, albeit marked by innovation, resilience and extraordinary transformation, namely its artistic products, see HARRISON-HALL, Jessica, Lovell, Julia (eds.), *China's Hidden Century, 1796–1912* (cat.), London, The British Museum Press, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> See ARNOLD, Laureen, 'Christianity in China. Yuan to Qing dynasties, 13th to 20th centuries', in CHONG, Alan (ed.), *Christianity in Asia. Sacred art and visual splendour* (cat.), Singapore, Asian Civilisations Museum, 2016, pp. 136–144.

<sup>8</sup> See WUE, Roberta, *Art Worlds. Artists, Images, and Audiences in Late Nineteenth-Century Shanghai*, Hong Kong–Honolulu, Hong Kong University Press–University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> YANG, Chia-Ling, 'Elite art', in HARRISON-HALL, Jessica, LOVELL, Julia (eds.), *China's Hidden Century, 1796–1912* (cat.), London, The British Museum Press, 2023, pp. 130–183, maxime p. 168–172.

## A CHINESE SAINT ANTHONY OF LISBON OR PADUA SILK PAINTING

Watercolour on silk; mounted on canvas

China; 1770–1780

Dim.: 84.3 × 53.3 cm

D1363

Provenance: Nuno Silva collection, Portugal



Painted on silk in fine, vibrant colours, the present painting represents Saint Anthony of Padua (1193?–1231) or of Lisbon.

The Saint is depicted kneeling, holding the Christ Child in his arms and surrounded by cherubs. In the foreground, on the right, an open book (symbolising his renowned skills as an outstanding preacher, namely against the Catharist heresy and as the Franciscan order's first Lector in Theology) with white lilies (*Lilium candidum*) resting on it, symbols of purity, normally associated with the Virgin, rebirth and never-ending spiritual love.

The prominence of the flowers, which bloom in the month of Saint Anthony's Feast Day, June 13th, might relate to the fact that, from the late seventeenth century, pilgrims have been offering white lilies to the Saint's tomb in Padua, a tradition which led Pope Leo XIII (r. 1878–1903) to grant permission for lilies to be blessed in honour of the Saint.

While no exact match has been identified for a likely engraved visual source, the present work's composition, European in nature, seems to derive from two combined earlier prints. One, by Flemish artist Alexander Voet the Elder (1608?–1689) [fig. 1], a leading 17th century Antwerp engraver and publisher, provides the overall posture of the kneeling figure and some other features, namely its profiled head. From the other, by Michel Corneille the Younger (1642–1708) [fig. 2], the Chinese artist seems to have

taken the figures hands positioning, the Christ Child posture and some of the drapery.

It is curious to note that, contrary to the print, the Child's upper body is shown wrapped in drapery, suggesting an intention for higher decorum. Both dating from the late 17th century, the engravings may have been used as the matrix for a later printed composition of identical iconography which, albeit unidentified, could have been the direct source for the present work.

The Chinese origin of our painting is evident, namely by the choice of medium, painting style and bold use of colour, but also from subtle iconographical features, such as some anatomical renditions typical of Asian features.

Identical Chinese features can be noted in another painting on silk work, also from a Portuguese collection, which has been recently acquired by the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore. It depicts *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* painted by a Chinese artist over a drawing by Giuseppe Panzi (*Pān Tíngzhāng* 潘廷璋, 1734–before 1812), a Florentine Jesuit lay brother and, like the famous Italian painter Father Giuseppe Castiglione (*Láng Shìníng* 郎世寧, 1688–1766)—who served as an artist at the Kangxi (r. 1661–1722), Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735) and Qianlong (r. 1735–1796) Imperial courts—, a professional painter who arrived in Beijing in 1773.<sup>1</sup> That painting, depicting the main altar at Beijing's Saint

<sup>1</sup> On Castiglione and his followers at the imperial court, see: MUSILLO, Marco, *The Shining Inheritance. Italian Painters at the Qing Court, 1699–1812*, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2016.



Joseph's Church, known as Dong Tang (or *Dông Tâng* 東堂, literally the 'Eastern church'), was completed in 1777 as a gift for Father Giuseppe Solari (master of novices in Genoa).<sup>2</sup> While it has not been possible to establish with certainty, a connection between our painting and a specific Chinese Catholic church building, it is nonetheless useful to highlight the related artistic and historical contexts underlying both depictions, that of the Immaculate Conception and that of our Saint Anthony.<sup>3</sup> *HMC*

<sup>2</sup> See: ALVES, Jorge M. dos Santos (ed.), *Tomás Pereira (1646–1708). Um Jesuíta na China de Kangxi. A Jesuit in Kangxi's China* (cat.), Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2009, cat. 29, pp. 134–135 (catalogue entry by Isabel Murta Pina), and CORSI, Elisabetta, 'Pozzo's Treatise as a Workshop for the Construction of a Sacred Catholic Space in Beijing', in BÖSEL, Richard; INSOLERA, Lydia Salviucci (eds.), *Artifizi della Metafora. Saggi su Andrea Pozzo*, Roma, Artemide, 2010, pp. 232–243, maxime p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> See: MUSILLO, Marco, 'The Qing Patronage of Milanese Art: a Reconsideration on Materiality and Western Art History', in CHEN, Yunru (ed.), *Portrayals from a Brush Divine. A Special Exhibition on the Tricentennial of Giuseppe Castiglione's Arrival in China* (cat.), Taipei, National Palace Museum, 2015, pp. 310–323.

**FIG. 1**  
Alexander Voet the Elder, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, or Lisbon, 2nd half of the 18th century; engraving on paper (22.1 × 13.1 cm). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. RP-P-OB-61.746

**FIG. 2**  
Michel Corneille the Younger, *Saint Anthony of Padua*, or Lisbon, ca. 1667–1708; engraving on paper (29.5 × 15.6 cm). London, ©The Trustees of the British Museum British Museum, inv. 1917,1208.1619



## 69

## A CHINESE RHINOCEROS' HORN LIBATION CUP

Carved rhinoceros horn

China; 17th–18th century

Dim.: 8.0 × 16.0 × 9.5 cm

F1452

*Provenance: Acquired in the London Art Market prior to 1943, thence by descent within the family to the present owner*

This elegantly proportioned cup, made in seventeenth-century China from a single piece of rhinoceros horn—probably a posterior horn of a Sumatran rhinoceros (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*)—was dyed and polished to reveal a lustrous, warm golden-reddish cinnamon hue, darkening slightly at the core. Raised on a oval-shaped, low and slightly flared foot with a recessed base, the cup has a tapering body with a wide pouring lip decorated with Chinese key-fret friezes beneath the rim and on top of the lip. The waisted body is finely carved in shallow relief with a band of archaic, stylised *tāotiè* masks—an ancient Chinese mythological creature associated with gluttony—over a ground of repeating Chinese keys, a pattern known as *léiwén* (literally, ‘thunder pattern’). Lively *chilóng* carved in high-relief—a mythical ‘hornless dragon’ or ‘young dragon’—climb around the sides, while a larger one, forming the curved handle (*chiniū*), creeps over into the smooth, polished interior. On one side, crossing the *léiwén* ground and almost reaching the everted rim, is a stylised flying phoenix (*fēnghuáng*).

This carved rhinoceros horn cup is modelled after a bronze vessel type called a *gōng* in Chinese, an archaic sacrificial vessel. Designed for mixing wine with water, the *gōng* was used for storing and pouring rice wine at ritual banquets, part of ancestor worship, and was often deposited as grave goods in high-status burials. The *gōng* usually features a broad rim, a projecting spout aligned with a vertical handle at the back, and rises from a single thick oval-shaped foot, or more rarely from multiple feet. It was believed that wine vapours were consumed by the spirits of the dead, while the physical contents were enjoyed by the living. Archaic bronze vessels of this type, made between the Shang and Zhou dynasties (c. 1700-c. 900 BCE), are often shaped as one or more animals, with a fully zoomorphic cover—absent from the later iterations in porcelain and rhinoceros horn—and an animal-shaped vertical handle opposite the spout. After the middle Western Zhou period, the *gōng* came to be used as a water vessel, its name changing to *yí*.<sup>1</sup> Lacking a cover and raised on four feet, the *yí* takes the form of a

<sup>1</sup> CHENGYUAN, Ma, ‘The Splendor of Ancient Chinese Bronzes’, in FONG, Wen (ed.), *The Great Bronze Age of China. An Exhibition from the People’s Republic of China* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art–Alfred A. Knopf, 1980, pp. 1–19, p. 14.





half gourd fitted with a handle. Used alongside flat basins (*pén*), it contained and poured water for washing the hands before rituals.

In China, rhinoceros horn cups were prized collector's items, often gifted to successful scholars. Their carving, particularly in workshops in southern cities such as Guangzhou, flourished from the late Ming to the early Qing dynasties, from the late sixteenth century to the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Worked in China from the Tang dynasty (618–907) onwards—possibly as sacrificial vessels—and treasured in Asia since Antiquity for their antidotal qualities and supposed magical powers, rhinoceros horn cups were highly sought after in late Renaissance Europe. Archival research shows that such cup, along with whole horns imported in bulk, were avidly collected at the Lisbon court in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>3</sup> Two carved rhinoceros horn cups modelled after archaic bronze vessels were bequeathed in 1753 to the British Museum, London,

by Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), the Irish physician and collector whose library and collections formed the chief foundation collection of the museum. Similarly shaped, with everted rims—albeit lacking the projecting spout seen on Bronze Age examples and on the present cup—Sloane's libation cups (invs. SLMisc.143 and SLMisc.158) date no later than the last decades of the seventeenth century. The design and motifs on the first of Sloane's cups closely resemble those of the present example, featuring a vertical handle in the form of a *chilóng*, meander friezes or Chinese key frets beneath rim and on top of the lip and at the base of the foot, and a central band of stylised *tāotiè* masks over a ground of interlocking lozenges (*léiwén*). — HMC

<sup>2</sup> On this production, see CHAPMAN, Jan, *The Art of Rhinoceros Horn Carving in China*, London, Christie's Books, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *At The Prince's Table. Dining at the Lisbon Court (1500–1700)*. Silver, Mother-of-pearl, Rock Crystal and Porcelain, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2018, pp. 232–237, cat. 30.



## 70

## A CHINESE PORCELAIN 'ARMS OF CRUZ SOBRAL ALAGOA II' TUREEN AND STAND

Chinese export porcelain

Qianlong Reign, ca. 1750

Dim.: 31.5 × 40.0 × 29.0 cm (tureen) and 40.7 × 30.5 × 3.5 cm (stand)

C787

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal

Exhibited: 'Triunfo do Barroco', Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, 1993–1994 (cat. III–31; pp. 295–296)

Note: The pair to this tureen is in the Winterthur Museum, Delaware, United States, within the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens (inv. no. 96.4.196)



FIG. 1

Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier, Design for a tureen in Project for a Large Centerpiece and Two Tureens Which Have Been Executed for His Lordship the Duke of Kingston, plate 115 from Works of Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (*Oeuvre de Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier*). Cleveland Museum of Art or Victoria and Albert Museum, no. E. 262.1967; or Cooper-Hewitt Museum NY

FIG. 2

Thomas Germain, Design for a tureen. Sanguine. Private collection

Of exceptional artistic virtuosity and historic relevance, this Chinese export porcelain tureen on stand is representative of a typology known as *pot à oille*. Made ca. 1750, in the reign of Emperor Qianlong, it presents enamelled *Famille Rose* decoration, and a Portuguese armorial shield for Cruz Alagoa/Sobral, inscribed with the Latin motto 'Nomen honorque meis' (In my name and on my honour), and surmounted by a sighthound. This collared dog, holding a key to its mouth, a symbolic allusion to Joaquim Inácio da Cruz Sobral fidelity as Keeper of the Crown Treasure.

The configurative genealogy of this tureen seems to originate from a model conceived by Juste-Aurèle Meissonnier (1693–95, Turin–1750, Paris), painter, sculptor, architect, ornamentist and goldsmith of Italian origin working in France, in whose treaty *Dixième livre des oeuvres de J.-A. Meissonnier*, appears identified as a 'Surtout de Table' (plate no. 61)<sup>1</sup> (fig. 1). Of exuberant design, it is defined by a stylistic repertoire of foliage motifs, volutes and shells, conspicuous in European baroque and rococo creations in a wide variety of fields, from goldsmithing to furniture or ceramics, particularly in France, England, Germany, Austria and Italy, but also in the Iberian Peninsula.

Meissonnier would also fulfil commissions for the Portuguese Royal House, motivated by those from the French King Louis XIV in the context of the Versailles universe formulation, and its subsequent adoption by other European courts

in the emergence of Absolutism. From the various commissions mediated by Ambassador Luís da Cunha (1662–1749), Portuguese representative in Paris, stands out a celebrated throne (1727) for King João V (r. 1706–1750). Comprising of a centre table, a back-rest with canopy and dossal, a dais carpet and a royal armchair, which together composed the 'Throne', its decorative composition included important allegorical and symbolic narratives.

Additionally, as a close attribution for the influences evident in this tureen, it is also essential to point out a work by François-Thomas Germain, which has most likely determined the adopted ornamental, botanical and zoological ostentation whose excess of vegetable elements reinforces a 'still-life context'—the set referred to as *La Machine d'Argent*, or the Centrepiece for a Table (*surtout*

<sup>1</sup> Collection Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum—Tenth Series of Designs from the work of J.-A. Meissonnier/Table Centerpiece, c. 1742–1748.





**FIG. 3**  
Portrait of Joaquim Inácio da Cruz Sobral (b. 1725), *Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal*



**FIG. 4 AND 5**  
Crest details of Joaquim Inácio da Cruz Sobral



**FIG. 6**  
Tureen from Winterthur Museum, Delaware, United States, with the Campbell Collection of Soup Tureens (inv. no. 96.4.196)

*de table*),<sup>2</sup> (fig. 2) which should be seen as another archetype, particularly clear on the cover, from which stands out the sculptural purpose verbalised by the object. In identical parallelism, it is also relevant to refer another contemporary tureen equally commissioned in Paris by Francisco da Silva Telo e Menezes, 6th Count of Aveiras, later 1st Marquess of Vagos. Made as a pair at Charles Spire's workshop between 1752 and 1753, it features a cover whose decoration represents a sculptural group allusive to hunting.

This setting, evidencing the identified stylistic contagion, reveals itself once again in the *Livre des Légumes*, another masterpiece by the same author that must be included in the collection of sources impacting ceramic creation by resorting to natural, predominantly botanical, elements. Although the compilation early core takes up the representation of plants and vegetables, other

blocks deal with topics such as architecture, religious implements, decorative objects and even fireworks.<sup>3</sup>

The set's orderer, and also of some Chinese export porcelain vases (ca. 1755), was Joaquim Inácio da Cruz Alagoa/Sobral (Lisbon 1725–1781), who held prestigious offices in the Marquess of Pombal administration, such as Royal House nobleman to King José I, member of the Council of the Exchequer and Treasurer of the Royal Purse, that would grant him a nobility title as well as opportunities for amassing immense wealth. By royal favour he would also be given the Honorific Lordship of the town of Sobral de Monte Agraço (by letter patent from April 18th, 1771) and later, on December 19th, 1776, the honour of adding the surname Sobral to his name, with the obligation of using it together with the family's armorial shield (fig. 3).

<sup>2</sup> Francois-Thomas Germain. French (1726–1791). Paris. France. Europe. 1754. Silver. Object: 21.0×36.8×23.2 cm (8 1/4×14 1/2×9 1/8 in.), (Photo by: Sepia Times/Universal Images Group via Getty),

<sup>3</sup> Cf.: HUQUIER, Gabriel, GERMAIN, Thomas, BLONDEL, François, *et al.* [estampe], Publication: [S.I.], [1740–1770] Description matérielle: Est.: gravure en taille-douce.



From the group of six Chinese export porcelain dinner sets featuring the Sobral crest, exceptional number amongst the commissions by the grandest and wealthiest aristocratic families, stands out the tureen herewith described which, by its ornamental grammar, may be linked to the 1st dinner set, said ‘of carnations’.<sup>4</sup>

#### MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND ORNAMENTAL FEATURES

Tureen, or *pot à oille*, normally used for holding meat and fish soups, or even ragouts, it contrasts with another, lower shaped typology known as *olla podrida*, according to the Spanish terminology. According to Raphael Bluteau,<sup>5</sup> ‘there are various typologies of *ollas*, such as the above-mentioned *olla podrida*, whose classification originates from *poderidas* or powerful, since it was destined to be used by the powerful elites and filled from large cooking pots and casseroles’.<sup>6</sup>

The tureen’s cover gadrooned details, framed by gilt beaded frieze, melt elegantly with its rim waving profile of trellis motifs and interrupted garlands in the *Famille Rose* ornamental taste, contrasting with the tureen girdled festoons rim—elements repeated in the tureen’s base peripheral edge. The two handles, shaped as striated (*crête de coq*) and gilt closed volutes, rest on small putto masks attached to the recesses that, in this instance, function as the handle brackets. In essence it adopts an often-used decorative detail that is common in sauceboats, urns and even jugs, but re-worked in the rococo taste and also used in Meissen produced wares.

Of central foliage detail inspired by a floral and fruit palmette ornament design, the feet feature two small scrolls (closely analogous to those seen in the tureens from the *Musée de la Compagnie des Indes* at Lorient, in Brittany, in those formerly in the Ricardo Espírito Santo collection, originally from the Marquess of Ficalho, and in the ones from the Dukes of Palmela collection), which follow the same decorative grammar as the cover, which in turn exhibits the massive vegetal rhetoric characteristic of the display stratagems so specific to François-Thomas Germain compositions—broccoli, mushrooms and peas.

Oblong shaped, the stand features a rather overloaded edge that increases its expressive phytomorphic value, organised as if a garland. Its central ground however, resorts to European floral specimens already seen in the 1st dining set, said of carnations, rather than the Chinese floral motifs used in the previous period,

and known as ‘*Indianische Blumen*’. This choice may have resulted from the models adopted by Meissen porcelain (*deutsche blumen decoration*) ca. 1745, and later also by the Strasbourg factory.

In other words, it reflects the transfer of a European botanical orientation onto these oriental surfaces, making the model, subjected to an aesthetic renovation, more updated. For this reason, Chinese made porcelain became known as ‘*Chinese Porcelain for the European Market*’,<sup>7</sup> in a process of contamination which from this date extended to other major European production centres such as Vincennes, Höchst, Frankenthal and Berlin, but also to Chelsea, Bow, Derby and Worcester, in Great Britain, whose models may have been absorbed from botanical prints, such as those by Johann Wilhelm Weinmann (1683–1741).

This floral decorative programme ‘in the European manner’ must be confronted with that from the covered vases in the Museu Castro Guimarães, in Cascais, which follow the model characteristic of *Famille Rose* ornamental compositions depicting Chinese floral motifs. The covers, however, feature Foo Dog shaped holders, hence maintaining the archaism, or tradition, that this feature represents.

Joaquim Inácio da Cruz (Alagoa-Sobral) lived in his palace at Rua da Fábrica das Sedas, in Lisbon’s Rato neighbourhood, with his wife, his brother Anselmo Sobral and 35 servants, a fact that in itself would justify the need for large quantities of domestic accoutrements, later moving to the Calhariz palace in the Santa Catarina district. From his younger brother’s José Francisco da Cruz Sobral inventory of the ‘Lisbon house’ (f. 37 a 48), comprising of thirteen rooms and one oratory, and excluding household linens and personal clothing, stands out the large numbers of Chinese porcelain pieces, which included: ‘India ware, various blue and white plates, blue and gold, enamelled plates, soup tureens, tureens, cups, teapots, beakers, bottles and cruets’.<sup>8</sup>

It is plausible that the commissioning of such objects would have happened in the context of Sobral’s fast promotions, as evidenced by the offices he held, and subsequently by the ostentatious wealth he accumulated, first as Ombudsman to the Board of Commerce, a post in which he gets a salary as General Manager for the Sugar Customs in 1768, followed by elected membership of the Treasury Council in 1769, and Director of the Royal Silks Factory and the Covilhã Textiles Factory. Symbolically, in the same year

<sup>4</sup> *Vd.*: Pierced lip plate, Chinese export porcelain of polychrome decoration and armorial shield for Joaquim Inácio da Cruz Sobral—1st dinner set (carnations); Qianlong reign (1736–1795); CASTRO, Nuno de, *A Porcelana Chinesa ao tempo do Império—Portugal/Brasil*. ACD Editores, Lisboa, 2007, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> BLUTEAU, Raphael, *Vocabulário Portuguez, Coimbra: Colégio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus, 1712–1728*, vol. 6.

<sup>6</sup> See also this terminology that is present in the Royal House table plans and respective table ‘sets’ as published by the master chef Domingos Rodrigues. *Arte da Cozinha*, 1680.

<sup>7</sup> *Vd.*: HONOUR, Hugh, *The Penguin Dictionary of Decorative Arts*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 523–524.

<sup>8</sup> Chrome extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgclefindmkaj/https://www.lisboa.pt/fileadmin/informacao/publicacoes/arquivo\_municipal/Cadernos\_Arquivo\_Municipal\_6.pdf



he was also granted the rank of knight nobleman and later, at the highest point of his success he was also awarded the honourable grade of Knight of the Military Order of Christ.

In 1775, on participating in the ceremonial procession for the inauguration of King José I equestrian statue and parading in front of the king's omnipotent minister, the Marquess of Pombal, Joaquim Inácio da Cruz (Alagoa-Sobral) displays his closeness to the political elites, as well as his own grandeur amongst the Kingdom's highest hierarchies.

Historiography is unanimous regarding the fact that the 1780s represented an increase in the Asian trade, in what is conventionally known as the 'India Trade' resurgence. The Grão-Pará

and Maranhão trading company, in whose foundation Joaquim Inácio intervened under the determining patronage of Pombal, succeeded to the Portuguese Asia Trading Company, dissolved in 1756. Towards the end of the 18th century, another brother, Anselmo Joaquim Cruz Sobral (1728–1802), would also amass considerable wealth and, in association with Joaquim da Costa Quintela, would hold the majority of that company's shares, thereby maintaining trade with the Far East and ensuring the importing of Chinese porcelain, a possible reason for the presence of such large quantities of such wares amongst his possessions, in a context of meteoric social rising. *JMT*

## 71

## A SINO-PORTUGUESE MING CASKET

Ivory; metal fittings

South China, probably Zhangzhou; 1590–1620

Dim.: 13.5 × 23.0 × 12.0 cm

F1473

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



Print by Philips Galle after Maarten van Heemskerck, *The story of Jonah*, 1566. The British Museum, London (inv. 1937,0915.263), 2.05 × 2.45 cm

This rare dome-shaped casket, finely carved in ivory in low relief, was made in South China, probably in Zhangzhou, for export to the Iberian markets, between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

It belongs to a small group of similarly shaped caskets and related diminutive pieces of furniture carved in ivory, in a distinctive style of very low relief found nowhere else in Asia. This Zhangzhou-centred production also included figurative carvings in the round, mostly religious and Christian in iconography, which became an important export commodity in the early modern period.<sup>1</sup>

Modelled after an earlier, late medieval European prototype, the casket features a rectangular box made from thick ivory plaques joined together using woodworking techniques (with ivory pegs when needed), and its characteristic dome-shaped lid, likely taking advantage of the natural curvature of the elephant's tusk.

The metal fittings include a lock plate in the shape of a double-headed eagle, and three hinges on the back; it was originally fitted with a top handle, now missing, which would have hindered the legibility of the lid's figural decoration.

Adapted from contemporary European ornamental prints, the decoration of the casket includes *ferronneries* and *rinceaux* (vegetal scrolls) with animals (dogs and squirrels), and perched birds on the front; vegetal scrolls on the back; and flowering plants with animals on the sides. These animal motifs include a curious isolated 'Pelican in her piety' or *pie pellicane*—a mother pelican wounding herself to feed her young with her blood—a Christian motif widely used in Portuguese-influenced Asia, mostly in textiles and furniture. Both spectacular and intriguing, the decoration on the dome-shaped lid derives from Mannerist prints in a style known as 'strapwork' (*Rollwerk* in German), incorporating cartouches, *ferronneries*, and grotesques (*grotteschi* in Italian), which, mainly from Antwerp, disseminated a new ornamental repertoire all over Europe and beyond, including Asia. The lid features a grotesque panel with a 'strapwork' cartouche in the centre, flanked by chimerical male and female figures blowing trumpets, crowned by a curious elderly figure. As usual in such Northern Mannerist prints, the background of the grotesque is filled with drapes, garlands, masks, and animals, including a scorpion and a fish hanging from ribbons. The central scene depicts the story of Jonah, known principally from the Hebrew Bible (the Book of Jonah).<sup>2</sup> According to the biblical story, Jonah tries to flee God's command to preach in Nineveh, is swallowed by a great fish, repents, and is delivered to complete his mission. In late sixteenth-century Counter-Reformation Europe, Jonah was commonly read as a figure of penitence, chastisement, and providential deliverance (and, typologically, of Christ's death and Resurrection), while also lending itself—by implicit analogy—to the perils and imperatives of Catholic missionary work in Asia.

It is possible that, alongside an ornamental print, such as those published by Hieronymus Cock (ca. 1518–1570) after designs by Cornelis Floris (ca. 1514–1575), the Chinese carver used

<sup>1</sup> This group of Chinese household objects is virtually unknown and largely unpublished. For the religious ivory carvings related to this production, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Chinese Christian Art. From the South China Sea to the Imperial Court (1580–1900)*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> On the significance of the story of Jonah, see SHERWOOD, Yvonne, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives. The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000; and particularly in the early modern period, in art and literature, see also BURROUGHS, Charles, 'The 'Last Judgment' of Michelangelo: Pictorial Space, Sacred Topography, and the Social World', *Artibus et Historiae* 16.32 (1995), pp. 55–89; and HAMLIN, Hannibal, 'Staging Prophecy: A Looking Glass for London and the Book of Jonah', in GOODBLATT, Chanita, VON CONTZEN, Eva (eds.), *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2020, pp. 175–191.





a 1566 print by Philips Galle, after a composition by Maarten van Heemskerck, depicting the story of Jonah.<sup>3</sup> In the print, Jonah is regurgitated by a monstrous fish onto dry land, overseen by God the Father above, in the clouds. Although mirrored—a widely used process in copying prints—the carved Jonah is similar in pose and gestures to that of the print, and the same is true of the monstrous fish, its curling tail, and the gush of liquid coming out of its mouth. Squeezed into the central field of the cartouche, however, Jonah instead leans over the fish, rather than being expelled from his belly—this may well derive not only from spatial constraints, but from Chinese myth, given that the Daoist immortal Qin Gao disappears into the water and later reappears riding a red carp, before departing again, a story which influenced many Chinese artworks, in painted and sculptural form.<sup>4</sup> The elderly, haloed figure crowning the cartouche carved on the lid may thus be identified with God the Father, similarly adapted by the Chinese craftsman, combined with the more familiar iconography of another Daoist immortal, possibly Laozi. As with other productions for export to the European market—and apart from the strong Daoist iconographical overlapping—the figurative and ornamental motifs are Sinicised, with a typical Chinese stylisation of forms and the inclusion of motifs specific to art made in China, most notably the curling of vegetal scrolls reminiscent of the *rúyì*, which derives from the head of the *língzhī*, or mushroom of immortality (*Ganoderma sichuanense*), and symbolises power, good fortune, and granting of wishes.

Zhangzhou, one of the most important coastal cities of Fujian Province, was a notable centre for ivory carving in late

Ming China. The tradition of carving secular and religious figures (for Buddhist and Daoist private shrines) in ivory in southern Fujian was bolstered by the emergence of a new appreciation and consumption of luxury goods among the urban elite. This shift, far removed from the more austere tastes of the literati, coincided with the appearance of a new European clientele.<sup>5</sup> Europeans with access to the Fujian markets and their local and hinterland agents—merchants and Christian missionaries alike—likely began commissioning not only religious ivory carvings, but also decorative items, including small pieces of furniture such as the present casket. No more than a handful of similarly shaped caskets from this production are known, mostly in Portuguese private collections.

One very small casket, with a dome-shaped lid (12.8×8.2×9.6 cm), now in a Lisbon private collection, was published in 2000 by the antiques dealer Manuel Castilho—the first to recognize this production and to draw attention to its importance.<sup>6</sup> Carved in the same shallow relief and copying similar European engravings, the casket features *feronneries* on the front and back; Mannerist-style grotesques (with *putti*, masks, and vases) on the lid; and hunting scenes on the sides, highly favoured by the aristocratic and patrician Portuguese, and perhaps Spanish, clientele who commissioned such objects from South China, likely through middlemen stationed in Portuguese-settled Macao. It is set with silver fittings, including a cast top handle (with dragon heads), which may have been similar to the missing handle on this casket. —HMC

<sup>3</sup> The British Museum, London (inv. 1937,0915.263).

<sup>4</sup> One highly significant example is a fifteenth-century painting by Li Zai in the Shanghai Museum.

<sup>5</sup> See GILLMAN, Derek, 'Ming and Qing Ivories: figure carving', in WATSON, William (ed.), *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, London, The Oriental Ceramic Society–British Museum, 1984, pp. 35–52.

<sup>6</sup> CASTILHO, Manuel, *Missions in the East. The Route to Lisbon and the Route to Acapulco*, Lisbon, Manuel Castilho Antiguidades, 2000, pp. 60–61, cat. 22.



## THE CHINA TRADE

The trade between China and the West evolved steadily through the centuries, first along the Silk Road that took the Turk merchants to Asia via Persia, and later by sea.

The slow but continuous disintegration of that overland trade route, in the 14th and 15th centuries, forced Europeans to search for an alternative access to the Far East and to its valuable silks, porcelains, tea and various other luxury goods.

The Portuguese would be the first to attain this aim, arriving in India in 1498 and settling in Macao in 1557, a small but valuable territory that would soon become the most important platform for accessing the Chinese Empire and its products, eventually growing to be one of the great trading outposts in the whole of Asia.

As pioneers and privileged intermediaries, the Portuguese became intensely involved in the profitable international trade routes between China and other Eastern and European ports, contributing to the development of the important cultural exchanges that ensued.

However, this Portuguese monopoly would cease in 1685, when Emperor Kangxi (r. 1662–1722) decrees the opening of the Port of Canton to other European powers. Later, in 1757, during the reign of Emperor Qianlong, the closure of all other Chinese ports to international trade turned Canton into the only Chinese market available to foreign merchants. Conveniently located close to the mouth of the Pearl River, by the Island of Honam, Canton became the most important city in southern China, and the place where western traders were welcome, albeit within certain clearly defined parameters. The western settlers were accommodated in an area outside the city walls and expected to follow a set of rules designed to ensure racial segregation, and obstructing any contacts between them and the indigenous Chinese population.

Various western countries would install their own trading outposts, or 'hong', in Canton, eventually growing to thirteen, amongst them England, The Netherlands, France, Denmark, Sweden and the United States, keeping a strong international presence until the first Opium War of the late 1830s.

The opening of Canton had an immediate effect, substantially increasing traffic in the strategic port of Macao, located on the Pearl River delta, by the unavoidable pass into Whampoa Island, the last stronghold before Guangzhou (Canton).

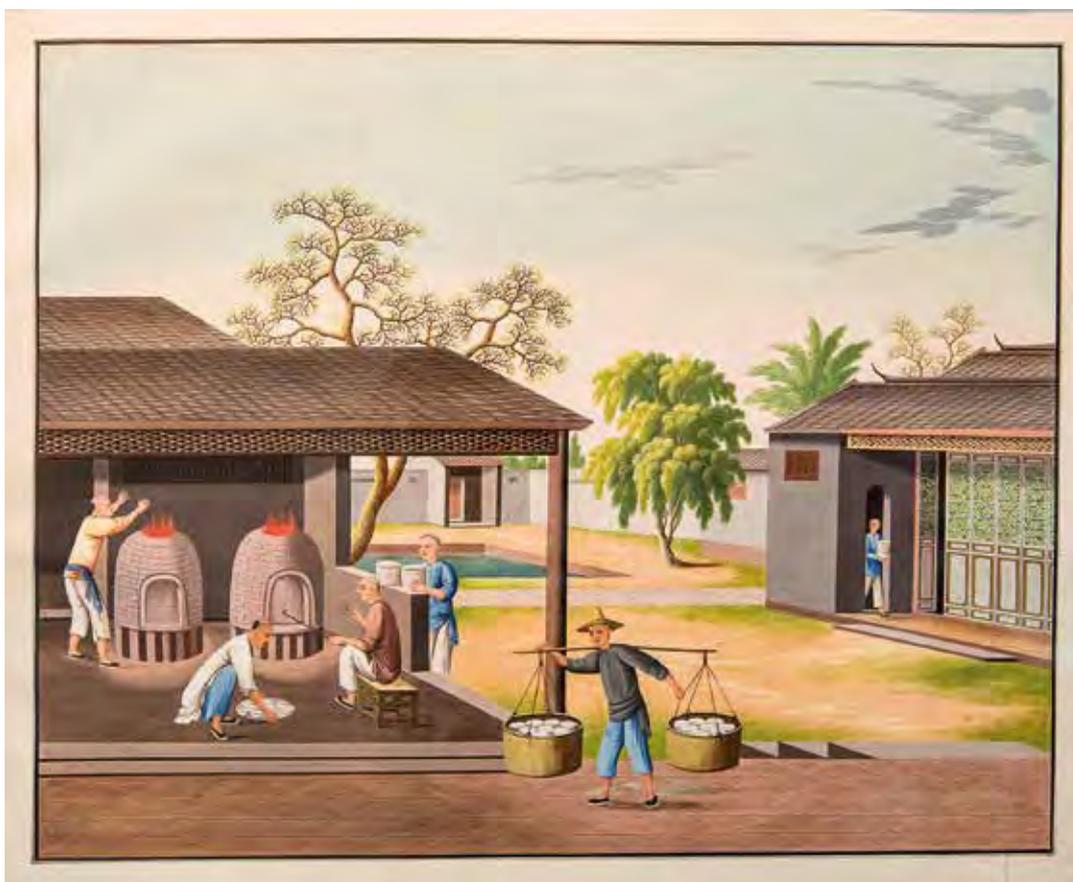
Contrary to initial expectations, the presence of European merchants was by no means consensual and trade was only allowed under very specific conditions. Emperor Qianlong imposed the *Canton System* as a means to controlling trade with westerners, by forbidding any direct commercial exchanges. It was only possible to trade with Chinese authorised dealers (*Cohong*) who belonged to the guild of city merchants, the hong, that was under the jurisdiction of the governor-general and of the customs supervisor (*hoppo*), both responsible for establishing product quotas and tax rates.

There were however, very few western products with significant markets in China, an unavoidable fact that made trade difficult. In an attempt at counterbalancing this deficit, by the late 18th century both Britain and the United States turned to opium as a trade currency. In 1830 England was granted exclusivity in commerce to and from the port of Canton, but the ever-increasing raw-materials deficit promoted the growth of the Indian opium traffic, eventually forcing the Beijing government into acting by prohibiting it. In protest, the English send their navy ships in, in a demonstration of military power, to force the Emperor into changing his position, but eventually causing the closure of Canton to all foreign trade in 1839.

## PAINTING

European influence over Chinese art was only felt by the late 18th century, with the arrival of English and French merchants, which promoted commissions destined to wealthy European clients.

Beyond the well-established porcelain orders, they commissioned paintings, lacquer work, ivory carvings and furniture pieces in the European taste, which the Chinese artists produced with remarkable skill. This trade promoted the spreading of Chinese art as well as the development of its imitations, the *chinoiseries*.



In its paintings, the *China Trade* portrayed favoured export goods (tea, silk and porcelain), indigenous flora and fauna, quotidian scenes, portraits and landscapes, particularly views of the places most visited by foreigners. In fact, these paintings assumed the role of postcards and souvenirs sold to visitors, which became important historical sources.

Produced by Chinese artists in the western manner, sometimes under the supervision of resident European masters based in Macao, these works are often studio productions involving various hands, in response to a wide and constant demand. The result was a hybrid style, of careful detail, refined precision and bright and luminous colour palette, albeit of rather flat perspective and lacking the rigour of western art. These paintings were often sold from small local boats, directly on to the arriving European ship's passengers and crews.

Within this *China Trade* production we will focus specifically on the group depicting marine scenes, particularly those referring to trade between European and Chinese. These bustling scenes have survived in considerable numbers in the artworks purchased by Europeans, as souvenirs of their passage through China. Today, their charm residing not only on the beauty of the landscapes and on their technical quality, but also on the history and documentary evidence they enclose, becoming extraordinary windows into 19th century world history.

Often produced in sets, the most common are composed of four paintings with views of the final sequential journey of the European ships; Macao, the first urban mass on approaching China, *Bocca Tigris* the impressive entry into the Pearl River, Whampoa Island, the final ship's anchorage and Canton, the final destination.

The paintings described herewith correspond to the first three stages in this sequence, fitting seamlessly within the *China Trade* parameters. As period testimonies they allow for the perception of the geography, the architecture and the daily existences in Macao's Praia Grande, *Bocca Tigris* and Whampoa Island, assuming a documentary precision that surprises by the detailed information they provide on these early 19th century ports. ✓

*Using Muffle Stoves for the Firing of Porcelain in a Cantonese Workshop*, Chinese School, ca. 1830, watercolor on paper. The MET Museum (inv. no. 55.139.1)

## 72

## A 'MANDARIN' FOLDING FAN WITH A VIEW OF THE PEARL RIVER DELTA

Brass, silver, gold, enamel, paper and gouache

China (Macao?, Henan?); 1842–47

Diam.: 56.0 cm

F1225

Provenance: Private collection, France



Folding fan of a type referred to as 'Mandarin', composed of two guards and fourteen sticks—in gilt brass and silver filigree with applied *cloisonné* enamelled decoration—and double, overlapping and pleated paper leaf painted in gouache and gilt. The sticks are fixed by a riveted loop, from which hangs a green silk cord of intertwined 'endless' knots and two jade beads, ending in one red and one yellow tassel.

The fan's front is divided into three frames. Centrally placed, an original and unique riverine landscape that we attribute to the Pearl River delta, an unavoidable passageway for European ships sailing towards Canton, as evidenced by the 1841 map illustrating the positioning of English battleships.<sup>1</sup> At the forefront Ersha Island

with its fortress and opposite, crossing the river, Whampoa anchorage and Honam Island—or Henan—with its pagoda (*Chigang*).

Close to the Ersha Fortress five Chinese males with Manchu hairstyles—shaved foreheads with hair braid towards the nape—and berthed sampan. In the distance, various Chinese and foreign anchored vessels.

The island would also become known as Napier Island in honour of William John Napier (1786–1834), the first superintendent-general of Canton trade, appointed by the British Government in 1834 following the abolition of the East India Company monopoly.

On arriving in Macao, Napier challenged the Chinese authorities by refusing to request an official travel permit to sail to

<sup>1</sup> The Pearl River showing the positions of the British ships in the Battle of Canton, on the 26th May 1841, during the First Opium War: *The Hong Shang or Broadway River*—Reduced from a Chinese Manuscript, London, H. Colburn, 1845, Apud: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/43669/43669-h/43669-h.htm>; BERNARD, William Dallas; HALL, William Hutcheon (1844). *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis, from 1840 to 1843*. Volume 1. London, Henry Colburn.

Canton, the hub where all the trading with the west, mediated by the *hongs*<sup>2</sup>, was consummated. Once arrived in that city, he demanded to be received by Lu Kun (1772–1835)—the viceroy of Liangguang—who refused him an audience, ordering his return to Macao.

In response, Lord Napier instructed that three frigates should return to Whampoa<sup>3</sup>—the anchorage port for foreign ships—a fact that would generate an armed conflict between the British ships and the Chinese land battery. As a result Lu Kun decreed the interdiction of trade with Great Britain and the eviction of the British from Canton. The escalation of hostilities would only end with Napier's sudden and unexpected death.

This incident will be the *casus belli* that triggers the First Opium War (1839–1842), leading to the occupation of Ersha Island, and ending with the capture of Canton by the British troops in 1841. Across the river stands Honam Island, whose pagoda was built in 1619 during the reign of Emperor Wanli (1572–1620), supposedly to mirror the 'pagoda of Whampoa' (on Pazhou Island) and to bring good fortune to the port of Canton.

Sailing close to the shore three, clearly visible, Chinese vessels (a junk and two sampan). A steam clipper, flying the United Kingdom red ensign, is anchored nearby.<sup>4</sup> In the distance it is also possible to recognise other foreign tall ships.

The scene is encased in an oval lobate frame of foliage branches, interlinked with the 'endless' or destiny knot, auguring

good fortune, harmony and longevity to the lands depicted in this panoramic view. It is flanked by two court scenes of identical frames, laterally embraced by two bats—symbols of joy, happiness, good luck and, when facing each other, of doubly good fortune—having at its lower edge, the lotus flower, a wealth and fertility metaphor.

All the human figures depicted in these sections have ivory faces—cut-out and painted—and silk costumes ornate with sophisticated painted decorative elements. Their attire follows the styles worn by the ancient *Han* ethnic groups as it is usual in this type of accessory. The female figures are depicted with elaborate hairstyles adorned with pearls and holding fans, attributes of royalty.

The three framed scenes are encircled by numerous symbolic motifs that follow ancient, inherited Chinese cultural traditions and customs and by auspicious Buddhist emblems: The Wheel of Law (*falun*) sitting on swastikas (*Wàn*) and clouds (*Yún*) in an allegory to the eternal renovation of Buddha's infinite heart—a sign of protection, good augury, authority and longevity; the vase (*quan*), in a wish of good fortune and perpetual harmony; and the parasol, a metaphor of dignity. Associated to them are the scholar's treasures such as the *ruyi* sceptre—aiming at success, prosperity, longevity and immortality, or the books and scrolls, embodying science, and essential in erudite scholarly activity. Completing this panoply the symbols normally associated to the Eight Immortals, such as the castanets of the mystic Taoist Cao Guojiu (*Cao Yi*)—patron of the theatre—and the fan, attribute of Zhongli Quan—the eldest of the

<sup>2</sup> *Hongs*—Chinese trading houses or clans, grouped in the *Cohong* guild that supervised the exchange of goods between the West and China; they were the main link between the Imperial government and the foreigners, and legal responsible for the Westerners good behaviour. In turn, the activities of this guild were regulated by the customs supervisor—*Hoppo*—and by the Viceroy of Liangguang (Viceroy of the two Guang: Province of Guangdong—whose capital was Canton or Guangzhu—and Province of Guangxi).

<sup>3</sup> The Island of Whampoa (*Pazhou*) was located in a deep water area of the Pearl River, and was the place where foreign cargo ships could anchor. These were not allowed to sail up the river from this point, their cargoes being transferred to Chinese junks for the journey to Canton, the location of the European trading factories, where the products would be valued by the Hong. Even after the First Opium War that ended the 'Canton System' and some of the main restrictions, the Europeans maintained their preference for this anchorage point for their larger ships.

<sup>4</sup> Steam clippers were developed during the First Opium War (1839–92). One of them, the 'Nemesis', had a devastating role in this war.



Immortals, capable of reviving the dead, turn stones into gold and silver and holding powers that could save China from starving. Some examples of the 'Eight Precious Things'—popular representations in Chinese Art—are also depicted, such as the jade sound stone, emblem of justice and perfection, and the coin, in a yearn for riches. Also present is the frog—insignia of the unattainable, evoked in desires for wealth, the peony (*fukeihua*) and the lotus flower (*lian*), which, when together convey long years of health and wealth.

On the obverse, the paper leaf is densely populated by courtly palace scenes on the terraces of garden pavilions, inspired by the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, written in the 14th century by Luo Guanzhong. This literary work describes the turbulent later years of the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period (ca.169–280 AC)<sup>5</sup>, in a new genre that, based on historical facts, narrates endless adventures lived by both fictitious and real characters.

Without attempting to identify the precise episode depicted on this fan, due to the complexity of the novel and of its characters, it is possible to point out on the central scene, the figure of General Lu Bū (ca. 153–199) easily recognisable by his double 'antennae' helmet. A brilliant career warrior, almost invincible, he was known as the 'Flying General' thanks to his horse (*Chi Tu*) that could run thousands of miles a day.

The fan's painted decorative type suggests a fusion between the popular models of free creation from the Suzhou School<sup>6</sup>—exemplified by the 14000 paintings found at Beijing's<sup>7</sup> Summer Palace (*Yihe yuan*) Long Corridor, and the Mandarin style adopted for export pieces.

The frame repeats, in a synthetized manner, the flower, foliage and symbolic motifs of the leaf front, adopting traditional allegories of good fortune also evident in contemporary porcelain exports. In these the Chinese potters combine European decorative shapes and styles with intimate family scenes or flower and bird landscapes that evoke, to the avid western eye, exotic atmospheres admired by their aesthetic beauty rather than symbolic meaning.

Although plain at the head, the openwork gilt silver filigree ribs are scalloped and edged at the top and decorated with stylised blue and green enamel foliage elements. The chiselled guards' fronts are applied with raised filigree flower bouquets.

Filigree fans of enamelled *cloisonné* decoration were always in great demand by the Western markets. Mainly produced in Macao throughout the first half of the 19th century, their production expanded from the end of the First Opium War, when some craftspeople transferred their workshops to the Islands of Honam and Hong Kong and also to Shanghai.

This fan's adopted decorative theme is associated to the figure of Lord Napier, the First Opium War precursor, as if in praise of his heroic accomplishments from which resulted considerable benefits for the British Crown, that were formalised in the Treaty of Nanking. Out of this treaty came the end of the Canton regulatory system and the opening of four additional Chinese ports to Western trade; the payment of a large compensation in silver; and the concession of Hong Kong Island to the United Kingdom.

Napier Island and its fort were occupied by the British in 1841 and returned to the Chinese at the end of the conflict (1842), who immediately rebuilt the fortress, equipping it with canon guns for the defence of the Pearl River double passage<sup>8</sup> before it approaches Canton. Even though the terms of the Treaty of Nanking allowed the British to enter Canton, the restrictions to access the city remained in place and, in 1847 the Governor of Honk-Kong, John Davis (1844–1848), ordered a punitive expedition that ended with the apprehension of this and other Pearl River forts.<sup>9</sup>

The Chinese figures on Ersha Island, as well as the vessels depicted, suggest that this fan was produced at a time of Chinese control (ca.1842–1847), probably in Macao, or even in Honam Island, to where some fan making workshops relocated following the First Opium War. ➤ TP

<sup>5</sup> The novel '*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*' narrates a period of approximately 120 years (169–280 AC), between the collapse and fall of the Han dynasty (206BC–220AC) and the splitting of the Empire into three kingdoms: Wei (220–265AC), Shu (221–263AC) and Wu (222–280AC), ending with the reunification of these kingdoms during the Jin dynasty (265–420); Through the centuries this novel would have a considerable impact over Chinese culture and society, in its depiction of an ancient world in which reigned courage, morality and righteousness of character.

<sup>6</sup> It was at the Suzhou School (Hangzhou) that this creatively free and popular model of painting originated, characterised by the sequential layout of painted images in frames, as in comic strips. Often used in architectural decoration, it is a joyful and colourful painting type whose thematic includes classical literature, legends, myths, etc.

<sup>7</sup> The Summer Palace Long Corridor, one of the classical works of architecture, built in the reign of Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1796)—was partially destroyed in 1860, during the Second Opium War (1856–1860) and rebuilt in 1886, by Dowager Empress Cixi (*Tseu-Hi*) (1835–1908). The earlier painting character was maintained in its colourful drawing style, depicting characters inspired by literature, myths and legends, and without the use of calligraphy to identify the meaning of the compositions, therefore allowing the viewer to conjecture about the history's contents based on appearances—clothing, sets and characters expressions. Cf.: [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2011-04/28/content\\_12415115.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2011-04/28/content_12415115.htm); <https://www.int-arch-photogramm-remote-sens-spatial-inf-sci.net/XLII-2-W5/737/2017/isprs-archives-XLII-2-W5-737-2017.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Napier Island formed a bifurcation in the Pearl River that gave access to Canton.

<sup>9</sup> Cf.: 'The Expedition Against Canton (1847)'. Cf.: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/694813>; *The Chinese Repository*, Vol. 16, pp. 252–265; Colburn's United Service Magazine and Naval and Military Journal, Parte 2, 1847, p. 622; 'Important News from China Capture of the Bogue Forts' in *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 3rd July 1847.

## A 'MANDARIN' FOLDING FAN WITH A VIEW OF CANTON (GUANGZHOU)

Wood, lacquer, gold, paper and gouache

China, Daoguang reign; 1848–49

Diam.: 56.0 cm

F1226

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



Nineteenth century, Daoguang reign (1820–1850), 'Mandarin' handheld fan. Of folding semi-circular type and decorated with an exuberant topographic scene depicting Canton (Guangzhou), it is accompanied by its original storage case.

The monture is composed of fourteen lacquered and gilt wooden ribs and two guards—joined by a metal riveted head—and a double, pleated and starched paper leaf of gouache painted decoration.

Centrally placed on the fan's main face a panoramic view of the Port of Canton. On the foreground the Pearl River, busy with Chinese and foreign vessels and, clearly visible on the riverbank, four of the thirteen foreign trading outposts and their gardens. From left to right, and identified by their respective flags, the American, French, British and Dutch compounds, the latter flag with inverted colours. Clearly emerging from the British garden, the church is identifiable by its window openings and whitewashed volumes.

The trading outposts' buildings, also known as factories or Hong, denote a clear oriental influence. In 1840 the buildings win-

dows were fitted with bamboo blinds—to filter the sun and cool the atmosphere—and in 1848 the church was built. Considering that the 'Clubhouse' and the 'Boathouse' are still absent, both iconic landmarks built in the late 1840's close to the river and neighbouring the American compound garden—and often mentioned by traders and portrayed in contemporary paintings<sup>1</sup>—it is possible to conclude that this image was produced in approximately 1848–1849.

Huddled along the river a variety of Chinese vessels such as sampan—with curved, matting covered cabins driven by traders that, beyond selling their wares, would provide a range of services to both indigenous and foreign communities; junks, some of considerable tonnage—keel vessels of fully battened sails that carried cargo and passengers; official vessels known as 'mandarin ships', of various shapes and sizes and identifiable by their numerous oars; *Tanka*—wide stern vessels, narrowing towards the bow, part covered by vine matting supported by a bamboo structure. These were usually steered by women and destined to passenger trans-

<sup>1</sup> Described in George Preble from U.S. Navy in 1853. Cf. CONNER, Patrick, *Op. cit.* p. 204 and depicted in various paintings dated to ca. 1850. Ex.: *The hong of Canton*, by the painter Tingqua (1809–1870) or studio. Cf. CONNER, Patrick, *Op. cit.* p. 202, fig. 7.20; <http://gotheborg.com/glossary/tingqua.shtml>



port, although they could also be converted into coastal abodes while moored by the river banks.

Amongst the density of trading and passenger vessels, two 'Flower Boats', easily recognisable by their two storey cabins of prominent entrance arches, by their green coloured decoration and by the trellis panels in the bedrooms and reception areas. With their rounded sterns and flat platforms with no masts or sails, they were slow moving vessels propelled by long oars. The contemporary fascination for these boats related to their purpose as luxurious brothels, which also served scrumptious meals with musical accompaniment. In night darkness their lit lanterns would make them easily recognisable.

To complete the scene two steam ships, one of English red ensign and black hull, the other white of United States of America flag. Their presence is an important clue for the painting dating, as the Hong Kong / Canton fluvial link was started in 1848 by the Hong Kong and Canton Steam Packet Company, with two ships.

This Guangzhou landscape is framed by an oval cartouche of Buddhist and Confucian decorative elements such as oriental floral and foliage motifs and auspicious symbols in shades of green, pink,

aubergine, orange, yellow and blue, similarly to contemporary 'Famille Rose' and 'Canton' porcelain decoration, on a beige background.

Standing out from these frames, the books of erudition and science; the fly whisk, the attribute of greater deities; the frog of unattainable; the precious vase of abundance, associated to the teachings of Buddha; the shell, a good augur emblem; the lantern, symbol of happiness and festivity; the peony, queen of flowers; the lotus flower, much liked by Chinese people and an allusion to Summer.

These elements are repeated on the border surrounding the fan leaf, in association to others, such as the eternal knot, a symbol of infinite knowledge; the swastika, a symbol of longevity and the pair of coins (*shuang quan*), a symbol of wealth.

On the obverse, filling the whole leaf surface, a scene centred on a pavilion with various figures around a table and dressed in ancient Han attire. The male figures stand out by their Jurchen or Manchu tonsure—bald head, with long braid at the nape and Mandarin cap of red tassel.

As is usual in this type of depiction, the scene is centred on a river—source of life and prosperity—that edges the lower margins of the composition, and on the faraway mountains, which

create a connection between earth and heaven, the conscience of eternity. The encircling decorative border repeats the same symbolic foliage motifs adopted at the front, but on a blue ground instead.

On the fan sticks, of gilt decoration on a black lacquered ground, a depiction of a river edge garden populated by five Chinese figures and encircled by a fence, linking a pavilion to entry gates. A double outlined lobate band frames the scene, separating it from a field of flowers, foliage branches and stylised peaches (*tāozi* 桃子)—traditionally associated to longevity and immortality—on a dotted background. These diverge from a centrally placed butterfly (*hudié* 蝴蝶), in an allusion to happiness, summer and frivolous and sensual pleasures.

This iconography is reinforced on the guards, which are populated by male figures, butterflies and sun shaped flowers.

The fan is stored in a rectangular lacquered wooden case, its cover decorated with double lobate cartouches, each with two gilt male figures within gardens. Standing out from one scene a pavilion with a Chinese coin—symbol of wealth and one of the eight 'precious things'. On the other a man converses with a seated

figure. On the case remaining outer surfaces, decoration of stylised foliage elements.

The inner lid is lined in gouache painted blue silk, with allegorical motifs, namely bats, pearls and fish amongst green foliage and pink flowers.

The chronological dating of this fan depicting a view of Canton is defined by the church building date (1848) and the absence of both the 'Clubhouse' and the 'Boathouse' to be erected towards the end of the decade. This depiction is coherent with the remaining decoration of this fan, whose iconography is contemporary to Emperor Daoguang (1820–1850), who, at this time, was regent of China. — TP



## 74

## MACAO—PRAIA GRANDE

Oil on canvas

Chinese School, ca. 1805

Dim.: 21.0 × 28.5 cm

D2008

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal

Extraordinary and stunning panoramic view of Macao, stretching from South to North over the emblematic Praia Grande Bay, the setting for Macao's outer harbor, located at the entrance to the Pearl River Delta.<sup>1</sup>

Buildings of European influence extend to the edge of the beach. In the foreground, on the left, stands the Fortress of Our Lady of Bom Parto (1), which was remodeled in 1755, presenting, since then, a wide bastion facing the sea, clearly visible here. The rocky nature of the terrain imposed an irregular layout, with parapets fitted with brick gun emplacements, resting on solid granite foundations.

From this fortress, a steeply inclined wall extended, ending at Penha Hill, where the Fort of Our Lady of Penha de França<sup>2</sup> stands, the point where the artist would have been located.

Following the view, one identifies the Church of Saint Lawrence (2), erected by the Jesuits in honour of their patron saint. Considered one of the oldest churches in Macao, it was initially built of wood, later rebuilt in rammed earth in 1618 and, later still, in stone, between 1801 and 1803, where one can observe the crowning of the towers with urn-shaped torches,<sup>3</sup> destroyed in 1846.

Following the view, we find the Monastery and Church of Saint Augustine (3) (?), founded at the end of the 16th century. The complex was initially built by Spanish Augustinian friars, who abandoned it in 1589, heading for Manila, and it was occupied by friars of Portuguese origin. Two years later, the community moved to Saint Augustine Hill, where the church dedicated to Our Lady of Grace was built.

The Count of La Pérouse<sup>4</sup> mentions that an observatory intended for astronomical and nautical<sup>5</sup> purposes was built in the Augustinian convent. He also refers to a walled tower on the right side of the church; this information is corroborated by contemporary graphic sources that allude to a 'primitive tower', similar in appearance to that of the Church of Mercy, which surrounded the Cathedral.<sup>6</sup> Although there are doubts about its actual existence, it was not possible to find any references to this structure in the consulted bibliography.<sup>7</sup>



In the same direction, where the gaze extends, we identify the Fortress of Our Lady of the Mount (4), also called the Fortress of Saint Paul—perhaps the most important bastion, situated fifty-five meters above sea level, on a hill overlooking the city and in the center of the Macao peninsula, next to the Jesuits College. Beside it appears a facade, which we believe to be the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady (5) or of Saint Paul<sup>8</sup>—built between 1602 and 1640, of which only the facade dating from 1636 remains today—as well as the College of Saint Paul, located next to the church, both of which were destroyed by a fire in 1835.

Together, the old Church of Madre de Deus, the College of St. Paul, and the Mount Fortress were Jesuit constructions, forming a complex that can be identified as the 'acropolis' of Macao.

And further on, the Fortress of Our Lady of Guia (6)—which is located at the highest point in Macao, making it a privileged observation point. The Lighthouse, built in 1865, is not yet visible in this representation.

Finally, we sighted the Monastery and Church of St. Francis (7)—the latter founded in 1579 on a rock. The Church was dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels and, by 1780, it was already in great ruin, both having been destroyed in 1861.

And at its feet would stand the Saint Francis Fortress (8), which by 1748 was already partially destroyed, with a large section

<sup>1</sup> The identification of some monuments benefited from constructive debate and the support of Dr. Alexandre Correia, from the Cultural Directorate–Documentation Center of the Museum of the Oriente Foundation, and Eng. José Afonso Lima, to whom we are grateful.

<sup>2</sup> DIAS, Pedro, *Portuguese Art in the World—Far East*, Lisbon, Público, 2009, pp. 114 and 115.

<sup>3</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, p. 149; <https://hpiip.org/pt/heritage/details/490>

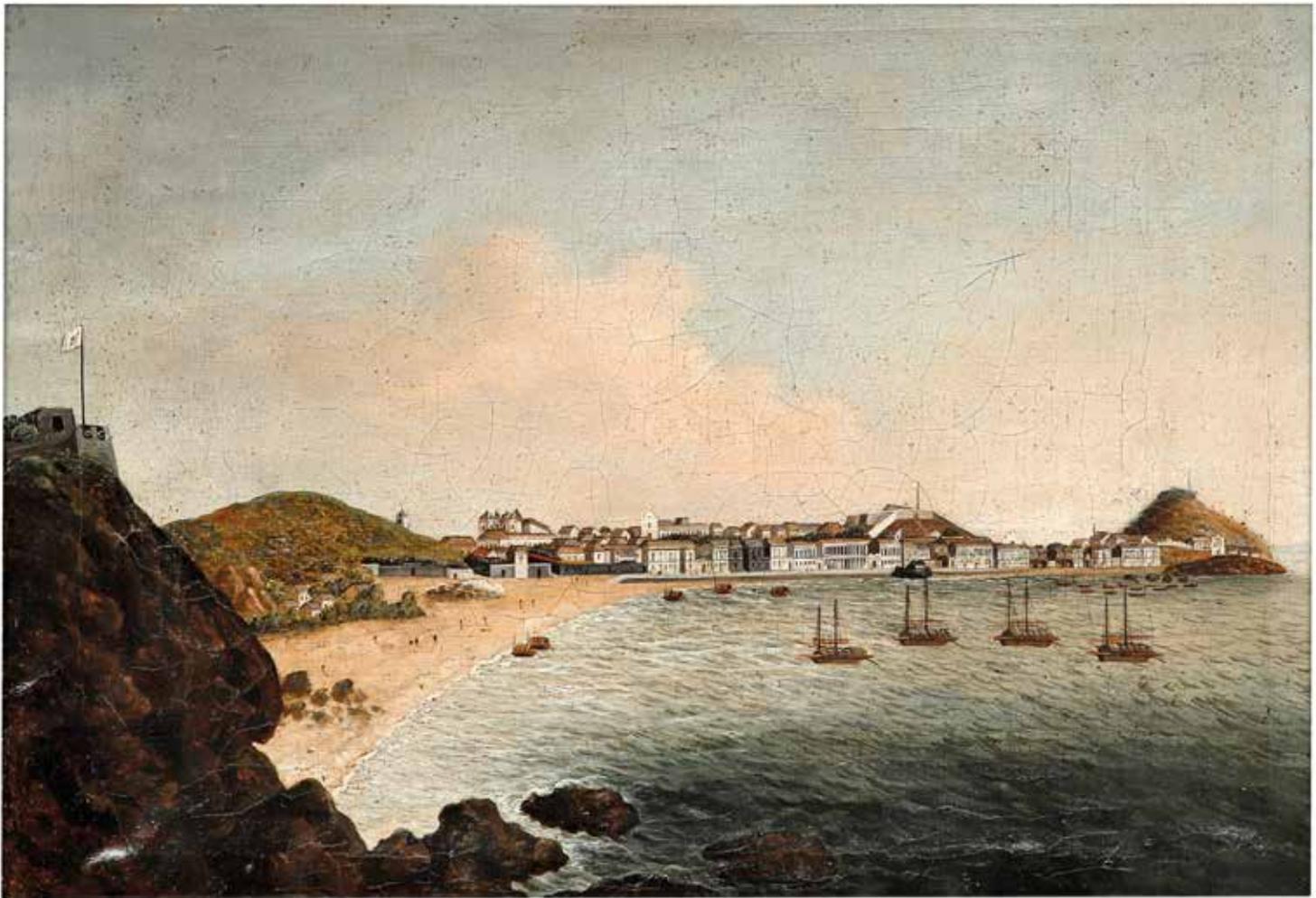
<sup>4</sup> Cf.: Jean François Galaup, Count of La Pérouse, (1741–c. 1788), French navigator, on his naval expedition, landed in Macau in 1786.

<sup>5</sup> DULKEN, H. W., *The world's Explorers or travels and adventures*. London: Ward, Lock and Tyler, n.d. *Apud*.

<sup>6</sup> Some authors place the old Cathedral, dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady and integrated into the complex of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy), which also had a walled tower, in this same location. The Cathedral building, originally built of rammed earth around 1622 and improved in 1742, was then rebuilt in stone c. 1844, with the façade reoriented to the north, flanked by two bell towers and spires in the form of small temples.

<sup>7</sup> BARREIRA, Hugo Daniel Silva, *Op. Cit.*, p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, annexed and private to the Madre de Deus College and known as the Church of Saint Paul.



of the wall knocked down. Only later, around 1864, would it be rebuilt with thick masonry work.

In the Bay, almost level and on watch over this outer harbor of Praia Grande, the Saint Peter's Fort (9) occupies a central position. It was an important Portuguese fortification, built around 1622 and forming, with the São Francisco Fort (8) and the Bom Parto Fortress (1), the main defense system of the South Coast of Macao.

The promenade along the beach is populated by commercial buildings and residences, with compact facades, following the traditional model of the Portuguese manor house, with few continuous balconies and porticoed galleries.<sup>9</sup>

On the beach, some passersby stroll, while five sampans navigate the river, near the breaking waves, with other small boats anchored in the background. Further from the bank, four junks navigate.

The composition functions as a true 'picture postcard', visually affirming Macao's role as a strategic entrepôt in the Canton Trade System.

Embedded in the tradition of Macao's Commercial Paintings, developed with particular intensity in the 18th and early 19th centuries,<sup>10</sup> this work is an excellent example of the international circulation of these images, whether as merchandise, travel souvenirs, or prestige objects. These representations constitute visual documents of great historical value, revealing the economic and social growth of Macao after the restrictions imposed on foreigners in Canton.<sup>11</sup>

An oil painting on canvas, dated around 1805 and belonging to the collection of Carl L. Crossman, is presented as identical to this one, reinforcing the diffusion and standardization of this iconographic model.<sup>12</sup> TP

<sup>9</sup> FERNANDES, José Manuel, *Macao between the 19th and 20th centuries, urbanism and infrastructure from 1820 to 1920*. Cf.: <https://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/30035/2016>

<sup>10</sup> OSSWALD, Cristina, 'Globalizing Macao: On Macao's Trade Paintings (18th–19th centuries)' in *Perspectiva Pictorum/Free Articles*, v. 4, no. 1, Jan–Jun/2025, ISSN: 2965–1085.

<sup>11</sup> The restrictions imposed by Emperor Qianlong (1711–1799) on foreign residence in Canton favored the economic and social growth of Macao, which became a place of residence, leisure and tourism for Western elites.

<sup>12</sup> CROSSMAN, Carl L., *The Decorative Arts of The China Trade—Paintings, furnishings and exotic curiosities*, UK, Antique Collectors' Club, 1991, fig. 1, p. 410.

## 75

## CELEBRATING THE IMPERIAL SCHOOL JINSHIN GRADE OF LUO BINGZHANG, 1832

Oil on canvas

Chinese School, Dao Guang's Reign, Ren Chen year

Dim.: 46.0 × 60.0 cm

D1916

Provenance: Private collection, Spain

Superb painting depicting a daily scene by the Pearl River, in China's Guangdong Province. On the bank, a group of traditional Cantonese architectural structures amongst trees, from which stands out a temple. Towards the front a pair of banners and a stand, undoubtedly a flower stall, surrounded by three Chinese figures attired in typical Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) costume.

Careful observation of this tranquil landscape highlights some elements that assist in its identification. On the foreground, close to the bank and facing a temple, which they frame, two squared plinths supporting two large poles, each flying an imposing banner. The composition is centred on the stone built single floored worship building, of traditional Cantonese architecture referred to as *Lingnan*, which adjoins a two floored structure with balconies, surely a wealthy family abode. The former, a temple destined to worshipping the family ancestors, or Ancestors Hall, is emphasized by the tall, mooring poles. These halls are closely related to Confucian culture and philosophy, being dedicated to ancestors worshipping, or key families' forebears, in the Chinese tradition.

The banners inscription reads 'Imperial Scholar Ren Chen year'. In the Sexagenary cycle, the *Ren Chen* year is 1832, or 1772, in this instance most certainly the former, corresponding to the 12th year of Emperor Dao Guang's reign—in the Qing Dynasty—when the painting was produced. In 1832 there was effectively a court scholar from Canton, named Luo Bingzhang (1793–1867), who reached the highest level that the Imperial examination could

possibly confer a candidate; the grade of *Jinshin*, the reason for its nomination for the prestigious Hanlin Academy.

Luo was subsequently nominated Vice-Governor of Hubei Province (1848), Governor of Hunan (1850–1853) and Viceroy of Sichuan (1860–1867). As such, it is highly likely that this Ancestors' Hall relates to his own family, and that the inscription may reflect a tribute from his relatives, honoured as they were, by the great distinction awarded.

Imperial scholars ranked very highly in China. Of extensive knowledge, particularly in the fields of literature and art, including calligraphy and Confucian studies, they controlled the Imperial administration and the local life up to the early 20th century.

On the dock, next to the banner poles, a straw parasol harbours three men, two possible stall holders of popular characteristics, and a third, perhaps a customer, that stand or sit around a table with foodstuffs. In the river sails a sampan, a Chinese wooden made flowers vessel, doubling as live-in accommodation, which seems to be about to moor. Widespread in Guangdong Province, these vessels, commonly steered by women, were homes as well as livelihoods. Completing the scene, some small single floored structures, one wooden and thatched standing out from the right, in which a person seems to be working.

China trade paintings are pictorial compositions of European influence depicting Canton's port scenes, its trading factories, and daily life, of which this depiction is a major example.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A special thanks to Martyn Gregory: 3 Bury Street, St James's, London. SW1Y 6AB, to Terri Cheung (Hong Kong Museum of Art), and to Jorge Santos Alves, for the precious input regarding this painting.



## 76

## THE GUANGZHOU DOCK—CANTON CHINESE PAINTING

Oil on canvas

Chinese School; 19th century

Dim.: 45.6 cm × 60.0 cm

D1865

*Provenance: Private collection, Spain*

This mid-19th century oil on canvas, possibly painted by the same Chinese artist that produced the previously described ‘Macao Tanka women’ scene, portrays a daily life view of Canton, of abundant formal and compositional details.

On the left foreground a building in semidarkness that defines the painting’s light. In the shade, close to the wall, a parasol, a food selling stall and four men, contrasting with the two figures that seem to stroll and chat on the dock. Both groups share the colour red, in the watermelons and in a package, contributing for reenforcing the scene’s main plan. Further afield the composition is denser, and rich in elements, as emphasized by the boats, the stone bridge, and the moving people.

On the opposite bank, numerous anchored boats, and various buildings, amongst which the two treetops that introduce nature. The sky is affirmed by its light blue clarity and by the almost static clouds.

This detail, almost a snapshot of the Guangzhou dock, formerly Canton, depicts the canal that penetrated through the city flat suburbs, the only one in this coastal city, and where it was possible to dock.

In the shade, three sellers and a possible fisherman seem to converse by a stall, possibly selling watermelon slices, with two baskets of identical fruits underneath. They are shoeless and humbly dressed, one simply wearing short trousers. The two passers-by standing out from the centre of the composition seem to chat unworriedly, their higher status clearly identified by the full costume and footwear, as well as by their forehead tonsure and long plait. This type of hair styling<sup>1</sup>, customary in the Qing dynasty (ca. 1644–1912), symbolized Chinese Han social control and submission to Manchu authority.<sup>2</sup>

While three sampan sail in the river, it is possible to discern numerous others anchored on the opposite bank, this dock being destined to trading from small Chinese vessels. From amongst those, stands out a large Mandarin’s boat, who controlled trading,

with its boatmen on deck. No foreign vessels are present in the scene as they could not sail into Canton, being forced to anchor at Whampoa, further down the river. From that point upriver the Europeans had to be taken to the city on the sampan.

Visible behind the port, the city’s residential neighbourhood, where most buildings were also destined to commercial activities.

The riverbanks are joined by a bridge crossed by merchants, boatmen and passers-by. On it, two people enjoy the sights seated on the wooden barriers, a labourer carries a bundle of withe and seated on a stool, a trader waits for a sale.

China Trade views are characterized by maritime scenes, landscapes, and everyday depictions as well as by portraits. From the late 18th century onwards, cultural, and artistic exchanges between Chinese and Europeans resulted in a hybrid style of evident mastery and refinement. Most paintings were produced in watercolor and gouache on paper and defined by their colour diversity, as if assuming the role of early postcards. These works reached the peak of their popularity in the mid-19th century, on account of the Aesthetic Orientalism tendencies, being generally purchased by European travellers on their return home. Today they are important testimonies of one, mostly lost, China. ↗ SR & AAL<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://thechinaproject.com/2021/07/21/the-manchu-queue-one-hairstyle-to-rule-them-all/>

<sup>2</sup> The largest arm of the Tungusic peoples distributed throughout China, they correspond to the fourth largest ethnic group in the country.

<sup>3</sup> A special thanks to Martyn Gregory for his valuable cooperation in this research.



## CHINESE PAINTED WALLPAPERS

From the early 16th century onwards, Portugal was a pioneer in the development of a Chinese influenced fashion for the decorating of European interiors, a tendency reinforced from 1555–1557 when the Portuguese settle in Macao, and relations with China become more direct and continuous.

The 1500s wealthy elites taste became defined by this 'oriental fashion' propagated from Lisbon, a main 16th and early-17th century European trading centre, with stalls and shops specializing in the sale of all types of exotic goods.

The Orient was thus identified by this wide variety of fashionable objects, the verb 'chinesar' appearing in the Portuguese language to define the acquisition of Chinese objects or later, of their imitations.<sup>1</sup> This 'Chinese taste' embraces amongst others, the acquisition of books, porcelain wares, furniture, silks, paintings, lacquerware, ivories and also painted wallpapers.<sup>2</sup> This almost obsessive craving will continue to grow more intensively throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.

In the 1700s, England, Holland, France and other European countries will establish trading factories in Canton. Macao, a Portuguese colony and main European outpost in China, will suddenly become the mandatory stopover for all foreigners travelling to that port city. This new, thriving trade would eventually promote the dissemination of Chinese art throughout the west as well as a strong European influence on the local artistic production particularly from the mid-18th century onwards. In this propitious environment, European commissions of Chinese goods increased to such an extent, that local artisans produced almost exclusively to supply the western market.

Of engraved repetitive patterns printed from a wooden matrix known as *dominoté*,<sup>3</sup> ornamented wallpapers appear in 15th century France, despite their main consumers being the English who favoured it in their homes decoration.

The existence of decorative Chinese papers is referred in Marco Polo's 'The Travels', published in 1298,<sup>4</sup> but the first such hand painted papers will not arrive in Europe until the 16th century, brought by Portuguese merchants.<sup>5</sup>

With the exotic obsession growing exponentially up to the 18th century, these artworks on paper become much admired for their fantasized imagery and iconographic relevance—illustrating indigenous nature and Chinese daily life, often related to main European imports such as porcelain making, tea picking and rice harvesting—for being more refined and sophisticated than European papers, and above all for being hand painted.

An important note on these papers has survived in the Memoirs of Mathieu de Gennes, a French serviceman and explorer in the ship 'Comte de Toulouse' (ca. 1733). De Gennes refers the existence of approximately 50 different types of decorative wallpapers, emphasizing that those from Nanking were the more colourful and admired—and that both screens and wallpapers, could be purchased in Canton without previous order.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BARRETO, Luís Filipe, 'Europas-China: Passado e Presente. Uma breve reflexão', in *Revista Militar*, janeiro de 2017, <https://www.revista-militar.pt/artigo/1208>

<sup>2</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> POMERANTZ, Carole Thibaut, *Wallpaper—A History of Style and Trends*, Paris, Flammarion, 2009, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> '...et lorsqu'on est arrivé au lieu où le corps doit être brûlé, ils désignent et peignent sur des feuilles de papier diverses figures d'hommes et de femmes, et même de plusieurs pièces de monnaie' Cf. [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le\\_Devisement\\_du\\_monde\\_\(fran%C3%A7ais\\_moderne\)/Livre\\_1/Chapitre\\_45](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_Devisement_du_monde_(fran%C3%A7ais_moderne)/Livre_1/Chapitre_45)

<sup>5</sup> CASTELLUCCIO, Stéphane, *De la cale au paravent—Importation, commerce et usages des papiers chinois au XVIIIe siècle*, Montreuil, Editions Gourcuff Gradenigo, 2018, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> IDEM, *ibidem*, p. 8.

In Portugal, technical and documental research on this art form requires more thorough investigation.<sup>7</sup> According to Vitor Serrão ‘references to Chinese paintings on paper abound in documental records as something that conquers the Portuguese taste. In the *post-mortem* inventory of D. Duarte, Marquis of Flechilla e Malagon and a brother of D. Teosósio II, there are mentions, amongst portraits and religious paintings, to paintings on Chinese papers and other, unspecified Chinese paintings’.<sup>8</sup>

In the estate inventory for Alexandre Metelo de Sousa e Menezes (1687–1766), King D. João V (r. 1706–1750) envoy to Emperor Yongzheng’s court in 1725, there is a reference to ‘Seven Chinese paper panels, of which two narrower and red valued at one thousand and four hundred reis’. Another citation, important for its detailed iconographic description, is to be found in António de Pina Manique’s inventory (1796):<sup>9</sup> ‘Eight China panels with figures purple and gilt frames all valued at eight thousand reis; Three China paper panels painted with flowers and birds gilt and green painted frames all valued at one thousand and eight hundred reis; Five China panels painted with figures on paper gilt and purple painted frames valued all at three thousand two hundred reis’.<sup>10</sup>

As a specific export product the ‘Chinese paper’—referred to as ‘Indian paper’—reflects inspiration by and adaptation to western artistic conventions, despite complying with Chinese aesthetic models of ungraceful perspectives and crude human figures. The appreciation of European painting becomes conspicuous in China, particularly during Emperor Qianlong’s reign (1736–1795), who allowed drawings and engravings, taken by catholic missionaries, to be used as models to court painters. The Jesuit priest Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), who arrived in Macao in 1715, served under this emperor for three decades, developing a style that fuses European and Chinese traditions.

The papers were transported as sheets to be adapted to the intended surface. These sheets were painted in different motifs which, when joined and applied to the wall would form a decorative composition. Some were framed as individual panels, often with a patterned border. Their dimensions varied between 78 and 81 cm width and 145 to 175 cm length, occasionally reaching 194 cm. The sheets were rolled, averaging 25 to 30 per roll, and packed in carrying cases.<sup>11</sup>

The abbot Guillaume T. Raynal (1713–1796)<sup>12</sup> mentions two types of Chinese paper: one made from fine cotton fibres and mainly used for writing and another made from bamboo, mulberry or Asian elm bark, or from a coarser cotton, specifically for this decorative purpose. Inner bark fibres were rotten by immersion in muddy water and subsequently immersed in lime and bleached in the sun. They were then reduced to a macerated and fluid paste that was dried in sunlight. According to Jean Baptiste du Halde

<sup>7</sup> GOMES, Ana C. Costa e PINA, Isabel Murta, *Papéis de parede da China em Casas Senhoriais Portuguesas*, in MENDONÇA, Isabel M. G.; CARITA, Helder; MALTA, Marize, *A Casa Senhorial em Lisboa e no Rio de Janeiro: Anatomia dos Interiores*, Lisbon, Instituto de História da Arte (IHA)—Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Rio de Janeiro, Escola de Belas Artes—Universidade do Rio de Janeiro, 2014; Sofia Pessanha *et al.* *Study of a XVIII century hand-painted Chinese wallpaper by multi-analytical non-destructive techniques*.

<sup>8</sup> SERRÃO, Vitor, *Entre a China e Portugal: temas e outros fenómenos de miscigenação artística, um programa necessário de estudos*, in BARRETO, Luís Filipe e SERRÃO, Vitor (coord.), *Património Cultural Chinês em Portugal*, (Actas do Colóquio Internacional) p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, Lisbon/Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Enciclopédia Lda., s.d., vol. XXI, p. 691; APUD, Ana C. Costa Gomes e PINA, Isabel Murta, *Op. cit.*, pp. 406 e 418. Cf.: <http://acasasenhorial.org/acs/index.php/en/fontes-documentais-en/inventarios-en/357-antonio-joaquim-de-pina-manique-1796-2>

<sup>10</sup> Cf: Orfanológicos, Letra A, Maço 120, no. 1: *Autos do inventário dos bens que ficaram por falecimento do desembargador António Joaquim de Pina Manique continuado com a viúva sua mulher, D. Antónia Claudia Rosa da Costa, 1796*. (Palaeographic transcription by OLIVEIRA, Lina Maria Marrafa de, for: *A Casa Senhorial em Lisboa e no Rio de Janeiro, Séculos XVII, XVIII e XIX*, pp. 30 e 31).

<sup>11</sup> CASTELLUCCIO, Stephane, *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> Jesuit priest author of *Uma História filosófica e política dos assentamentos e do comércio dos europeus nas Índias Orientais e Ocidentais*, published 1770. <https://www.wdl.org/pt/>

(1674–1743),<sup>13</sup> paper makers would dip the sheets in alum water, a solution that acts as an adhesive and gives the paper some sheen.<sup>14</sup> Traditionally each sheet is formed by three sections glued by paper starch.

Lazare Duvaux (1703–1758), an important Paris ‘marchant mercier’ records in his journal the various topics of the Chinese papers he traded between 1748 and 1758,<sup>15</sup> a particularly important document for understanding the ornamental motifs of the period. Duvaux lists four decorative models: ‘birds and flowers’; ‘figurative’; ‘ornamental motifs’ and with ‘gold or silver backgrounds’.

The first—of birds and flowers—are the more commonly referred. The patterns include trees and flowering plants, rock outcrops, insects, etc., in a suggestion of idyllic gardens.<sup>16</sup>

In the figurative type there are male and female figures, sometimes interspersed with architectural structures or taking part in various activities—from daily and commemorative to agricultural, tea picking, silk weaving or porcelain making.

Of the two types, very rare in the European market, no examples are known in Portugal.

The profitable, centuries’ old commercial exchange between China and Portugal, mainly via the Indian Route with its Macao branch, did undoubtedly facilitate the importing of large quantities of Chinese products. In spite of this fact only four sets of Chinese wallpapers are known in Portugal, of which three still in situ; two of ‘birds and flowers’ at Quinta da Francelha de Cima and at Casa da Ínsua, and a third, ‘figurative’, at the Museu de Lamego, the former Bishops of Lamego residence. The fourth set, that once decorated the Palace of Maiorca, includes ‘figurative’ examples and also bucolic landscapes with birds and flowers.

This small number of surviving papers is most certainly related to their intrinsic fragility and vulnerability, associated to the country’s weather patterns and to deficient conservation and care practices.

#### THE CHINESE PAPERS FROM THE PALACE OF MAIORCA

These ‘figurative’ paintings on wallpaper originally from the Palace of Maiorca, belong to a large set of approximately 30 now in the São Roque collection. Some of these papers portray figures in landscapes or amongst architectural structures, others compositions with birds and flowers. Dating from the fourth quarter of the 18th century they are defined by their uniform and smooth sheets, made from hemp or bamboo fibers, sometimes laminated with starch. Sizes vary approximately between 60.0 × 40.0 cm and 180.0 × 90.0 cm.

They once lined the Chinese Room as well as other spaces in the house—as recorded in previous inventories and intervention reports—but also other rooms in unidentified family properties. The

<sup>13</sup> CASTELLUCCIO, Stéphane, *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> CASTELLUCCIO, Stéphane, *Op. cit.*, p.8. Cf.: *Papier de la Chine* in Encyclopédie ou Cictionnaire raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers, Vol 11, Neufchastel, Samuel Faulche & Compagnie, 1765, p. 851–852.

<sup>15</sup> CASTELLUCCIO, Stéphane, *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Cf.: CLIFFORD, Helen, *Chinese wallpaper: From Canton to country house*, In Finn M. & Smith K. (Eds.), *East India Company at Home, 1757–1857*, London: UCL Press, pp. 39–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt21c4tfn.9>

Viscounts of Maiorca descended from the Antanhol 'Cunhas', powerful lords of Tábua that, in 1386 founded a lineage in Antanhol de Cavaleiros, near Coimbra where they built their family seat. This house destroyed by fire in the 17th century, they move to a Palace in Maiorca, which in turn would be looted in 1810, by General Massena French armies.<sup>17</sup>

Refurbished and altered through the years the palace is essentially a second-half of the 18th century structure, with an armored pediment framing a divided armorial shield for Cunha and Melo, topped by a coronet.

In the main wing, stand out the entrance hall, known as the Salon, the State Hall and the Paper Room, whose walls were, until a few years ago, lined with remarkable 'birds and flowers' Chinese wallpapers above a tiled wainscoting. This East facing wing is connected to the remaining house by a corridor whose walls were also decorated in the same motifs, mixed with figurative elements that endowed this space of harmonious and exuberant exoticism.<sup>18</sup> Extensive and rare, this set of decorative papers entered the palace when these rooms were remodeled in the last quarter of the 18th century. ➤ TP<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> On the occasion of the Bussaco Battle: Cf.: SAMPAIO, José de Mancelos, *Os Morgados de Antanhol de Cavaleiros*, in *Arqueologia e História*, Vol. 7/8, Associação dos Arqueólogos Portugueses, Lisboa 1930, pp. 142 e 143.

<sup>18</sup> These decorative sets ornamenting the paper Room and the Corridor were analysed in 2009 by the Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva Conservation and Restoration Laboratory, according to report kindly volunteered by Dr. Conceição do Amaral.

<sup>19</sup> I wish to thank Sasha Assis Lima for all her assistance in writing this essay.

## 77

## SCENE OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN A SÌHÉYUÀN

Gouache on paper

China (Canton?); 18th century

Dim.: 95.0 × 143.5 cm

D1288

Provenance: Viscounts of Maiorca collection

Gouache on paper landscape, depicting a daily scene within a residential setting of a courtyard surrounded by buildings and a garden. The colour palette is similar to the previously described work, the dense green of the trees standing out from the sand coloured background. The architectural elements are defined by black and brown shades from which stand out red, green and salmon ornamentations. The figures are attired in blue, light green, red and pink with black hats.

The perspective is almost strict, with implied horizon line separating sky from earth. This line is marked by the colour and outline of the various elements, such as the three canopies, the large rocky mountain and the buildings roofs.

In the background three imposing, subtly blue coloured mountains, foretell a building cluster of small roomed homes that illustrate the link between the intuitive method and the strict perspective rules of European landscape painting.

The scene seems to represent part of a *sìhéyuàn* 四合院—a mansion or family home with a courtyard, around which the various buildings are organized. The residential complex, encircled by a marble balustrade includes three structures. Inside the tall main house without an outer wall, it is possible to see two chairs. Next to it, a lower structure is identified by a red paper sign above the door inscribed (福—*Fu*),<sup>1</sup> blessing and well-wishing all the residents. At the door, a woman holding a transparent fan is depicted in a

*Cheongsam*, a two piece Manchu costume of long sleeved pink tunic and high straight collar and decorative fastenings, worn under a blue jacket of side openings.

Towards the back of the composition a walled garden with circular or 'Moon' gate, a traditional architectural detail in nobler and wealthier homes. This type of access functions as a barrier in the passage into a microcosm that recreates ideal nature propitious to contemplation, in a magic setting combining landscape, art and spirituality. Within the garden a two storey building with bamboo trellis and, on the upper floor, a shuttered window that acts as a viewpoint.

The central scene unrolls in the large courtyard where two mandarins, or high ranking officials of long braids and Manchu attire, converse at a table. One seems to be sipping tea while the other smokes an opium pipe. Close by, an elegant female figure wearing a *Cheongsam* and carrying a child, stands out in her lotus shoes.<sup>2</sup>

On the path leading to the main house two servants carrying trays, one with tea cups, most certainly for the high ranking officials. They are looked at by a scholar carrying a feather fan and holding a child by the hand.

A crane, a symbol of longevity and wisdom highly relevant in Chinese culture, often embroidered on imperial mandarin's attire, walks peacefully across the scene. ➤ TP

<sup>1</sup> These good omen signs are normally displayed around Chinese New Year, with well-wishing messages for the year to come.

<sup>2</sup> Lotus shoes were linked to high social status—the tradition required that girl's feet were bandaged from birth, so that they would not grow beyond 10 cm, the ideal size to ensure that a good marriage was found. It is said that this practice originated amongst the court dancers at the onset of the Song Dynasty (960–1279).



## 78

## RIVER LANDSCAPE CELEBRATING CHINESE NEW YEAR

Gouache on paper

China (Canton?); 18th century

Dim.: 96.0 × 145.0 cm

D1289

Provenance: Viscounts of Maiorca collection

Of identical dating to the previous works this gouache on paper painting depicts a riverscape with a dock and various buildings.

The composition is defined by an oblique line separating land and the water course, orientated from the dock on the right to the snow covered mountain range on the left.

Of identical colour palette to the other paintings, this work is defined by a sand coloured background, albeit with more intense use of saturated colours in detriment of white. The late afternoon light, opposed to the water flow, reinforces the colour shine.

A staircase leads to the dock and the courtyard with three buildings and various male figures. The wooden pavilion built on the bank follows the model of indigenous residential structures (*Diao jiao lou*) built on stilts, typical of ancient estuarine villages.

On the open water side, two officials seem to control the river traffic and trade, with the purpose of collecting due taxes that will fill the emperor's coffers. On the side wall a double trellis, under a red sign inscribed 想买 *Xiang mai*, welcoming visitors and wishing them luck.

Towards the back of the yard two white painted brick buildings on a socle. The black on red inscriptions around the door frames allow for an accurate identification of the period depicted — Chinese New Year.

On the building towards the background the inscription 天子万年 (*Tian Zi Wan Nian*), wishes the Emperor a long life. Although we haven't been able to identify the remaining, either because they are incomplete or schematic, it is viable to assume that they all carry well wishes for the New Year ahead.

On the main house front, above a window with iron bars decorated with fabric banners, a sign identifies it as a pawn shop: 當 (*Dang ou Dian Dang*).<sup>1</sup> On the side wall a closed window with trellis shutters on paper or silk.

Close to the river wall two dignitaries, probably state officials, seem to chat under a large tree with roots suspended over the water, a detail that suggests a profound respect by the nature that subjugates the urban development. They both wear Chang pao and one holds an opium pipe; next to them an imperial guard, attired in a short jacket (*Magua*) over a long tunic with 'horse hoof' cuffs. Towards a front door two servants clean the courtyard floor.

Anchored close to the customs building, two sampan of sliding, overlapping braided bamboo awnings<sup>2</sup> that allow for ease of loading and unloading.

Further along, by the water edge, a ceremonial gate topped by a sign that reads *San Kui Fang* identifies the hamlet beyond and defines its urban boundaries.

At the foot of the mountain a large pagoda and on the peak a great tower, probably a campanile. In the middle of the river a sampan with full blown sail carries three officials a sailor and some produce.

The landscape is completed by a snow covered mountain range compatible with the season depicted. As a final note we mention that in this faraway land most villages were built by the foot of mountains close to streams, as it was believed that this location would bring luck and prosperity, as it is illustrated by this as well as the other paintings described.

## NOTES

By their quality and rarity, this group of paintings on paper from the Viscounts of Maiorca collection, assumes great importance in Portugal. Their technical and artistic analyses confirms that they were produced in the same workshop during the last third of the 18th century.

The colour palette, the drawing character, the geometric architecture, the nature elements — trees with green and white

<sup>1</sup> The origin of pawn shops goes as far back as the 5th century although they reached their peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Spreading all over the empire it is estimated that by the mid-17th century there were between 600 and 700 in Peking alone. Cf.: <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/diandang.html>; FU, Hong, TURVEY, Calum G., 'Pawn Shops (*Dian Dang*)' in *The Evolution of Agricultural Credit during China's Republican Era, 1912–1494*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup> Sampan (三板) is a Chinese type of small, flat bottomed boat of two lateral boards. It can be rowed or sailed with one or more masts. Mainly used for transportation it is used essentially close to the coast or in rivers. They are made in a variety of specifications depending on their purpose: residential, traditional fishing, passenger or agricultural produce carrying. Cf.: <https://www.britannica.com/technology/sampan>



traced canopies, suggesting the wind blowing and the light on the foliage, as well as the curved lines of the river banks and of the shadowed mountains, are common to all.

In all the elements is evoked the simplified ancestral calligraphic taste, transmitting the same *qi* or vital force, albeit in an innovative manner, associated to subtle western influences both in perspective and in detail.

Until recently this type of interior architecture ornamentation was unknown in China, although the use of auspicious symbols enliven with texture and colour was common practice. Recently, after the restoration of the *tromp l'oeil* paintings on paper or silk, from the walls and ceiling of the Qianlong emperor's secret garden (*Juanqinzhai*) the parallel between those and the export productions became clear.

The visual beauty and the technical subtlety of this type of work associated to the attraction of this faraway culture, were most certainly responsible for the eccentric and exotic 'fever' and consequent diffusion in the West.

We must thank Dr. Sasha Assis Lima for her valuable cooperation in this research and her guidance and direction in relation to the link between all the characters depicted and the ancestral tale 'Dream of the Red Chamber'. ♣ TP

# Japan

## LACQUERWARE AND NAMBAN ART

The Portuguese or *namban-jin* (Southern Barbarians as the Japanese called them) were the first Europeans to reach the Japanese archipelago. The two countries established an intense cultural and artistic relationship between 1543 and 1639, until the expulsion of the Portuguese. Namban art was thus born, a style which, in the strict aesthetic level, reflects the contacts between these two peoples and the resulting artistic exchange, an artform where the Southern Barbarians are often portrayed as theme and motif.

Trade and Christianity are inextricably linked. The commissioning of luxurious objects by Europeans and the adherence of Japanese society to Christianity, which gave rise more specifically to *kirishitan* (Christian) art—an extension of Namban art itself—, contributed to the prosperity achieved by the so-called ‘Japan Run’.

It was during the Momoyama period (1573–1603), that the Jesuits had one of their greatest successes in Japan. Skilfully, they began to convert the elites: they knew that by convincing the *daimyos* (warlords and rich landowners) to embrace Christianity, all of their subjects would soon follow. To reach greater acceptance, the Jesuits strive to adapt the needs of the Christian cult to Japanese traditions, a flexibility that contributed fruitfully to the further strengthening of the connections between the two peoples.

The symbiosis between the objects brought by the Portuguese, some very different from the ones used in Japanese households, and in reverse, the Japanese objects, shapes and materials, such as lacquerware and their sophisticated decorations, which the Portuguese admired, gave rise to very particular artworks, which stem from an artisanal production circumscribed to the Japanese archipelago.

The millenary art of Japanese painted and lacquered screens would soon adopt the representation of the *namban-jin*, while Japanese-style painting became deeply influenced by the modes and representation as seen from European prints. Liturgical implements and devotional statuettes—such as Japanese-Portuguese (in the so-called ‘Nippo-Portuguese’ style) carved ivory figurines of Christ such as the one discussed here—include caskets, chests, the well-known lecterns and pyxes, European in design and Japanese in decoration, coated in lacquer and featuring Japanese decorative schemes, with some featuring the emblem of the religious orders which commissioned them, all highlight the artistic and cultural links between these two cultures.

## INRŌ

The *kimono* is the quintessential traditional Japanese dress. This piece of clothing, which means *ki*—‘to dress’ and *mono*—‘thing’, lacked any pockets. The need to transport personal items was solved through boxes or bags, called *sagemono* which suspended from the *obi*, a waist sash or band.

Several types of *sagemono* were developed, considering the specific objects or materials they contained. The *inrō*, used only by men, emerged at the end of the sixteenth century and is one such type of *sagemono*. Initially created to store a stamp and its ink pad, they were also used for the transportation of therapeutic herbs.

They consist of small overlapping compartments which fit together perfectly, creating a homogeneous whole and are held together by a textile cord or *himo* of which ends are joined by a bead or *ojime* that allows the various compartments to be kept tightly closed.

A *netsuke*, which functions as a toggle and is fitted with a hole (*himotoshi*) where the ends of the cord are joined, allowing it to be suspended from the *obi*, the waist sash which fastens the kimono.

The *inrō* quickly became an accessory for highlighting social rank, which lead patrons to commission them from the most creative and ingenious craftsmen, as to obtain the most precious and unique *inrō*, both in terms of materials, types, decoration and iconography. Usually coated with lacquer, they become more precious with gold and mother-of-pearl decoration. Regardless of their excessive price, the wealthiest aristocrats would have several *inrō*, chosen according to the time of year and the occasion.

*Netsuke*, not unlike the *ojime* and the *inrō*, evolved over time. From their decoration, we may recognize some important aspects of Japanese daily-life, which adds a significant documentary and historical value to them. The production of *inrō* and *netsuke* was enormous during the Edo period (1615–1868) and, with the westernization of clothing during the twentieth century, became attractive objects to the most attentive collectors, reaching high prices in the art market. ✨ TP



Map of Japan and Korea, L. Teixeira, 1595

## 79

## A NAMBAN INRŌ

Japanese cedar, lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold

Japan; Momoyama period (1573–1603)

Dim.: 9.5 × 6.0 × 3.0 cm

F965

Provenance: Private Collection, Spain

Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtaines Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux, France, 2019 (cat. p. 54); 'Des Samourais aux Mangas, Missions Étrangères de Paris', Paris 2024 (cat. no. 21)



Rare Namban *inrō* in lacquered wood. The box, prismatic in shape and oval in section, comprises four overlapping compartments or *dan* that fit together, two of them divided in two, closes with a similarly-shaped lid.

Both the inside and outside of the *inrō* is coated with dark brown to black lacquer, a colour that was obtained by adding coal powder or iron pigment to the *urushi*—the purified sap of the tree *Rhus vernicifera*. On this black ground, the master craftsman applied the *maki-e* with sprinkled gold forming the design, further enriched by the application of mother-of-pearl tesserae or *raden*, of bluish-green tint known as *aogai*.

As with other Namban objects, in this case intended solely for domestic consumption and mirroring the allure for the European newcomers, known as the 'Barbarians of the South', or *namban-jin*, this precious and rare *inrō* show us the somewhat caricatural and stereotypical depiction of the Portuguese in their typical costume towards the end of the sixteenth-century: doublets with their ruff collars, wide pantaloons known as *bombachas*, capes (*ferragoulos*) and brim hats of various types.

On one side of the *inrō* we may see three figures, most likely clergymen, one of which with his head bowed and hidden by his hat; on the other side there are two figures, probably laymen, engaging in conversation.

The present piece is not only rare but of great iconographic interest, of which we know only two matching examples, one from the collection of the Musée National des Arts Asiatiques—Guimet, in Paris. ➤ TP



## 80

**A NAMBAN KAGAMIBUTA**

Cryptomeria japonica (?), lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold  
Japan; 18th–19th century (?)

Dim.: 4.0 × 4.0 × 2.0 cm

F983

Provenance: *Eliador Nordskog collection; USA, Sydney Moss, England*

Exhibited: *'Des Samourais aux Mangas, Missions Étrangères de Paris', Paris 2024 (cat. no. 22)*

Published: *'Japanese Lacquer from South California collections', 1991, p. 27; 'The Elly Nordskog collection', 2010, p. 364–365*



Complementing the previous *inrō*, we now have a remarkably rare and important *Namban netsuke*.

Considering its shape, we may identify it as a *kagamibuta*. Literally ‘mirror cover’, it is reminiscent of a traditional round-shaped *manju* or sweet, since its upper part resembles a mirror.

Made from lacquered wood, the upper ‘mirror’ of this *kagamibuta* depicts a Portuguese or a Daimyo. Carved in low-relief, this figure is drawn in *maki-e*, with sprinkled silver powder for the skin and gold powder for the garments. On his neck, a large crucifix emerges in *aogai*, mother-of-pearl.

Due to its dimensions and relevance, the depicted crucifix might correspond to a Namban reliquary cross—as the one illustrated in our catalog (F1281, p. 260). These were exclusively worn by daimyos and high dignitaries of the church.

The older physical appearance of the masculine figure, his pose, and, above all, the crucifix hanging from his neck suggests that this is a Christian Portuguese, or a Daimyo converted to Christianity, echoing the so-called ‘Christian century of Japan’.

The extremely high level of the lacquer’s technical execution contributes to the rarity and uniqueness of this piece. ➤ TP

81

### A NAMBAN BOX WITH THREE PORTUGUESE FIGURES

Lacquer, polychromy and gold

Japan, Edo period; ca. 1860 (?)

Dim.: 7,5 × 6,5 × 6,5 cm

F1328

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



A rare, lacquered, polychrome, and gilt cylindrical shaped Namban box. Profusely decorated, it features three Portuguese figures in western attire characteristic of the 16th century, from which stand out the *galligaskins* (very loose trousers) and the tall hats. A river, together with cherry blossoms (*Sakura*), both popular motifs towards the end of the Edo Period and overtly used on *Kosode*,<sup>1</sup> supplement the container ornamental composition.

On the cover surface, a group of four adjacent squares, one enclosing a Cross of Christ, and the others what might correspond to a local interpretation of a possibly Portuguese geometrized armorial shield, framed by a border of stylized cherry blossoms.

Even though some of these decorative elements allude to the 16th century period, when the Portuguese had just landed in Japan, others became popular in the 1860s, as expressions of

the collective memories of Japanese artisans' experiences during the *Sakoku*,<sup>2</sup> in a marked fusion between western and eastern art.

The Edo Period was defined by the circulation of lacquer work's artistic techniques through the Japanese regions that did not carry such tradition. The Edo Shogunate capital city, modern day Tokyo, would eventually accommodate the Daimyo urban homes, in the areas surrounding the castle, and consequently the various lacquer artisans' workshops that would turn this city into the evident rival of Kyoto, the Imperial capital. ↪ BMS

<sup>1</sup> Cf. BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2001, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> The *Sakoku*, or the 'chained country' policy, was a measure imposed by The Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604–1651), that closed the Japanese territory to the outside world, banishing all Christians and westerners. Only the Dutch were allowed to remain, although restricted to their trading outpost at the Island of Dejima off the coast of Nagasaki.

## 82

## A RAKU SAKE BOTTLE DISPLAYING TWO DRUNK PORTUGUESE

Red raku ware, glazed stoneware

Japan, Kyoto; Edo period (1603–1868)

Dim.: 17.0 × 20.0 × 20.0 cm

Hakogaki: attr. to Nonko by Gengensai (1810–1877), Master of Urasenke tea school

F1353

Provenance: Saiuchi Kyushiro, Japan

Exhibited: 'Winds From Afar: Europe through the Eyes of Edo-period Kyoto', The Museum of Kyoto, March and Tobacco & Salt Museum, Tokyo, May 2000



This sake bottle, or rather, this display bottle (*kazarimono*) not destined for practical use, is defined by its globular shaped body, resembling a pomegranate (*zakuro*), and by the two male figures, possibly drunken 'Southern barbarians', or *namban-jin*, holding firmly onto it.<sup>1</sup>

Hand moulded with expressive naturalism, it is made from iron-rich red stoneware (*juraku*) clay, coated in glossy, transparent lead glaze, and low-fired in an indoor kiln (*uchigama*). Similarly to other early-seventeenth century *raku* pieces, which were removed from the kiln while still glowing hot and allowed to cool in the open air, this bottle features glossy lead glazing and high-quality finishing. It was most probably designed for displaying in an alcove, its iconography ensuring its importance as a conversation piece.

Presented in a double box, the protective inner case in which it is stored features an inscription in its cover that reads:

'Europeans holding onto the hot water [or liquid] bottle, this design made by Nonko. [signed:] Gengensai'. Gengensai Seichu Soshitsu (1810–1877) was the eleventh-generation master of the Urasenke tea school, who authenticated other works by Nonko. Another authentication note (*hakogaki*) inscribed to the base of the same protective case, informs: 'Acquired this piece in the eleventh month, Meiji 29 [1896], representative, Rikimaru [probably the shop's name]'. Another *hakogaki*, written on the inner case cover, informs: 'Europeans holding onto a hot water [or liquid] bottle, an alcove display item'.

Gengensai's most important caption however, states that the potter responsible for the making of this sake bottle was Nonko, name by which Raku Donyu, or Kichizaemon III (1599–1656), was known in his lifetime. Nonko was the third-generation *raku* master from the Raku family. Grandson of Chojiro, the founder of the

<sup>1</sup> Published in: TATSURO, Akai (ed.), *Winds from Afar. Europe through the Eyes of Edo-period Kyoto* (cat.), Kyoto, 2000, p. 44, cat. 2.17 (catalogue entry by Yasumasa Oka).





Raku family and kiln, Nonko is considered the most innovative *raku* potter, having introduced new styles into these wares.<sup>2</sup>

He is renowned for the use of white or transparent glazes over black glazes, and for applying thick layers of glossy glazes. According to an almost hagiographic official version, the production of the earliest *raku* wares is closely interlinked with tea drinking, and with the 16th century development of the *wabi-cha* tradition of the tea ceremony (*chanoyu*), by Sen no Rikyu (1522–1591). This Japanese tea master was involved in the building of Kyoto's Jurakudai Palace (1586), under the command of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), the feudal warlord regarded as Japan's second 'Great Unifier'.

According to traditional tales, discredited by research and archaeological evidence, Rikyu, who served as the palace's tea master, had the foreigner tile-maker Chojiro producing handcrafted tea bowls. These cutting-edge bowls, basic and rather rustic, became known as *ima-yaki*, or 'contemporary wares', or as *juraku-yaki*, from the local red clay (*juraku*) that was used in the making of earlier

pieces. Still according to the tale, it was only afterwards, once Toyotomi Hideyoshi had presented Chojiro with a seal featuring the Chinese character for *raku*—or enjoyment—that such production was named *raku-yaki*, or *raku* ware. *Raku* would thus turn into the name of the family that produced this type of ceramics, but the word is now used as a generic term to refer to a ceramic technique popularized throughout the world. In fact, the earliest *raku* wares seem to have been produced by Chinese potters working in the Kyoto region, and it was only in the early-17th century, in the so called 'Kyoto Renaissance', that the *Raku* kiln, managed by Chojiro's descendants, namely by Nonko, reached its dominance, under the patronage of Sen no Rikyu's grandson and great-grandsons.

Once the globalization process became irreversible by the Portuguese 15th century exploration of the uncharted seas, and by the crossing of Africa's southernmost tip that led them to India in 1498, new intercontinental trading routes would be open to the exchange of luxury goods, foodstuffs, plants, animals, tech-

<sup>2</sup> Regarding Nonko, see: PITELKA, Morgan, *Handmade Culture. Raku Potters, Patrons, and Tea Practitioners in Japan*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2005, pp. 49–53. Excepting tea bowls normally produced in white clay and proudly marked with the 'raku' stamp, pieces attributed to Nonko do include serving plates.



nology, religion, and ideas. Japan would be of the last lands to be reached by the Portuguese, the earliest contacts dating from 1543 in Tanegashima, a small island to the south of the archipelago. This contact would have enormous consequences for Japan, pushing it into a new era, after centuries of semi-isolation.

In addition to Chinese raw silk, lacquers, and Chinese ceramics for exchanging with Japanese silver, the large Portuguese black ships (*kurofane*), the main motifs depicted on contemporary Namban screens produced for cosmopolitan local merchants and businessmen, also carried wine. It is thus unsurprising that the perceived Portuguese fondness for wine, and for the excesses it provoked, opposed to Japanese restraint and polite manners, would be caricatured by the Japanese potter. The portrayal of 'Southern barbarians' or *namban-jin*, on contemporary objects was often stereotyped and caricatural, in a manner that was deeply rooted in ancient Japanese art. With their unusual attire of short baggy

breeches, or *kurusan*, from the Portuguese 'calção', and bizarre practices, these foreigners were depicted with long 'barbarian' noses.

Regardless of its origin, either from the Raku family or not, this rare sake bottle, conceived as a display object featuring Europeans, stands out as a powerful testimony to the vitality of the *namban-jin* theme as a cosmopolitan subject in early-17th century Kyoto. As does also another object of identical chronology, a glazed stoneware candle stick fashioned as a European figure of Oribe type—introduced by the master potter Furuta Oribe (1543/44–1615), and most certainly produced in the Province of Mino—, now kept in the Suntory Museum of Art, in Tokyo.<sup>3</sup> Unlike our bottle, other similar candlesticks from this production do survive, some handed down as heirlooms through the generations or exhumed by the archaeologists. — HMC

<sup>3</sup> See: MURASE, Miyeko (ed.), *Turning Point. Oribe and the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003, p. 122, cat. 46 (catalogue entry by Misato Shomura).

## 83

## A NIPO-PORTUGUESE NAMBAN CASKET

Japanese Cryptomeria, black lacquer, gold, with mother-of-pearl and gilt copper fittings  
 Japan; Momoyama or early Edo period; 1580–1610

Dim.: 15.6 × 22.4 × 13.1 cm

F1444

Provenance: S.F. collection, Oporto



This Namban casket, known as *dogubako*, in lacquered wood (*urushi*), features a hinged domed lid, a square-shaped lock plate (*aimeita*) with animal heads and an elegant latch, a fiddlehead fern-shaped (*warabi-te*) top handle, and two hinges at the back (*chôtsugai*).

The gilt copper ornamental fittings (*kazarikanagu*) are finely chased with flower motifs on a punched ‘fish roe’ (*nanako*) background pattern, called *nanakoji*. While the lock plate decoration includes pumpkins with their large, lobed leaves, and the latch features a minute fish-scale pattern, the hinges depict chrysanthemum flowers in full bloom.

The unusual decoration of the casket, particularly the front and domed lid, consists of vertical rectangular panels set with mother-of-pearl inlay (*raden*), bordered by a chequered frieze along the casket’s edges, which also separates each panel from the next. The panel’s complex arrangement features a lobed cartouche in reserve (with flowers) over a crushed mother-of-pearl ground, bordered by a frieze of the well-known endless pearl pattern, named *shippôtsunagi*. The sides feature the same type of carpet-like composition, with flowers over the black ground in the central field, bordered by a narrow frame of crushed *raden* and a frieze of lozenges. The

back features a simplified version of the front and lid, with vertical floral panels divided by a chequered frieze and bordered by a frame of triangles. The interior and underside are decorated in plain black lacquer.

The refined gold decoration applied to such caskets, called *maki-e* (literally ‘sprinkled picture’), was common in Momoyama (1568–1600) and early Edo Japan. During this period, a special type lacquerware made for export, which combined mother-of-pearl inlay with *hiramaki-e*, was called *Namban maki-e* or *Namban shit-sugei*.<sup>1</sup> Namban, or Namban-jin (literally, ‘Southern Barbarian’), is a Japanese term derived from Chinese that refers to the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, missionaries, and sailors who arrived in Japan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The term Namban has also become synonymous with the types of lacquerware and other products commissioned in Japan for its domestic market or for export. These objects reflected Western taste and were modelled after European prototypes. Namban-style products, which were made exclusively for export, commonly combined Japanese techniques, materials, and motifs with European styles and shapes. Namban caskets, like the present example, were apparently used for storing precious belongings, such as jewellery. Made to European specifications, they reflect the Portuguese demand for mother-of-pearl objects, akin to those produced in Gujarat, India.

The present casket is remarkable not only for its preservation state but also its unusual decoration and superior of its gilt copper fittings. *HMC*

<sup>1</sup> Of the vast bibliography on Namban lacquerware, see PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, *Lacas Namban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990; IMPEY, Oliver, ‘Namban Lacquer for the Portuguese Market’, *Oriental Art*, 46.3 (2000), pp. 42–47; IMPEY, Oliver, JORG, Christian J. A., *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Brill, 2005; CURVELO, Alexandra, ‘Namban Art: what’s past is prologue’, in Victoria Weston (ed.), *Portugal, Jesuits and Japan. Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods* (cat.), Chestnut Hill, MA, McMullen of Art, 2013, pp. 71–78; and CANEPA, Teresa, Silk, *Porcelain and Lacquer. China and Japan and their Trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500–1644*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2016.



## 84

## A NIPO-PORTUGUESE NAMBAN WRITING CABINET

Wood lacquered in black, gold, mother-of-pearl and gilt-copper fittings  
Japan, Kyoto; Momoyama period, 1580–1600

Dim.: 24,5 × 25,0 × 25,5 cm

F1477

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon

This small, cube-shaped Namban fall-front writing cabinet is made from a lightweight wood, likely the Japanese cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*), locally known as hinoki, lacquered (*urushi*) in black, and decorated in gold with mother-of-pearl (*raden*) inlays.

The cabinet is decorated with large panels in gold and mother-of-pearl inlay, with a geometric border featuring large mother-of-pearl triangles (lobed at the front), offering a striking contrast with the black lacquered ground.

On the exterior panel of the fall-front, underscoring the marital character of many such export pieces, is a pair of spotted deer—a stag with antlers and a doe—within a landscape with flowering cherry and pine trees. Known for their reddish-brown summer coats with white spots that often fade with the new seasons, the spotted deer, the native sika deer (*Cervus nippon*), are considered sacred messengers of the gods, and roam freely in parks and temples.

Further strengthening the marital character of the cabinet, the top features a large panel depicting a pair of pheasants in flight above flowering plants, probably the green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*). Known as *kiji* and endemic to Japan, the green pheasant is also understood in Japanese myth as a divine messenger; its call is treated as a meaningful sound-event that signals the arrival of spring. As with the deer, their pairing implies conjugal harmony, fecundity and auspicious renewal. When opened, the cabinet reveals nine drawers arranged in four tiers, with a central drawer of double height spanning two tiers. While the decoration on the drawers' fronts depict different types of flowers, including branches of the mandarin orange, or *tachibana* (*Citrus tachibana*), the interior of the fall-front, unbordered, is decorated with a large panel depicting vines of the East Asian arrowroot (*Pueraria lobata*), known as *kuzu*.

One of the sides of the cabinet depicts flowering branches of the Japanese cherry tree (*Prunus serrulata*), known in Japanese

as *sakura*, while the other features branches of tree peonies (*Paeonia x suffruticosa*), in full bloom, known in Japan as *botan*. The back panel, more simply framed by a narrow gilt frieze of the so-called Namban vine (*karacusa*), features Chinese bellflowers (*Platycodon grandiflorus*), known as *kikyo* in Japanese.

The gilt-copper ornamental fittings (*kazarikanagu*), finely chased with flower motifs, comprise corner and edge brackets, two lock plates, one top handle, hinges, and the chrysanthemum-shaped drawer pulls.

The refined gold decoration applied to such objects, called *maki-e*, literally 'sprinkled picture', was common in Momoyama (1568–1600) and early Edo Japan. During this period, a special lacquerware made for export, which combined mother-of-pearl inlay with *hiramaki-e*, was called *Namban makie* or *Namban shit-sugei*.<sup>1</sup> Namban, or *namban-jin* (literally, 'Southern Barbarian') is a Japanese term derived from Chinese that refers to the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, missionaries, and sailors who arrived in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Namban has also become synonymous with the types of lacquerware and other products that were commissioned in Japan for the home market or for export and reflected Western taste and were modelled after European prototypes.

Namban-style products, which were made strictly for export, commonly combine Japanese techniques, materials, and motifs with European styles and shapes. Small Namban cabinets such as the present example were used for storing precious belongings such as jewellery and made to European specifications, responding to Portuguese demand for mother-of-pearl objects such as those made in Gujarat in northern India.

A fall-front writing cabinet of this type and date, a rare example of this shape (25.2 × 23.4 × 24.8 cm), belongs to the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, Oporto (inv. 40 Mob CMP/MNSR).<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Of the vast bibliography on Namban lacquerware, see PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, *Lacas Namban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990; IMPEY, Oliver, 'Namban Lacquer for the Portuguese Market', *Oriental Art* 46.3 (2000), pp. 42–47; IMPEY, Oliver, JÖRG, Christiaan, *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005; CURVELO, Alexandra, 'Namban Art: what's past is prologue', in WESTON, Victoria (ed.), *Portugal, Jesuits and Japan. Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods* (cat.), Chestnut Hill, MA, McMullen of Art, 2013, pp. 71–78; and CANEPA, Teresa, Silk, *Porcelain and Lacquer. China and Japan and their Trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500–1644*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, *Lacas Namban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990, pp. 84–87.



## 85

## A NIPO-PORTUGUESE NAMBAN WRITING CABINET

Japanese cedar, lacquer, mother-of-pearl, gold and gilt copper  
Momoyama-Edo Period; 1600-1630

Dim.: 24,5 × 25,0 × 25,5 cm

F1381

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



Small sized, Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*) namban fall front cabinet. Of parallelepiped design and eight inner drawers, it has been dated, based on its ornamental characteristics, to the first quarter of the 17th century.

Black lacquered (*urushi-e*) and of evident European prototype, it is decorated in *hira-maqui-e*<sup>1</sup> with inlaid mother-of-pearl (*raden*), two techniques that are typical of namban period (1573–1639)<sup>2</sup> Japanese export lacquers. The metal fittings, handles, corner pieces and lock escutcheons, are gilt copper.

In terms of the cabinet's decorative motifs, reflecting ancestral practices from Japanese traditional arts, they are defined by geometric and botanical elements in various patterns covering the entirety of its outer surfaces.

The frontal, lateral and upper panels are profusely ornamented with two types of geometric motifs. In the large central ground, encased by double mother-of-pearl filleting, the Japanese *seven jewels* decorative pattern, imported from China. According to the Indian tradition, this motif is related to the Great Universal Monarch, Chakravarty, and to the Master of the Sacred Domains, Siddhartha Gautama Buddha. In Japan it is also associated to the Seven Gods of Fortune and known as *shippomon*. Framing this central composition, a wide mother-of-pearl and *maki-e* band, filled by *ichimatsu*, a repeating pattern of juxtaposed squares, alternating mother-of-pearl and painted stylized hemp flowers, alluding to vows of prosperity for one's descendants and good luck in business.

Lowering the fall-front exposes a group of drawers centred by a lockable rectangular compartment, whose front is decorated by an arch resting on a pair of classical European style columns, and gentian flowers (*Rindo*). On the drawer faces, large Paulownia foliage scrolls, trimmed by single mother-of-pearl thread, and framed by the *Uroko* pattern representative of fish scales, a motif often used by Samurai as an amulet against evil.

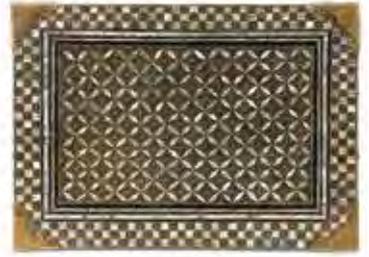
From the exposed inner writing surface and rear panel, stands out a large Paulownia foliage scroll, encased by continuous mother-of-pearl frame and wide band of motifs analogous to *seven jewels*.

For its specificities, this writing box is an excellent example of the syncretism that developed, between the late 16th and the first quarter of the 17th century, from the meeting of western and Japanese cultures, evidence clearly illustrated by its European shape and traditional Japanese art ornamentation allusive to autochthonous popular traditions, to Buddhism and to Shintoism.

Considering its rare format, this writing box could be one of the last objects made for exporting before the *Sakoku*, the 'Closure of Country' period, in which only the Dutch were allowed to remain in Japan, and even so circumscribed to the small island of Dejima, off the coast of Nagasaki, all the other foreign merchants having been expelled. — BMS

<sup>1</sup> Smooth gold painting. When textured it is referred as *taca-maqui-e*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. IMPEY, Oliver and JORG, Christiaan, *Japanese Export Lacquer 1580–1850*, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, 2005, p. 78.



## 86

## A NIPO-PORTUGUESE NAMBAN WRITING BOX

*Cryptomeria japonica* (?), lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold; brass fittings  
Japan; Momoyama period (1573–1615)

Dim.: 25.5 × 50.0 × 34.5 cm

F1333

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal



Exceptional, rectangular shaped Namban writing casket of hinged cover. Wood made, possibly in *Cryptomeria japonica*, it was produced in the late-16th or in the early-17th century. The lifting cover gives access to a single compartment for storing writing paraphernalia, beneath which there is a long, single drawer, for documents. Copying a typically Iberian furniture model, the chest is decorated in black lacquer (*urushi*), gold (*maqui-e*), and mother-of-pearl (*raden*) inlays, characteristic of contemporary Japanese productions. The various brass hardware elements—handles, corner pieces, oval lock escutcheons and traditional European style latch, are engraved with foliage decorative compositions, and mercury gilt.

From the chest's outer surfaces stands out the cover, defined by a large cartouche of vegetable decorative composition centred by a pair of turtles (*kame*)—reptiles of exceptional longevity, that grew a long white tail whose exhaled vapours could create sacred jewels<sup>1</sup>—with shells featuring a hexagons pattern known as *Kikko-*

*mon*, originally from the Nara period (710–794), filled with birds and flowers (*Karahana*).

Emerging from the water, the testudines are flanked by a lush Japanese maple tree (*Acer palmatum*) or Momizi, with a perched cuckoo (*Hototogisu*), and an orange tree (*Tachibana*). The surrounding surface is completed by intricate circles of mother-of-pearl intersections forming a star, centred by a flower. This compelling geometric pattern is repeated on the front panel. All the chest's elevations, as well as the lid, are framed by a broad peripheral band of circles and demi-circles of stylized floral motifs, on a black lacquered ground, that alternate with mother-of-pearl elements centred by small black squares. The mother-of-pearl elements seem to correspond to the *aogai*, which radiates a turquoise blue sheen, and to the *chogai* shell, of whitish and iridescent lustre.

On the casket front, the rectangular surface is divided in two overlapping sections, corresponding to the upper single case

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 2001, p. 168.





compartment and to the lower drawer, delimited by decorative borders. The larger upper section is characterized by two scalloped, mother-of-pearl framed cartouches, flanking the exuberant lock plate. The one to the right features a pair of quail (*uzura*) among royal blue gentian flowers (*rindo*), both associated to Autumn. The other, to the left, an orange tree (*tachibana*), and what seems a Japanese nightingale (*uguisu*), bird associated with Japanese prose and poetry and whose song is related to the New Year, as evidenced in the Hatsune chapter of the literature classic *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji).<sup>2</sup>

Beneath this section, a full width drawer of geometric pattern decoration, centred by a small, and rather discreet lock escutcheon. On both lateral elevations, dense compositions with orange tree and royal blue gentian flower shrubs, to the right, and, to the left, a Paulownia tree (*Kiri*), in an allusion to the Japanese Imperial House and to Spring. On the back, a long outstretching Paulownia branch.

The chest interior is fully lacquered in black. In the inner cover, a golden pergola sustaining a camellia shrub (*Tsubaki*), symbol of winter in the traditional Japanese floral calendar. Completing the scene, a grasshopper (*Korogi*)—a popular pet in Japan that is often pictured in lacquerware pieces—a crane (*Tsuru*), an allegory to longevity associated to the New Year, and, once again, a cuckoo.

In terms of its decorative iconography, it is certain that the emphasis given to the turtles on the chest's cover panel, relates to the fact that, according to Hindu, Taoist, Confucianist and Buddhist traditions, these testudines participate in the world's evolution. For their longevity they are associated to the Taoist paradise, Mount Horai, and to the Aquatic palace of the Dragon-God, the King of the Seas. Turtles are frequent characters in Japanese folk tales, such as in the *Urashima Taro*, in which this reptile is the messenger of the Gods, able to travel between the underwater and the terrestrial worlds. On the other hand, in Japanese art they are associated to the Seven Gods of Good Fortune, a detail that is alluded to by the geometric ornamentation in which the pair is inserted, known and the 'seven jewels pattern', associated to these gods.

An exceptional example of Namban art, this small piece of furniture alludes to life and death, as well as to life's regeneration, metaphorically defined by the four seasons' regular and continuous rotation. In addition to the evident beauty of this chest, we must also refer its decorative sophistication that conveys an important artistic and cultural meaning, reinforced by the rare 'seven jewels pattern' which, in a Japanese context becomes an allegory to the seven Shinto Gods of Good Fortune (*shichi fukujin*).<sup>3</sup> BMS

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 2001, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 2001, p. 198.

### A LARGE NIPO-PORTUGUESE NAMBAN CHEST

Lacquered wood, gold, MOP and gilt-copper

Japan, Tokyo; 1590–1620

Dim.: 57.0 × 92.5 × 50.5 cm

F1472

Provenance: Private collection, Lisbon



As in earlier Namban lacquer furniture, the decoration of this chest consists of large panels framed by fine borders running along the edges, with a frieze of Namban tendrils (*karakusa*). This large dome-shaped chest of black lacquered wood (*urushi*) is decorated in gold (*maki-e*) with mother-of-pearl inlay (*raden*).

On the front, amidst various types of plants, a prominently rendered hen and cockerel can be seen which, given their overall morphology, especially the long tail feathers trailing along the ground, may be identified as *ohiki*, an ornamental bantam breed (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) originating from Shikoku Island, Kochi Prefecture.

The extraordinary domed lid presents another pair, this time of Buddhist lions, mythical animals of Chinese origin, in a composition that recalls the famous pair of *Chinese Lions* (*Karajishi*) on a folding screen of about 1590 by the master Kano Eitoku

(1543–1590), in the Japanese Imperial Collection (inv. SZK002944) and designated a National Treasure.<sup>1</sup> Pairs of Buddhist lions, male and female as on this chest, known in Japan as *komainu* (literally ‘Korean dog’), carved in stone and referred to as *shishi* in Chinese, served as guardians at the entrances to temples, protecting the sacred precinct from malign influences, both spiritual and human.

The sides are adorned with flowering branches and leaves, while the inner face of the domed lid bears a stylised landscape with a meandering stream and vegetation, in contrast to the rest of the interior, which is entirely finished in black lacquer.

Its gilt-copper fittings (*kazarikanagu*), finely chased with floral motifs, include two lock plates (*aimeita*) with their latches, brackets for the corners, hinges at the back, and side handles.

The refined gold decoration on this chest, known as *maki-e* (literally ‘sprinkled picture’), was common in Japan during the

<sup>1</sup> This screen is one of the most famous artworks of the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573–1603). See *Grace, Beauty and Ingenuity. Masterpieces of the Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan*, vol. 1, Tokyo, Imperial Household Agency, 2003.



Momoyama period (1568–1600) and in the early decades of the subsequent Edo period.<sup>2</sup> It is within this period and in a context of mutual acculturation that a special export lacquer emerges, combining mother-of-pearl inlay with a type of decoration known as *hiramaki-e*, termed *Namban maki-e* or *Namban shitsugei*. Namban, or *namban-jin* (literally ‘Southern barbarian’), is a Japanese term derived from Chinese, referring to the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, missionaries and seamen who reached Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Namban also became synonymous with the lacquerware and other products made in Japan either for the domestic market or for export, which reflected Western taste by reproducing European prototypes such as this chest. Lacquer objects in Namban style, produced exclusively for export, combine Japanese techniques, materials and decorative motifs with European shapes and styles;

among the most common are small caskets with domed lids and larger chests, a typology introduced into Japan by the Portuguese and there emulated.<sup>3</sup> The decoration of such chests is usually arranged in panels separated by broad geometric borders, while single-panel examples, such as the present piece, are considerably rarer.

Comparable examples of this specific type are preserved at Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda (inv. DAS M91), and at the Naprstek Museum (Národní Muzeum), Prague (inv. 20611), where there is a chest (37.0 × 70.2 × 46.5 cm) very close to the present example; and, from the Barros e Sá bequest, a smaller chest (29.0 × 43.0 × 25.0 cm) with silver fittings in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. 98 Cx).<sup>4</sup> Examples of this size, with double lock and latch, are extraordinarily rare. — HMC

<sup>2</sup> On this production, see CANEPA, Teresa, *Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer. China and Japan and their Trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500–1644*, London, Paul Holberton publishing, 2016; and CURVELO, Alexandra, ‘Namban Art: what’s past is prologue’, in WESTON, Victoria (ed.), *Portugal, Jesuits and Japan. Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods* (cat.), Chestnut Hill, MA, McMullen of Art, 2013, pp. 71–78.

<sup>3</sup> See IMPEY, Oliver, JÖRG, Christiaan J. A., *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005, pp. 147–158.

<sup>4</sup> See PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes (ed.), *Arte Namban. Os Portugueses no Japão* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1990, p. 57, cat. 58.



88

**MARTYRDOM OF THREE JESUITS IN JAPAN**

Oil on copper

Iberian Peninsula; 2nd half of the 17th century

Dim.: 22.0 × 17.5 cm

D1897

Provenance: Private collection, France

Exhibited: 'Des Samourais aux Mangas, Missions Étrangères de Paris', Paris 2024 (cat. no. 45)



**FIG. 1**  
Abraham van Diepenbeeck  
(1596–1675), *Martyrdom of Jesuits  
in Japan* (c. 1650), ink on paper.  
Hermitage Museum

**FIG. 2**  
Schelte à Bolswert (1586–1659), *The  
Martyrdom of the Jesuits in Japan*,  
engraving. The National Museum of  
Western Art, Japan

This rare oil on copper painting, probably produced as a devotional representation in a major Iberian workshop, depicts the martyrdom of three Jesuit Priests in late 16th century Japan. Of fine quality and defined by firm and fast brushstrokes and vibrant colours, it accurately replicates a contemporary print by the renowned Netherlandish engraver Schelte Adamsz. Bolswert (1586–1659), active in Amsterdam, Haarlem and Antwerp, after a drawing by the artist Abraham van Diepenbeeck (1596–1675), a pupil of Pieter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) in Antwerp. A copy of such print, engraved between 1627, the year of the Martyr's beatification, and 1654, since that in his five final years Bolswert engraved exclusively for Rubens, belongs to the Rijksmuseum collection, in Amsterdam (inv. RP-P-BI-2563).

Of the twenty-six Martyrs (*Nihon Nijūroku Seijin* in Japanese) executed by crucifixion in Nagasaki, a Japanese Catholic stronghold, on February 5th, 1597, mostly Franciscans Friars, the artist singled out the martyrdom scene of the three local Jesuit Priests. Of these, Paulo Miki, or *Pauro Miki* in Japanese, born near Osaka into a wealthy Japanese family in 1564, and educated at the Azuchi

and Takatsuki Jesuit Seminaries, was a respected preacher credited with many Buddhist conversions, and the most celebrated of the whole group, which is listed in the General Roman calendar as Paulo Miki and Companions. The two other martyred Jesuits were Diego Kisai (b. 1533), formerly Ichikawa Kisaemon, and João Soan of Gotō (b. 1578), born of Christian parents in one of the Gotō archipelago islands.

Once arrested, the three had their left earlobes cut off, and were forced to walk the six hundred miles between Miyako, present day Kyoto, and Nagasaki. While martyred by having his chest stabbed by a spear, Miki preached his last sermon from the cross and forgave his executioners. Together with their twenty-three companions, the three Jesuits were beatified on September 14th, 1627, by Pope Urban VIII (r. 1623–1644), and canonised on June 8th, 1862, by Pope Pius IX (r. 1846–1878).

The painting, identically to the printed prototype, illustrates the moment in which Miki, to the right of the painting and already crucified, has his chest stabbed by the soldier's spear, as



Christ himself had been by the roman soldier Longinus; Kisai, to the left background, is lifted on his cross; and Soan, to the left, still beardless, is being knocked down by a soldier to be tied to his. The composition is surmounted by hovering angels carried by clouds, which crown Miki, the greatest hero of Japan's first Christian century, with a laurel wreath.

With evident intentionality, the painter departs from the printed composition by omitting the laurel wreaths destined to Kisai and Soan, the palm that the first angel presents to Miki, and

both the soldiers and the ropes that lift the crucified Kisai. These particularities reinforce the predominance attributed to Miki, eminent preacher who died on the cross aged thirty-three.

A rare and powerful subject in the history of missionary activity in Asia, and of Jesuit presence in Japan, this painting is an exceptional testimony to the persecution of Japanese Catholics and their growing social and political relevance, to the antagonism of the local Buddhist authorities, and to the European devotion for these Christian Martyrs from faraway lands. *HMC*

## SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER BEFORE THE MAP OF HIS MISSIONS

Oil on canvas

Europe, probably Iberian Peninsula; 1680–1720

Dim.: 46.0 × 34.8 cm

D1946

Provenance: Private collection, France

This small-scale religious painting depicts *Saint Francis Xavier Before the Map of His Missions* or, alternatively, *Saint Francis Xavier Embarking for Asia*.

Born in Spain, Francis Xavier (1506–1552), along with Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) and four other companions, co-founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and became a key missionary figure in Asia. In 1541, he travelled from Lisbon to India, preaching in Goa before expanding his efforts to Southeast Asia and Japan, where he was renowned for converting many to Catholicism. He died in 1552 on Shangchuan Island, off the Chinese coast, while attempting to enter the mainland. Though he never entered China, his missionary legacy had a major impact on the spreading of Christianity throughout Asia.

Conceived as an allegory to the widespread nature of Saint Francis Xavier's missionary role, the painting depicts the Saint, haloed and holding a crucifix in his right hand, with a map of Asia presented by five figures, four of whom represent continents. Africa depicted as a standing, black-skinned man wearing a single pearl earring and holding an axe. Also standing is Asia, a fair-skinned male youth wearing long red tunic and a feather ornamented turban (in the Safavid and Mughal style), proudly grabbing a lance in his left hand. Europe, represented by a kneeling female in the foreground, is richly attired and jewelled, her braided hair, neck and pink tunic hems adorned with pearls. At her feet lies a cornucopia of plenty, from which spill gold and silver coins. Behind her, a kneeling and turbaned dark-skinned man, armed with a bow, represents America.

The fifth figure, depicted as an older turbaned Ottoman man standing next to the Saint, and presenting the map to Him, is possibly intended to represent one of the local pilots commonly recruited by the Portuguese in the early exploration of the various regions featured on the map. On the left background a ship about to depart, in which a figure climbs a mast to unfurl its sail.

The present painting reproduces an engraving by Cornelis Bloemaert II (1603–ca.1689), after an original composition by Jan Miel (1599–1656). The print was published as the frontispiece of Daniello Bartoli's 1667 edition of the first part of his widely circulated and influential book *Dell'istoria della Compagnia di Gesù*, which focused on Jesuit missionary activity in Asia. Bartoli (1608–1685), who served as rector of the *Collegio Romano*, the main

Jesuit university, intended this section of his book to cover the Jesuit experience in the Far East, including Japan and China, since their settling there in the mid-sixteenth century.

Bloemaert's print was copied in 1703 by the Mexican artist Juan González in a highly elaborate and large *enconchado* (inlaid with mother-of-pearl) painting and frame (113.0 × 91.0 cm), which is now in a private collection.<sup>1</sup> In his adaptation of the Flemish print, González added labels next to the allegories of the four continents. The kneeling female figure is identified as Europe, while the other kneeling figure behind her, whose garments are now accurately depicted as made from feathers, is labelled America. The standing youth featuring a feather aigrette is identified as Asia, but the older turbaned figure holding the map remains unlabelled. It has been suggested that the original print did not intend to depict the four continents, and that the figures instead represented the diverse peoples encountered by Francis Xavier in Asia.<sup>2</sup> However, considering the customary attributes in the original print—such as the cornucopia with a sceptre spilling onto the grass in the foreground—this interpretation is rather problematic and unlikely.

Faithfully copied from Bloemaert's print, our painting on canvas was likely produced in Portugal or Spain during the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and probably intended for one of the many Jesuit houses across the Iberian Peninsula. Created by a skilled painter using vivid, bright colours, its artistic quality is somewhat overshadowed by its iconographical rarity and significance.

A similar style of painting can be found in a set of works on the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola from Coimbra Cathedral (Sé Nova), once the city's Jesuit college church.<sup>3</sup> Dating from around 1640, this group was painted by Domingos da Cunha, nicknamed *O Cabrinha* (1598–1644), and closely follows contemporary engravings by Jean Baptiste Barbé (1578–1649), after Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). At around the same time, and based on earlier models, the painter Manuel Henriques (1593–1654) produced, for the same Jesuit college and church,<sup>4</sup> a set of paintings on the life of St. Francis Xavier. Both groups are now displayed in the sacristy of Coimbra's Jesuit church, alongside other devotional paintings similar in character and artistic significance to our *Saint Francis Xavier Before the Map of His Missions*. ↪ HMC

<sup>1</sup> This painting was commissioned by Ana Rodríguez de Madrid, a Spanish noblewoman living in Mexico. See PIERCE, Donna, 'By the Boatload: Receiving and Recreating the Arts of Asia' in CARR, Dennis (ed.), *Made in the Americas. The New World Discovers Asia* (cat.), Boston: MFA Publications, 2015, pp. 64–65; and RUIZ, Sonia I. Ocaña, 'Enconchado Frames: The Use of Japanese Ornamental Models in New Spanish Painting', in PIERCE, Donna, OTSUKA, Ronald Y. (eds.), *Asia and Spanish America. Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850*, Denver, Denver Art Museum 2009, pp. 129–149, ref. pp. 141–142, fig. 15.

<sup>2</sup> MILLER, Rachel, 'From "Apostle of Japan" to "Apostle of All the Christian World": The Iconography of St. Francis Xavier and the Global Catholic Church', *Journal of Jesuit Studies*, 9 (2022), pp. 415–437, ref. pp. 424–425.

<sup>3</sup> CRAVEIRO, Maria de Lurdes, TRIGUEIROS, António Júlio, *A Sé Nova de Coimbra*, Coimbra, Direcção Regional de Cultura do Centro, Sé Nova de Coimbra, 2011, pp. 95–122.

<sup>4</sup> IDEM, pp. 123–129.



## 90

## A KING CHARLES I OF ENGLAND ROYAL ARMS ENGRAVED CHEST

Cypress wood

Northern Italy; 2nd quarter of the 17th century

Dim.: 60.0 × 163.5 × 58.5 cm

A618

Provenance: A.R. collection, Oporto



**FIG. 1**  
 'Theatrum imperii Magnae Britanniae, exactam regnorum Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae...', inside cover, John Speed, London, J. Sudbury and G. Humble, 1616

Historically significant cypress wood made chest (*Cupressus sempervirens*),<sup>1</sup> characterised by the elaborate pyrography decorative composition that fills its frontal surface. Made in Italy, and destined to the English market, it was produced during the reign of King Charles I (r. 1625–1649) and belongs to a group of case furniture whose manufacture has often been attributed to the Archipelago of the Azores, but which in fact originates from a distinct northern Italian production centre.<sup>2</sup>

Parallelepiped in shape, it features a flat hinged top formed by four joined boards which, as is common in this production, extend over the sides in a protruding edge, contrary to the back and rear edges which align along the chest width. The simple case lock, with no bolt or other visible outer elements, is contemporary

to the chest making and fitted to its inner surface. The four case elevations, whose upper edges are decorated by simple punched motifs, are assembled at the angles by chromatically alternating joints. Contrary to other analogous extant examples, our chest, featuring an inner storage lidded tray to its right-hand side, does not include a stand, therefore sitting directly on the ground.

The chest's particular importance is justified by the pyrographed iconography that fills the entirety of its front panel. Obtained by burning the decorative motifs onto the wood surface with heated metal tools, this contrasting ornamental technique that enhances the cypress warm honey tones, creates three sections of classical architectural elements framed by decorative friezes of geometric and foliage motifs, which present an unusual combination of heraldic motifs and insignia.

Standing out from the larger central section, the Royal Crest of Arms for England, Scotland and Ireland wrapped in the Garter, the most senior Order of Chivalry in the British Honorific hierarchy, featuring the order's motto 'Honi soit qui mal y pense'. These elements are surmounted by the crown and the monogram CR, and flanked by a crowned rampant lion and unicorn, as it was customary during the various Stuart dynasty reigns between 1603 and 1707. This composition sits on a banner with the British monarchy motto 'Dieu et mon droit', alluding to the monarch's divine right to rule. São Roque keeps in its archive a print dated 1616 that does feature an identical armorial shield (Fig. 1).<sup>3</sup>

This central arrangement is flanked by two smaller rectangular panels centred by round arches resting on columns that feature sequences of superimposed pointed arches and plain capitals, from which stand out exuberant double-headed eagles.

In spite of its early 17th century origin, the chest's formal and archaic simplicity takes us back to the Medieval and

<sup>1</sup> The cypress was introduced to the eastern Mediterranean in antiquity, from Persia and Asia Minor (Turkey). Its use flourished in Europe during the Renaissance, having a special meaning in Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Information based on research developed by historian Dr. Pedro Pascoal de Melo, who kindly assisted us in the classification of this chest as originating from a non-Azorean production centre.

<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Pedro Pascoal de Melo for this identification. The publication of the 'Theatrum imperii Magnae Britanniae, ...', by John Speed, London, 1616. J. Sudbury and G. Humble, belonged to Gaston d'Orléans, uncle to King Louis XIV of France, who owned an important library that would be integrated in the French state (in 1666, the Printed Books collection), including also some gems from the Duke of Buckingham library. It must be referred that King Charles I married Henrietta Maria, sister to King Louis XIII of France, in 1625.



Renaissance periods. The classicism of decoration, as well as the heraldic references and associated inscriptions, hint at a form of political and personal affirmation still common in this period. Absorbed from Flemish prints, or other European erudite sources, is the characteristic Renaissance repertoire of dragons, birds, dogs, lions and foliage motifs.

During the 17th century reigns of King James I (James VI of Scotland), Charles I and Charles II, a period encompassing the second phase of the Renaissance in England, furniture was profoundly impacted by both Italian and Flemish prototypes, mainly made in oak and featuring sober decorative elements and heraldic motifs, whose presence had emerged in the previous century. This taste is also clearly evident in a significant number of Italian imported chests, following the prototypes from the well-known *cassone* produced in Milan and Venice from the medieval period onward, of incised, pyrographed and coloured decoration and, as is

the case with the chest herewith described, made in cypress wood, a timber that was much-appreciated in England.

The crowned monogram CR for *Carolus Rex* identifies it as belonging to King Charles I of England. This ownership mark was used on the art objects from the Monarch's collections and, in addition to the chest herewith described, it is also present on the back of a painting by Osias Beert (ca. 1580–1624), formerly in the King's collection,<sup>4</sup> and presently also with São Roque, Lisbon (Fig. 2). In addition to the former monogram, this painting does also feature the monogram HP for *Henricus Princeps* (Charles I elder brother and Prince of Wales between 1594 and 1612), who, on his premature death of typhus aged 18, opened the path for Charles ascension to the throne.

Besides their role as storage for 17th century dowries, chests were also used for transporting textiles, a commodity widely exported by England. During Charles I reign, the King himself a collector and admirer of such luxury goods, the presence of this

<sup>4</sup> His taste for art collecting was reinforced by his visit to Madrid to admire the Spanish Royal collection of paintings.



**FIG. 2**  
Chest engraved with Royal Arms for King James I of England (?), Northern Italy, 17th century (1st quarter), Cypresswood, Dim.: 56.0 × 167.0 × 58.0 cm, São Roque collection



**FIG. 3**  
Chest of incised decoration, cypress wood, ca. 1600–1620, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, No. 299–1878

furniture typology increased substantially in royal palaces interiors, a fact that reflects the taste instilled by the monarch onto the crown estate.<sup>5</sup> Considering Charles I interest for textiles, it is also possible to suggest that these chests may have been used as containers for diplomatic gifts.

Contemporary Stuart inventories mention many cypress made chests, probably of Italian origin, that were used to store bed linens and clothing belonging to the queen, while also referring their good quality and resistance against damp and moth damage.<sup>6</sup>

The double headed eagle corresponds to an iconography that was used in the distant past by the Hittite Emperors in Anatolia, and later, in the 13th century, by the sovereigns of the last Byzantine dynasty, the Palaeologus. In the same century it was also the attribute of Frederick I, *Barbarossa*, adopted by the succeeding Holy Roman Emperors. It would become widely used from the mid-15th century onwards in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian contexts.<sup>7</sup> It is also associated to the Spanish Habsburg rulers as the insignia

taken by King Carlos I of Spain, himself Holy Roman Emperor as Carlos V. In the 17th century this Imperial Christian symbol became also increasingly adopted by Religious Orders as their heraldic, as was the case with the Augustinians.<sup>8</sup>

Although it is admissible that this specific attribute is purely decorative, it can also be a reference to the ties established between the Anglican and the continental Protestant Churches. To reinforce the links between his kingdom, and the protestant Holy Roman Empire princes, in 1619 James I succeeded in marrying his daughter Elizabeth Stuart, sister to Charles, Prince of Wales and later Charles I, to Frederick V, Elector Palatinate, who reigned as King of Bohemia. Their particularly short reign would earn them the sobriquet ‘Winter King’ and ‘Winter Queen’.

This type of chests has overtime been identified as of Portuguese production for their similarities with contemporary Azorean chests.<sup>9</sup> The latter however, are mostly made in juniper and cedarwood with incised decoration, the grooves outlining the

<sup>5</sup> FASTNEDGE, Ralph, *English Furniture Styles: From 1500–1830*, Penguin Books, 1961, p.3, pp. 32–35.

<sup>6</sup> The Diary of John Evelyn, 1666 (In MACQUOID, Percy, EDWARDS, Ralph, *The Dictionary of English Furniture: From The Middle Ages to The Late Georgian Period*, 1954, Vol 2, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Insignia adopted by Ivan III of Russia upon his marriage to Byzantine Princess Sophia, from the Palaiologos Dynasty, inheriting the crest of arms to represent Russia as the ‘third Rome’ heir to the both the Eastern and Western Empires.

<sup>8</sup> TRINDADE, Joelson B., *O Império dos Mil Anos e a arte do ‘tempo barroco’: a águia bicéfala como emblema da Cristandade*, Anais do Museu Paulista. São Paulo. N. Sér. v. 18. no. 2. p. 11–91. jul.–dez. 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Bernardo Ferrão refers the earlier identification of incised decoration furniture by Arthur de Sandão, Maria Helena Mendes Pinto, Irene Quilhó (FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Mobiliário Português, dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, Vol. IV, Oporto, 1990, pp. 3–5). The wood selected for the manufacture of one of these pieces of furniture was scientifically analysed, confirming its geographic origin (PIMENTEL, António Filipe, BORGES DE SOUSA, Maria da Conceição, *Mobiliário Português*, MNAA, 2019, p.17).



patterns cut into the wood and filled with bees wax darkened with grounded gallnut,<sup>10</sup> as is recorded in contemporaneous extant documents that do also refer the numerous carpentry workshops in the Azorean city of *Angra do Heroísmo*.<sup>11</sup>

Various other sources do corroborate the existence of such workshops dedicated to the exporting of chests to Spain, Flanders and particularly to England, carried by English merchants trading via regional Azorean routes,<sup>12</sup> considering that some depicting the heraldic for Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603), King James I (r. 1603–1625) and King Charles I (r. 1625–1649), have been located. It is thus possible to identify two groups of chests of distinct Portuguese and Italian origins, both destined to exporting to England and rivalling for their erudition, with the English oak made furniture.

These variants diverge both on material and on technical levels, not only for their distinct raw materials, but for the fact that the Italian cypress planks were thicker than those of Azorean juniper or cedar and exhibited a characteristic reddish colour that contrasts with the yellow tone of the cedar, an autochthonous resinous tree. Equally distinct are the decorative techniques as,

contrary to the incised motifs of Azorean attributed chests, the Italian feature pyrographic decoration, a technique in which the design outlines are shallower.

Related chests can be seen in major English and Portuguese museum collections such as at the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga* in Lisbon, or at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which has in its collection a very similar chest to the ones herewith described, but resting on a stand instead (Fig. 3). ↗ LLA<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> From the 16th century onwards, and for its geographic relevance, the Azorean Archipelago became a thoroughfare and a stopping point for the two main European maritime routes, the Portuguese east India route and the Spanish western route.

<sup>11</sup> According to Gaspar Frutuoso (1522–91), in Terceira Island 'from the cedar wood grown in the land, many expensive chests, boxes, fine cabinets as well as tables and armchairs are made and sent to the whole of Spain and other overseas places' (In CASTILHO, Manuel, *De Lalibela a Nagasaki*, 2012, pp. 45–46).

<sup>12</sup> IDEM, pp. 46–47; TELES E CUNHA, João, *Um clássico reeditado: o arquipélago dos açores no século XVII. Aspectos socioeconómicos (1575–1675) de Maria Olímpia da Rocha Gil*, 2017, pp. 503–504.

<sup>13</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Pedro Pascoal de Melo for his invaluable cooperation.

## 91

## A STILL LIFE FROM THE COLLECTION OF KING CHARLES I OF ENGLAND

## OSIAS BEERT THE ELDER (1580–1623)

Oil on panel

Flanders, Antwerp, 1610 or earlier

Dim.: 57.0 × 105.0 cm

D2009

*Provenance: Collection of Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales (1594–1612, his brand on the reverse); collection of Charles I, king of England, Scotland and Ireland (1600–1649, his brand on the reverse); Bessa Barbosa family, Portugal (lacquer seal at lower right); private collection, Portugal*  
*Painting included in the RKD-Netherlands Institute for Art History under no. 346028*

## DR. FRED G. MEIJER

*Art historian**Dutch and Flemish seventeenth-century painting*

A still life on a wooden table: up front are, from left to right, a plate of Chinese Wanli porcelain carrying a flat, sugared tart, adorned with sprigs of rosemary, two carnations, and a branch with gold- and silver-painted leaves in the centre; a Wanli porcelain bowl of sweetmeats, and a pewter dish carrying a knife, a rummer of white wine, sugared confectionery, and half a lemon. Behind, from left to right, are a bread roll, an elaborate glass tazza of white wine, a pewter dish with nuts, currants and a slice of bread, an Venetian-style glass of red wine, a pewter dish of capers and a pewter dish of candied fruit. The branches and sprigs on the tart are adorned with glass and metal ornaments, one of which, attached to half a leaf, lies to the left. Spread across the table, particularly at front centre, are various sweets. The right edge of the table, which is in part placed against a wall, is partly visible.

## THE AUTHOR

Osias Beert was probably born in Antwerp, in or around 1580. In 1596, he was registered by the Antwerp painters' guild as a pupil of Andries van Baesrode (1574–1641), and enrolled as a master in 1602. He married Margarita Ykens (died 1646/47) on 8 January 1606. Their son Osias Beert the Younger (1622–c.1678) also became a painter, but no work can be attributed to him with any certainty.<sup>1</sup> While registered as a painter, Osias Beert was also recorded as a cork tradesman. He trained several pupils, but it appears that only one of them, his cousin Frans Ykens (1601–1692/93), became a still-life painter, like his teacher.

Osias Beert was one of the pioneers of still-life painting in Antwerp and a highly esteemed artist, of which recognition numerous (more or less) contemporary copies and imitations of his work bear witness. Today, barely a dozen signed or monogrammed still lifes by Beert are known. Not one of those is dated, but as many as four of his still lifes were painted on copper plates dated by their

maker, Peeter Stas (c. 1565–1617 or later) to 1607, 1608, and 1609, providing at least an indication of the year in which they were been painted. The presently known surviving total of works considered to be by Beert with certainty does not appear to outnumber fifty.

About half of the known oeuvre of this contemporary of Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568–1625) and Ambrosius Bosschaert the Elder (1573–1621) consists of flower pieces and still lifes including bouquets; the other half are still lifes displaying fruit, oysters and other victuals, often in rather costly containers. Osias Beert died in Antwerp in late 1623.

In Beert's palette, earth colours are often predominant, balanced by cool blues and greys and strengthened by red, yellow, and bright green accents. His flower pieces, by the nature of their subject, show more variegation. In many areas, Beert accomplished the brightness and subtle detail in his works by the use of glazes on a light ground, while details were often rendered with fine linear accents. In larger works, there are usually also elements that have been handled somewhat more painterly, particularly items in the background.

Beert's early works, from the years before c.1610, are his most refined pieces. While quite a few of Beert's works have lost their original appearance due to loss of topmost layers of glaze, in the still life discussed here, the original paint layers are generally well preserved, which allows the viewer to study Beert's handling closely.<sup>2</sup>

This unpublished still life is a most important addition to the oeuvre of Osias Beert. It fits seamlessly in the group of early works from before c.1610, for some of which a date can be established with the help of the date stamped into the reverse of the copper plate on which they were painted, as mentioned above. Moreover, the brand of Henry Prince of Wales on the back of the panel provides a date *ante quem*. Henry died in 1612, aged 18, so the painting must have entered into his collection in or—presum-

<sup>1</sup> The assumption that he worked in the style of his father is probably unfounded. The elder Beert died when his son was only about one year old, so he cannot have trained him. By the time Osias Beert II became a master in 1644, his father's style was already considered archaic. A still life with oysters and a herring, reportedly signed and dated 'Osias... 1650', was auctioned at Christie's London on 12 October 1956, but no photograph of it appears to exist.

<sup>2</sup> However, the blue decorations of the porcelain plate and bowl appear to have been painted with smalt, which tends to fade from a strong blue to grey, so the blue will have been brighter.



ably—not long before that year (fig. 1). Subsequently it came to his brother, Charles I and received his brand as well.

The pewter plate with a knife and rummer at lower right, handled quite similarly, appears in a still life on a copper panel dated 1607 by Pieter Stas, which thus must have been painted in that year or shortly after. The same glass tazza appears in two early, but undated, examples.<sup>3</sup> In the first, it is shown together with very similar porcelain bowls filled with sweetmeats, in the second, a bread roll very similar to the one in the present painting is placed next to it. Such refined Venetian-style wine glasses—the tazza and the glass of red wine—represent a distinct degree of luxury. They were most likely the products of one of the glass studios led by Venetian immigrants in Liège and Antwerp, rather than an actual import from Venice. Such glasses often recur in Beert's still lifes.

In a vertical still life on a marked and dated copper plate from 1609, Osias Beert painted a dish of nuts, currants and a slice of bread, much like the one depicted in the painting under discussion here. A dish of candied fruit like the one presented here to the right can be found in a small still life that likely originated around the same time.

As in most of his still lifes of this type, Beert arranged his objects and victuals on a plain wooden table. Mostly, the sides of the table are not visible, but in the present painting part of the right-hand side can be seen. It would also appear that the artist

has extended the left side of the table, so he could position the bread roll there.

Dishes of Chinese Wanli porcelain are a recurring feature in Beert's still lifes of this type. Such porcelain was imported by the East-India trade companies and got its popular name of *Kraak* porcelain—a term still internationally used today—from early examples that were taken from a captured Portuguese merchant vessel, of a type that was called 'carracas'. At the time when this still life was painted, such dishes were still very costly rarities. For this painting, it would seem that Beert had no example of the type of bowl at hand and was probably working at random: the artist has clearly portrayed a bowl of the so-called *klapmuts* type (Dutch for brimmed hat), and quite accurately so, but the decoration he depicted on the side was more likely on the inside of the bowl, normally the side shows a repeating geometrical pattern. The locally made pewter dishes were common household objects, and they feature in many of Beert's still lifes, as well as in the work of many other artists throughout the seventeenth century.

The sugared tart to the left is unique in Beert's oeuvre. A similar piece of pastry, however, appears in a still life by Clara Peeters (?c.1589–1636 or later?), probably from the 1610s, in a private collection. It has been suggested that the tart was part of a wedding banquet.<sup>4</sup> Peeters' earliest known still life, from 1607,

<sup>3</sup> The first looks somewhat grey in tone, but the table cloth was probably painted with red lake (on top of a grey ground) which has almost entirely faded, so it must have had a more colourful appearance, certainly when we take into account that the decorations on the porcelain, here too, were probably painted with smalt.

<sup>4</sup> See exhibition catalogue *The Art of Clara Peeters*, Antwerp/Madrid, 2016, cat. no. 3, pp. 76–78, colour ill.







**FIG. 1**  
The brands of Henry Prince of Wales  
and Charles I on the back of the  
panel

features a similarly adorned sprig of rosemary. That painting may have originated around the time of her own wedding.<sup>5</sup>

Negotiations for a wedding between Henry, Prince of Wales, and Catarina de' Medici or Christine, daughter of Henri IV of France were in progress, but Henry died before an actual marriage could be arranged. Whether this panel was a proper acquisition, or a gift, perhaps from one of the suiting parties, must remain the subject of speculation. ✎

#### DR NIKO MUNZ

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#### PROVENANCE FINDINGS

This painting is a significant rediscovery, not only due to its artistic quality but also its historical interest. More research remains to be conducted, but it may be the earliest still life painting to have reached Britain surviving today. Demonstrated by two monogrammed brands surmounted by crowns on its reverse—'HP' (Henricus Princeps) and 'CR' (Carolus Rex)—it was in the collection of Henry, Prince of Wales (1594–1612), and subsequently his younger brother, Charles I (1600–1649, r.1625–1649).<sup>6</sup> I inspected the brands in person and found them to be authentic.

*Still Life* is therefore securely datable to 1612 or before as Prince Henry died in that year. It remained in the royal collection until at least 1625, the year Charles became king. The eldest son of King James I, Prince Henry had a pioneering interest in collecting art and a substantial gallery already by his death in 1612, aged eighteen. Around a dozen paintings are known to survive from his

picture collection, identifiable by their 'HP' brands. Henry must have been among the earliest British collectors of still life painting.

Precisely how or when the painting attributed to Beert entered Henry's possession is unclear, but records show the prince acquired pictures in considerable numbers c.1609–12, the years immediately before his death. Some were diplomatic gifts from the Dutch Estates-General or the Dutch ambassador to England Sir Noel Caron (ambassador 1609–24); others were purchased through Netherlandish agents active at court.<sup>7</sup>

The best of Prince Henry's collection hung at St James's Palace. And remarkably, Beert's *Still Life*—or a work of very similar appearance—was recorded in St James's Palace's gallery in summer 1613 during a visit of Johann Ernest I, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and his entourage. It is described among other still lifes owned by Henry, such as a book in *trompe l'oeil*, (to my knowledge) all no longer extant or known to the public. For at least six years after his death, Prince Henry's gallery was preserved at St James's Palace as a memorial.<sup>8</sup> The gallery was viewed in 1618 by a young Constantijn Huygens who unfortunately did not leave a description of its contents.

Charles I inherited pictures from his brother's collection, some of which he integrated with his own acquisitions. Beert's *Still Life* bears a 'CR', the king's brand (Charles also had a prince's brand, 'CP'). It was therefore still in the royal collection in 1625, the year Charles I became king. Most pictures surviving today from Prince Henry's collection seem not to have been rebranded by Charles; they only bear an 'HP' brand.

The rebranding of *Still Life* is interesting: it suggests Charles I valued the work and consciously intended to re-hang it as part of his collection, perhaps in a new location. (Another rare example of Prince Henry's surviving works rebranded by Charles is Michiel Jansz van

<sup>5</sup> For that painting, see online database RKDimages lite, record no. 85056. Clara Peeters' proper identity is still uncertain, but recent research has suggested that she was Clara Lamberts who married the painter Henrick Peeters in 1607.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.rct.uk/collection/stories/charles-lost-collection/how-to-identify-a-charles-i-painting>

<sup>7</sup> See VAN GELDER, J. G., "Notes on the Royal. Collection—IV: The 'Dutch Gift' of 1610 to Henry, Prince of Whalis, and some other. Presents." *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 105, no. 729 (1963); WILKS, T., *The Court Culture of Prince Henry and his Circle, 1603–1613* (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1987–88), pp. 172–73.

<sup>8</sup> WILKS, T., "Paying attention to the adorning of a most beautiful gallery": the Picture Gallery at St. James's Palace, 1609–1649', *The Court Historian* 10:2 (December, 2005), p. 156.

Miereveld, *A Bearded Old Man with a Shell*, c. 1606, Royal Collection no. 403956, which was hung by the king at Greenwich Palace).<sup>9</sup>

After 1625 *Still Life* becomes more difficult to trace. It is apparently not included in the famous inventory of Charles I's art collection at Whitehall Palace c. 1639, which also contained fragmentary notes on a few, but by no means all, other palaces.

As this inventory was an incomplete record of the collection, *Still Life*'s absence does not necessarily mean it had already left by c. 1639; it may have been hanging elsewhere.

Some pictures owned by Prince Henry and seen by Saxe-Weimar in St James's Palace in 1613, such as a Sacrifice of Isaac, are recorded in this c. 1639 inventory at Whitehall Palace, showing that Prince Henry's gallery had by that time been broken up.<sup>10</sup> The *trompe l'oeil* book recorded with *Still Life* in 1613 seems to have remained in St James's Palace, where it is inventoried (among deferent paintings) in c. 1640.<sup>11</sup> By c. 1639 *Still Life* had evidently been moved out of St James's Palace's gallery to a different location, or had left the collection. (Incidentally, a different still life owned by Prince Henry is recorded in March 1639 in the Palace of Nonsuch 'in a black gilded frame', suggesting how *Still Life* would have originally been framed in England.)<sup>12</sup>

*Still Life* is also apparently not recorded in the overview of the King's picture collection in the Commonwealth Sale inventory c.1649–51 following the execution of Charles I.<sup>13</sup> As this inventory included all paintings owned by Charles I throughout all his residences, we can be more confident in arguing that *Still Life* had already left the king's collection before 1649.

It is not known how or when *Still Life* reached Portugal. It may be mentioned that the first Portuguese embassy to London began in 1641; a treaty was signed between the two countries in 1642. The Portuguese also attempted to marry the heir to the throne

Charles, Prince of Wales (later Charles II), to a Portuguese princess, but the match was then unsuccessful. Charles II eventually married Catherine of Braganza, daughter of John IV of Portugal, in 1662.

## THE 1613 RECORD AND ANOTHER MORE PROBLEMATIC RECORD OF INDEFINITE DATE

John Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and his entourage saw the recently deceased Prince Henry's art collection in summer 1613. They visited St James's, 'a palace where the King's first-born son the Prince of Wales lived out his life' and were 'led to a gallery wherein were among others the following pieces'.<sup>14</sup> Hanging with other works, including still life paintings, is recorded: *Ein gedackter Tisch/vorauh allerley Confect und Fruchte/Item gebackene Torten/wie auch ein Glaß mit rohten/und ein Glaß mit weissen Wein sehr künstlich gemahlet* (a covered table on which is all manner of confectionary and fruits and a baked tart, as also a glass of red and a glass of white wine, very artfully painted).

There is another record of the same work apparently made by Johan Albrecht de Mandelslo on a visit to St James's Palace supposedly at the beginning of 1640.<sup>15</sup> It appears in the same group of works with which it is hanging in 1613 with a few small differences or omissions. Mandelslo's descriptions are also similar (but not identical) to those given by Saxe-Weimar. Here is the reference to *Still Life* in an early French translation of the travel account: *une table couverte & chargée de toutes sortes de fruits, de confitures, de tourtes, & d'autres patisseries, parmi lesquelles sont deux verres de vin blanc & claret* (a table covered and laid with all sorts of fruits, confectionaries, tarts and other pastisseries, among which are two glasses of white and claret wine).

The printed date may be an error. The group of works cannot have still been hanging together in 1640, as proven by their appearance in different locations in c.1639–40—cited above. Perhaps this visit took place at a date much earlier than is stated in the printed reference. Mandelslo's birth date appears to be 1616: should this description even be attributed to Mandelslo or included with his travel account? Until further research is carried out, this source and its dating should be handled with caution. ↗

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rct.uk/collection/403956/a-bearded-old-man-with-a-shell>

<sup>10</sup> See MILLAR, O., 'Abraham van der Doort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I', *Walpole Society* 37 (1958–60), p. 8, no. 3.

<sup>11</sup> IDEM, p. 226, no. 22.

<sup>12</sup> IDEM, *ibidem.*, p. 185, no. 2: *did belong to prijnz hijnri... a piece of fruits and Grapes and glasses wth wine and a partridg in a dish wch was Prince Hen: peece in a black gilded frame upon a board. 1' 9" x 2' 11"*.

<sup>13</sup> MILLAR, O., 'The Inventories and Valuations of the King's Goods 1649–1651', *Walpole Society* 43 (1970–72).

<sup>14</sup> *Des Durchlauchtigen Hochgebornen Fürsten und Herrn/Herrn Johann Ernsten des Jüngern/Hertzogen zu Sachsen/Jülich/Cleve und Berg/Landgrafen in Düringen/Marggrafen zu Meissen/Grafen zu der Margk und Ravenspurg/herm zu Ravenstein: Reise In Franckreich/Engelland und Niederland. Beschrieben durch Herrn Johan Wilhelm Neumayr von Ramßla/daselbsten Erbgesessen* (Leipzig, 1620), pp.180–182.

<sup>15</sup> Sr. A. De Wicquefort (trans.), *Voyages Celebres & remarquables, Faits de Perse aux Indes Orientales, Par le Sr. Jean-Albert de Mandelslo, Gentilhomme de Ambassadeurs du Duc de Holstein en Moscovie & Perse...* (Amsterdam, 1727), p. 750.

**A TRAPANI JESUIT DEVOTIONAL PLAQUE**

Italy, Sicily, Trapani; 1st half of the 17th century

Gilt copper, mediterranean coral and white enamel

Dim.: 49.5 × 35.0 × 4.4 cm; Case: 61.5 × 45.0 × 6.0 cm (width with open doors: 76.0 cm)

F1484

*Provenance: Bernardim Raposo de Sousa de Alte Espargosa (1859–1912), Torres Novas; José Maria Raposo de Sousa de Alte Espargosa (1886–1974), Torres Novas by descent; Bernardim Raposo de Sousa D'Alte Espargosa (1940–2022), Torres Novas by descent; Dr. Carlos Nuno Nunes Ferreira, Torres Novas, acquired shortly before 1989; Joaquim Horta Correia, Monte Gordo, acquired on 17 August 1989*

This *capezzalle*<sup>1</sup> embodies the most celebrated characteristics of coral workmanship from Trapani, particularly of those produced in the first half of the 17th century. Its structure, technical execution and ornamentation correspond closely to the traditions described throughout the literature on Sicilian coral art.

On a smooth gilt copper background, The Assumption of the Virgin is the central composition. The crowned Virgin, shown with crossed arms, is draped in a curvilinear mantle. Above her, the Eternal Father bestows his blessing while holding the Orb, and winged cherubs surround the scene. This subject was a widespread devotional theme during the Catholic Counter-Reformation and in the region's coral workshops.<sup>2</sup> The absence of perspectival modelling in the relief suggests a relatively early date within the 17th century, before more developed spatial effects became standard.

This devotion plaque features a slightly elongated octagonal inner-frame divided into trapezoidal sectors, each treated as a self-contained decorative field. The dense carpet-like ornamentation is composed of coral curls, commas, pods, drops and centre rosettes. These elements, typical of Trapani production of the 1st half of the 17th century, express the baroque '*horror vacui*' that scholars have remarked upon,<sup>3</sup> a practice linked to Arab-Islamic ornamental traditions of Mesopotamian origin that persisted in Sicilian visual culture well into the 17th century.<sup>4</sup> These frames were widely used in medallions, holy water vessels and mirror frames being repeatedly reproduced with few variations, reflecting a consolidated tradition rooted in client expectations. The persistent use

of the octagon also carried symbolic meaning: the number eight, according to Kabbalistic interpretations, expressed the mystical union of the imperfect and the perfect, the male and the female.<sup>5</sup>

This piece displays extensive use of *retroincastro ornamentation*. This technique, central to Trapani coral work from the late 16th century onward, was first coined by Corrado Maltese and Maria Concetta Di Natale on the exhibition *The Art of Coral in Sicily*, held at the Pepoli Museum in Trapani in 1986, as a process that consists in inserting small smooth coral pieces on the reverse of pre-drilled gilt copper and securing them with black pitch and wax, sealed with cloth, later finishing the back with another gilt-copper plate.<sup>6</sup> This technique is characteristic of works dated between the late 16th and early 17th century and often accompanied by white or polychrome enamels.<sup>7</sup>

The external frame, characterised by geometric herringbone motifs in white enamel, develops into a rich openwork lace-like composition in gilt copper and decorated in white *champlevé* enamel. The frame alternates coral cherub heads and rosettes with white enamel crown, wings and scrolls, all part of a typically baroque language.<sup>8</sup> The pervasive use of white enamel applied over copper helps generate a luminous contrast with the deep orange of the Mediterranean coral. The fixation system, using small metal rods or pins reflects a refined technical language. The upper portion of the frame is dominated by scroll-like openwork in white enamel, enclosing a slightly larger cherub head and coral-enamel rosettes. This scheme recurs in comparable pieces from the first half of the 17th century.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In Sicily, the term *capezzalle* indicates a type of devotional plaque which was usually hung next to the bed's headboard. Having an apotropaic function, it protects the sleeper against the nocturnal raids of the Evil One (CAMPIONE, Francesco, 'Capezzalle con San Michele Arcangelo', in LI VIGNI, Valeria, DI NATALE, M.C. and ABBATE, Vincenzo (eds.), *I Grandi Capolavori del Corallo*, p. 81).

<sup>2</sup> See INTORRE, Sergio 'Coralli trapanesi tra XVI e XX secolo nella collezione di Manolo March', in *Coralli trapanesi nella collezione March*, pp. 31–32; For example, see LI VIGNI, Valeria, DI NATALE, M.C. and ABBATE, Vincenzo (eds.), *I Grandi Capolavori del Corallo*, p. 71, 76 and 95. DI NATALE, M.C., 'Oro, argento e corallo tra committenza ecclesiastica e devozione laica', in DI NATALE, M.C. (ed.), *Splendori di Sicilia*, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., *Mirabilia Corallii*, p. 126–130; INTORRE, Sergio 'Coralli trapanesi tra XVI e XX secolo nella collezione di Manolo March', in *Coralli trapanesi nella collezione March*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., 'Ars coralliariorum et sculptorum coralli a Trapani', in BALME, Clelia Arnaldi di, CASTRONOVO, Simonetta (eds.), *Rosso Corallo*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., *Mirabilia Corallii*, pp. 122–130.

<sup>6</sup> See INTORRE, Sergio, 'Coralli trapanesi tra XVI e XX secolo nella collezione di Manolo March', in *Coralli trapanesi nella collezione March*, p. 31–32.

<sup>7</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., 'Una Collezione per il Corallo nel XXI Secolo', in GHIO, Dario (ed.), *Da Trapani a Napoli, Coralli trapanesi e napoletani dal XVII al XIX secolo*, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., *Mirabilia Corallii*, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see LI VIGNI, Valeria, DI NATALE, M.C. and ABBATE, Vincenzo (eds.), *I Grandi Capolavori del Corallo*, pp. 75–95.





At the top of the frame, a circular copper ring was placed intended for holding the piece.

The reverse is finely engraved with an outer-frame of phyto-morphic motifs, and an inner-frame of lanceolate and flaming rays framing the HIS monogram. The figure of the *Salvator Mundi* with a quadrangular halo and the Globe in His right hand is inserted in the central letter. Such decorative treatment of the reverses of *capezzali* appears in several catalogued examples, however, this depiction, possibly indicative of a commission linked to the Society of Jesus, is considerably rarer. A comparable rendering may be observed in the *Capezzale con il Battesimo di Cristo*, exhibited at *Rosso Corallo. Arti Preziose della Sicilia Barocca* in Turin in 2008 (cat. pp. 126–129).

Another rare and noteworthy aspect of this object is the survival of its original wooden case, fitted with a red velvet lining that, while not original, is period accurate.

Its integration of dense retroincastro coral work, white enamel lace-like frames, symbolic octagonal geometry, and baroque iconography firmly anchors this *capezzale* within the golden age of Trapani coral art, when local workshops produced some of the most sought-after devotional objects in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

Coral objects produced in Trapani belonged to a long tradition of craftsmanship admired across Europe. These works were

often intended for courtly patronage and were highly appreciated by noblemen, sovereigns, and popes, frequently forming part of prestigious diplomatic gifts.

Their craftsmanship was favoured by the presence of nearby coral banks and an active commercial network. In its earliest form, this craft likely focused on the production of coral beads used to make the characteristic *paternosters*. These, along with a small coral brooch, are mentioned in the 1393 inventory of goods belonging to Martino and Maria, king and queen of Sicily, confiscated from Manfredi Alagona.<sup>11</sup> A major turning point came in the 16th century with the introduction of the burin technique by Antonio Ciminello, a renowned coral master. This tool made it possible to carve with exceptional precision, allowing artisans to create miniature sculptures of remarkable technical refinement and beauty. By 1605, the city boasted twenty-five active workshops whose works travelled widely and were highly coveted. The art of these masters was never isolated within the confines of a single workshop as it remained receptive to outside influences. The workshops formed an open, collaborative artistic environment: craftsmen frequently exchanged techniques with bronze workers, goldsmiths and silversmiths, producing complex multi-material works.<sup>12</sup>

As Di Natale stresses, Trapani coral enjoyed widespread fame: “Few cities can boast like Trapani [...] of having been famous

<sup>10</sup> See MARE, Cristina del, ‘Sicilian Coral from 11th to 17th. Merchants, tradition and jewish craftsmen’, in DI NATALE, M.C., MARE, Cristina del, *Mirabilia Corallii*, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., ‘Ad Laborandum Curallum’, in LI VIGNI, Valeria, DI NATALE, M.C. and ABBATE, Vincenzo (eds.), *I Grandi Capolavori del Corallo*, pp. 39–42; DI NATALE, M.C., ‘Ars coralliariorum et sculptorum coralli a Trapani’, in BALME, Clelia Arnaldi di, CASTRONOVO, Simonetta (eds.), *Rosso Corallo*, p. 17; MARE, Cristina del, ‘Sicilian Coral from 11th to 17th. Merchants, tradition and jewish craftsmen’, in DI NATALE, M.C., MARE, Cristina del, *Mirabilia Corallii*, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., ‘Ars coralliariorum et sculptorum coralli a Trapani’, in BALME, Clelia Arnaldi di, CASTRONOVO, Simonetta (eds.), *Rosso Corallo*, p. 21.





throughout the world over the centuries for the mastery of their artisan-artists, among whom the members of the ‘ars coralliorum et sculptorum coralli’ certainly stood out”.<sup>13</sup> The persistent presence of these works on the international art market today demonstrates the continued recognition of this craftsmanship.<sup>14</sup>

Coral’s apotropaic and symbolic meanings also played a central role in its use. Originating in classic mythology, where coral embodied the blood of Medusa, it later acquired a Christian interpretation, becoming a material symbol of Christ’s blood, charged with protective and salvific value.<sup>15</sup>

During the Counter-Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church deliberately reinforced its religious identity through doctrine, devotion, and the visual arts. In response to internal dissent and the rapid spread of Protestantism, the Church undertook a period of intense self-examination that culminated in the Council of Trent (1545–1563). Within this artistic and devotional framework, Marian piety assumed a position of exceptional importance. Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary was especially strong, supported and promoted by the popes of the post-Tridentine era.<sup>16</sup> In

parallel, new religious orders, most notably the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), emerged as champions of the reformed Catholic Church, actively promoting the faith on a global scale.<sup>17</sup>

In this context, this *capezzale* emerges as a synthesis of Counter-Reformation values: its coral evokes the blood of Christ and its apotropaic power, its Marian imagery reflects the heightened veneration of the Virgin, and its Jesuit associations align it with the missionary and doctrinal ambitions of the post-Tridentine Church. Together, these elements elevate the object from ornament to a concentrated embodiment of Counter-Reformation belief and practice.

Regarding provenance, this piece can be traced with considerable continuity to the Quinta de Carvalhais, Torres Novas, where it is recorded as having remained from around 1870. It was held in the Raposo de Sousa family, first in the possession of Bernardim Raposo de Sousa de Alte Espargosa (1859–1912), former owner of the estate, and then passing by descent to his son, José Maria Raposo de Sousa de Alte Espargosa (1886–1974), and subsequently to his grandson, Bernardim Raposo de Sousa D’Alte Espargosa (1940–2022). Shortly before 1989 the piece was acquired by Dr. Carlos Nuno Nunes Ferreira, and thereafter purchased by Joaquim Horta Correia on 17 August 1989. Given that Bernardim Raposo de Sousa de Alte Espargosa only assumed ownership of the Quinta de Carvalhais in 1889, while the piece is stated to have been there since circa 1870 according to its latest owner, it is possible that it previously belonged to Joaquim de Gouveia Prestes dos Guimarães Pinto, of the Gouveia Prestes family, who owned the estate until 1889.<sup>18</sup> MSP

<sup>13</sup> DI NATALE, M.C., ‘Ad Laborandum Curallum’, in LI VIGNI, Valeria, DI NATALE, M.C. and ABBATE, Vincenzo (eds.), *I Grandi Capolavori del Corallo*, p. 39. ASCIONE, Gina Carla, ‘Il corallo a Napoli. Storia de un collezionismo tra viceregno e regno’, in DI NATALE, M.C. (ed.), *Splendori di Sicilia*, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> See INTORRE, Sergio ‘Coralli trapanesi tra Seicento e Ottocento nel mercato internazionale dell’arte del XXI secolo’, in *Coralli trapanesi nella collezione March*, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> See DI NATALE, M.C., ‘Una Collezione per il Corallo nel XXI Secolo’, in GHIO, Dario, *Da Trapani a Napoli, Coralli trapanesi e napoletani dal XVII al XIX secolo*, p. 3. ASCIONE, Gina Carla, ‘Il corallo a Napoli. Storia de un collezionismo tra viceregno e regno’, in DI NATALE, M.C. (ed.), *Splendori di Sicilia*, p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> See FASTIGGI, ‘Mariology in the Counter Reformation’, in MAUNDER, Chris (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Mary*, pp. 454–467.

<sup>17</sup> See SHRINE M.159–1956, V&A.

<sup>18</sup> See GONÇALVES, Artur, *Memórias de Torrres Novas*, pp. 289–290.



# Portugal in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Following the succession crisis of 1580, triggered by the disappearance of King D. Sebastião (1557–1578) in the battle of El-Ksar el Kebir in Morocco, Philip II of Spain was recognized by the ‘Cortes de Tomar’ in 1581 as King of Portugal, being his the closest legitimate relative of the young Sebastião, becoming Filipe I of Portugal (r. 1581–1598).

During the so-called Iberian Union (1580–1640), the domains of this new empire became one of the largest in all of history, comprising territories scattered all over the world. However, the Portuguese Empire suffered a considerable economic decline, being involved in Spanish conflicts that had been going on since 1568 and the Eighty Years’ War, with England, France and the Netherlands. After the defeat of the so-called ‘Invincible Armada’ in 1588, a considerable growth of a more global maritime trade takes place, with the Dutch taking a local conflict to the Spanish seafaring domains.

The Portuguese Empire, lacking autonomy and mainly consisting on coastal occupation vulnerable to conquest, became an easy target, leading to the loss of territories in Asia and Brazil, and to military confrontations at the trading posts on the West African coast.

From 1630 onwards, during the reign of Philip III, the situation led to a growing displeasure with the Spanish authorities in Portugal. The recent, numerous wars promoted by the Habsburgs against the Netherlands (Thirty Years War) and England, for example, with very significant losses to Portuguese colonial possessions, led to the Restoration of the Portuguese Independence in 1640 and to the restitution of the old alliance between Portugal and England.

After the Restoration, and while some territories had been recovered, the Portuguese Empire was heavily diminished, not unlike the commerce with Asia. Portugal then turned its attentions to his Atlantic domains, increasing the maritime and commercial connections between Europe, Africa and America, turning Brazil into the main source of wealth of the realm, with sugar reaching the top position in Portuguese economy.

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, gold and diamonds were at the base of the various Brazilian expeditions organized by so-called ‘Bandeirantes’ (Portuguese settlers and fortune hunters mostly from São Paulo). Its success allowed for a considerable enrichment of the Portuguese crown, which charged a fifth of all the wealth extracted from the earth, fomenting the colonization and development of the Brazilian hinterland.

Portugal once again experienced a period of great prosperity, as may be seen from the extreme opulence of the court of João V (1706–1750), who ruled as absolute king at the head of a monarchy based on a univocal, strong character of royal power.

The riches that poured into Portugal allowed the king to surround himself with his court and to elevate it to one of the richest in Europe. Descriptions of banquets are known where the novelties of the time were all present, from coffee and chocolate to tobacco snuff, which took place at the court, alongside poetry sessions, music, theatrical representations and public spectacles such as opera or the much-celebrated bullfights. Thanks to Brazilian gold and diamonds, and also to the commerce in tobacco, sugar, slaves, wine and salt, D. João V was able to attract foreign artists to his court, mainly Italians, and build monuments in the Baroque style of the time such as the Library of the University of Coimbra, the Royal Building of Mafra (convent, basilica and palace), the Patriarchal Church in Lisbon or the famous Chapel of St. John the Baptist, with which the king enriched the Church of São Roque, both major symbols of the significant relationships which he re-established with the Holy See, enriching the patrimony of the churches and other institutions under royal patronage. ↗

**A D. JOÃO V PORTUGUESE CUTLERY SET AND KNIFE BOX**

Gold, and steel (cutlery set); wood, velvet, silver mounts and silver-braid trim (knife box)

Portugal, Lisbon; 1745–1750

Dim.: 43.5 × 27.0 × 18.0 cm (knife box)

B325

*Provenance: According to family tradition, the set and box were gifted by King João V (r. 1706–1750) to one of his mistresses living near Estremoz; Abbot Cristóvão Gonçalves de Faria (b. late 18th century); by descent to Maria Ana Faria; by inheritance to Artur Assis e Santos and family*



This spectacular table cutlery set (*faqueiro* in Portuguese), made of gold, survives with its original knife box (*estojo de faqueiro*). Produced in Lisbon in the second half of the 1740s, its remarkable survival—given the princely material from which it is made, totalling around 1,400 grams of gold—offers a powerful testament to the conspicuous consumption of gold objects, particularly for the dining table, at the Portuguese royal court.<sup>1</sup>

Knife boxes usually stood in pairs on sideboards, allowing servants could lay out fresh cutlery for each course. Given the choice of material, this set was intended for a more familiar, intimate dining context, serving only six diners.

The rectangular knife box, with its characteristically Baroque serpentine-shaped front and flat sloping lid, is covered externally in crimson silk velvet—a colour usually reserved for royalty—and lined

<sup>1</sup> The gold cutlery set and knife box are the subject of a monograph with contributions by several authors edited by CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *Magnanimous. A Gold Cutlery Set for the King of Portugal. Gold during the reign of John V*, Lisbon, São Roque Antiquidades & Galeria de Arte, 2026.



internally with forest-green silk velvet, both trimmed with silver braid. Fitted with exuberant cast and chased silver fittings (handle, lock plate and latch, and two hinges at the back), the box reveals eighteen compartments arranged across four tiers when opened.

It contains one set of six knives, six spoons, and six forks.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the knives—with their steel blades and handles made from sheet gold worked in repoussé, chased and engraved, and filled with a resinous cutler's cement—the solid-gold spoons and forks were forged from ingots, then finely chased and engraved with a burin. The openwork stems of both spoons and forks were chisel-cut, while the shield-shaped reserves at the ends of the handles (on the reverse), typically intended for monograms—or, more likely, the owner's heraldry—remain blank.

According to family tradition, the set and box were gifted by King John V (r. 1706–1750) to one of his mistresses living near Estremoz. This claim is not implausible. Gold objects were strictly reserved for the monarch and the royal family, and the style—beautifully merging the earlier Portuguese Baroque repertoire, French *Régence* ornament, and the newly introduced *rocaille* motifs—points to the final years of John V's reign.

This transitional idiom combines the characteristic masks (on the lower parts of the forks' tines and spoons' bowls, where they meet the handle, and most prominently on the box's latch) familiar from Portuguese Baroque display silver around 1700, combined with the *Régence* trellis (*quadrillage*) pattern and the experimental *rocaille* ornament—previously unseen in Portuguese decorative arts—that would become prevalent under the king's successor, Joseph I (r. 1750–1777).

As the pieces bear no marks, the identity of the accomplished silversmith responsible for this gold cutlery set is difficult to establish with certainty. Comparisons with the rare surviving gold objects from this pivotal phase of experimentation—spanning the closing years of John V's reign, the king's death in 1750, and the devastation of Lisbon in the 1755 earthquake—suggest the workshop of Manuel Roque Ferrão (fl. 1728–1785), one of Lisbon's most prolific silversmiths. His long career and documented corpus of work encompass the principal decorative styles of the eighteenth century, from the late Baroque and the height of the Rococo to the early onset of Neoclassicism. *HMC*

<sup>2</sup> With regard to the gold alloys, observation under a stereomicroscope revealed, exclusively on the knives, the presence of grey-coloured metallic inclusions. X-ray fluorescence analysis identified these inclusions as consisting of osmium and iridium. The presence of this type of inclusion indicates the use of alluvial gold in the manufacture of the alloys.



## 94

## A PORTUGUESE SALT AND PEPPER CELLAR BY MANUEL VIEIRA CARVALHO

Cast, repousse and chiselled silver

Portugal, Oporto; 1694–1721

Oporto assay-mark for Manuel do Couto de Azevedo; Maker's mark 'C/M.V', attr. to Manuel Vieira Carvalho

Height: 28.8 cm; Weight: 1125.0 gr

B290

*Provenance: Private collection, England and later Portugal*

*Exhibited: 'Europália 1991, Le Triomphe du Baroque', Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels; 'O Triunfo do Barroco', F. das Descobertas—C. C. Belém, Lisbon 1993 (pp. 199–200)*



This important salt and pepper cellar of triangular obelisk shape standing on three cast lions' feet, features a lower 'bombé' salt container and an upper concave pyramidal shaped section that hides a pepper holder, surmounted by an equally cast figure of Minerva.<sup>1</sup>

Attired in *cuirass all'antica*, plumed elm and sword suspended from the belt, Minerva is depicted frontally, left hand resting on a large oval shield. Roman goddess of wisdom and defensive war—matched to the Greek Pallas Athena—it is the tutelary deity of the arts and knowledge, a role that entitles her to preside over the iconographic and symbolic discourse of this erudite container.

Salt, and particularly pepper, were expensive commodities whose presence on the table, in a particularly conspicuous and precious vessel, signalled the host's prosperity.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the Modern Age, complex salt, and salt and pepper cellars, evolved into sophisticated display objects which, well beyond their practical use, were imbued of ceremonial meaning in terms of the hierarchy of guests' placement around the table, relatively to the cellar displayed near the host. In their format they adopted a variety of shapes derived from prisms—cylindrical, oval, rectangular or octagonal—, or more complex designs such as tall vessels surmounted by figures

and of elaborate feet, footed bowls or tripods, small containers, cups or vases, or obelisks such as it is the case with the example herewith described.

The erudition of the late 17th century repousse and chiselled decoration chosen for this object, with foliage and acanthus friezes, hybrid feline and human classical masks, high relief cast and applied caryatids, as well as feet lions and top figure, is reinforced by the chisel mastery of the silversmith Manuel Vieira Carvalho (1679–1726) brought to bear onto this important display cellar, conceived for an aristocratic Portuguese table, of which very few examples survive and none in Portuguese public collections.

It features an Oporto assay-mark for Manuel do Couto de Azevedo, active 1694–1721 (M.A. P-11.0), and a maker's mark 'C/M.V', attributable to Manuel Vieira Carvalho, active 1693–1726 (M.A. P-211.0) stamped to the cover rim, as well as a scratched mark for gauging the alloy silver content.<sup>3</sup> These correspond to two of the earliest Portuguese silver marks registered after 1688 when, following from a large hiatus, marking by Municipal assayers as well as by maker's, becomes, once again, compulsory in order to avoid illegal practices.<sup>4</sup> In Oporto, between 1694 and 1769, Municipal

<sup>1</sup> Published in: TEIXEIRA, José Monterroso (ed.), *O Triunfo do Barroco* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação das Descobertas—Centro Cultural de Belém, 1993, pp. 199–200, cat. I.60; it was also exhibited in *Triomphe du Baroque* at the Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels, 1991 on the occasion of Europália 91 Portugal, being listed in the relevant catalogue under the same number.

<sup>2</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *À Mesa do Príncipe. Jantar e Cear na Corte de Lisboa (1500–1700): Prata, madrepérola, cristal de rocha e porcelana*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2018, pp. 166–171, cats. 10–11.

<sup>3</sup> ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, CARLOS, Rita, *Inventário de Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras. Século XV a 1887*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 2018, p. 218 (assay-mark, P-11.0) and p. 260 (maker's mark, P-211.0).

<sup>4</sup> On the subject of municipal assayer's role, see: CARLOS, Rita, *O ofício de ensaiador da prata em Lisboa (1690–1834)*, *Cadernos do Arquivo Municipal*, 7, 2017, pp. 83–110.



assaying was the responsibility of the Couto de Azevedo family, first with Manuel and later with his son João do Couto de Azevedo, the former being responsible for the marks herewith referred.<sup>5</sup>

This cellar belongs to a small group of five similar Portuguese silver objects produced between the late 17th and the early 18th century, of which only one other is hallmarked. Of the four other extant cellars,<sup>6</sup> one, silver gilt and 24.3cm in height, features Lisbon assay-marks dating from the late 17th century to 1720, and a maker's mark, used until 1720 by Johann Friedrich Ludwig, the German gold and silversmith known in Portugal as Ludovice. It formerly belonged to the collection amassed by Sir Francis Cook (1817–1901), 1st Viscount of Monserrate, and later to the Foundation Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva (FRESS) Decorative Arts Museum, in Lisbon, where it remains (inv. 1023).<sup>7</sup> Of cast animal feet, it features austere chiselled acanthus and cartouches decoration; the top, albeit turned and screwed, similarly to our example, ends in baluster shaped finial.

A second gilt silver cellar, belonging to a Lisbon private collection, presents armorial shield for the Fonseca or Coutinho families. Of lion feet, it has cast high-relief female busts applied to the base, and profuse foliage motifs decoration, particularly large acanthus leaves that protect the base and the truncated pyramid vertical edges. A third example, also in a Lisbon private collection, features zoomorphic feet, cast lions' heads in the 'bombé' base and cartouches to the upper section surfaces.

The fourth cellar, of zoomorphic feet and cast putti heads to the base contrasting with the chiselled acanthus surface, is equally kept in a Lisbon collection, having been acquired at Sotheby's Paris on April 29th, 2009, under lot number 169.

Of this small group, the one herewith described is undoubtedly the most refined and of more accomplished aesthetic and technical mastery, both for its erudite repousse and chiselled decoration and for the diversity of the tridimensional cast elements that adorn its surface.

The Oporto silversmith Manuel Vieira de Carvalho, of whom little is known and from whom we only know six marked works, amongst which a jug, a wine taster, and a censer, can be counted as one of the most accomplished silversmiths from the 17th to 18th century transition. From amongst this restrict number of works stands out an exceptional gilt silver hand washing basin (Ø 58.0 cm) belonging to the FRESS Decorative Arts Museum (inv. 71).

Formerly in the Rothschild collection,<sup>8</sup> the basin is defined by a central medallion depicting a nude Neptune riding a dolphin on the water surface, framed by a band of twisted laurels. Its 'cavetto' is decorated with foliage scrolls alternating with classical masks and winged caryatids, and the lip with 'rincaux' motifs alternating with shells, birds, and classical masks. Both the erudition of the ornamental repertoire—certainly inspired by engraved prototypes published by Jean Bérain, The Elder (1640–1711) and his followers, spreaders of the 'Berainesque' style—and the exceptional mastery of the chiselled decoration, are analogous to those of the salt cellar herewith described, which features identical hallmarks.

Such engraved models include a set of nineteen prints published under the title 'Ornemens peints dans les Appartemens des Tuilleries dessinez et grauez par Berain. A Paris chez N. anglois rue S. Iacque a la Victoire avec priuil. du Roy', ca. 1690 (Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet 8 RES 89).  HMC

<sup>5</sup> SANTOS, Reynaldo dos, QUILHÓ, Maria Irene, *Os primeiros punções de Lisboa e Porto*, Belas-Artes, 6, 1953, pp. 11–22.

<sup>6</sup> SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e, *Salsarium. Uma obra única em cristal de rocha*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2012, pp. 29–32.

<sup>7</sup> D'OREY, Leonor, *Ourivesaria*, Lisbon, Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva, 1998, pp. 60–62.

<sup>8</sup> IDEM, pp. 42–43.



## 95

## A PAIR OF 17TH CENTURY PORTUGUESE SILVER CANDLESTICKS

Silver

Portugal; 17th century, later 1713 inscription

Height: 15,5 cm; Weight: 550.0 g

B271

Inscription: 'Soi' De[e]l] S, mo Sacramento año de 1713; Confiteor tibi Pater Domi,ne Caeli, et Terrae; quia abscondi,sti, haec asaPi,enti,b,9 et; Pruden[ti]b9, et Reuelasti, e a Parbuli,s'

Provenance: Galerie Kugel, Paris

Rare pair of solid silver 17th century (c. 1665) Portuguese candlesticks, the square base rising onto two circular pad discs separated from the shaft by a prominent ring.

The faceted octagonal shaft is extended by a link of three plain ring sections defined by raised edges, finishing in a plain lip cylindrical candleholder cup.

Erudite pieces of exceptional quality, these candle stands follow a Portuguese classical stylistic model, in the taste of the 'estilo chão' (a 'plain and simple' style, adopted in Portugal from the mid-16th century), which adopted a purified language that favoured shape in detriment of decoration, therefore enabling the domain of well-defined volumes and plain surfaces, purged from decorative excess. This aesthetic current, directly affiliated to the Mannerist principles adopted during the 17th century, reflected directives emerged from the Council of Trent that demanded the eradication of 'all impurity and lewdness lure', excluding all unnecessary ornamentation in either secular or religious artefacts.

In this instance the silversmith underlined the bare, balanced and austere character of the objects, in which prevail the plain surfaces defined by delicate turned appointments, and the clear geometric shapes, thus reaching an extraordinary and successful equilibrium.

The absence of hallmarks in Portuguese silver objects is common in this period. This practice will be radically altered in the Baroque period, when King Pedro II (r. 1683–1706) decrees the obligation of marking silver pieces, in an attempt at controlling the quality of raw materials and the standards of practice for the profession (1688).

This pair of candlesticks summarize the relationship between the inscribed message and the purpose for which they are destined. Most probably commissioned as secular objects, they were later adapted to a religious context by the sacralization of their use, as attested by the Castilian inscription [*Soi' De[e]l] S, mo*

*Sacramento año de 1713*], the year corresponding to their reusing in the cult of the Holy Sacrament.

Considerably reinforced by the Council of Trent, which redefined Communion as of triumphal importance, the devotion to the Holy Sacrament called for Fraternities and Brotherhoods, specifically created for its glorification, which would commission paintings, altarpieces, vestments and gold and silver pieces to decorate their chapels and altars.

In addition to the dating and the allusion to the Holy Communion, the engraved inscription transcribes a psalm of Saint Matthew (Chap. 11, vers. 25: *Confiteor tibi, Pater, Domine caeli et terrae, quia abscondisti haec a sapientibus et prudentibus et revelasti ea parvulis*)<sup>1</sup>, reinforcing their religious character.

In order to ensure that the free, cursive writing inscription fitted in the available space, it was necessary for the engraver to abbreviate some of the words.

The use of the Castilian language in a period post Restoration of Independence from Spain, can be explained by the cultural links that were maintained between the two countries, albeit the total political separation. Both languages, Portuguese and Castilian, were often used in literature, a fact that should not surprise, considering that many courtiers, magistrates and clergyman, the social groups that had access to culture, had attended the General Studies in Salamanca or Alcalá, and were connected to Spain by intellectual and friendship ties.<sup>2</sup>

Formally this pair of candlesticks is associated to other contemporary pieces, namely eight silver sticks, converted to incense burners and dated 1665<sup>3</sup>, made by the Guimarães silversmith Francisco Luís Pinheiro who 'made and restored for the Collegiate, at the time of Prior D. Diogo Lobo da Silveira (1663–1666), several silver and gold pieces'.<sup>4</sup> These rare objects, today at the Alberto de Sampaio Museum, were originally deposited at the Guimarães Collegiate Sacristy, as is recorded in the 1661–1665 inventory.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'I am from the Holy Sacrament, year 1713; I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children'. (Matthew Ch. 11, vers. 25).

<sup>2</sup> SERRÃO, Joaquim Veríssimo, *História de Portugal — A Restauração e a Monarquia Absoluta (1650–1750)*, Lisbon, Editorial Verbo, 1980, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription: 'SOVA POR CONTA DA FÁBRICA, ANNO 1665, (...)'. Cf.: SANTOS, Manuela de Alcântara, VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, *A Coleção de Ourivesaria do Museu de Alberto Sampaio*, Lisbon, Instituto Português de Museus, 1998, p. 102, cat. 35–42.

<sup>4</sup> SANTOS, Manuela de Alcântara, VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, *A Coleção de Ourivesaria do Museu de Alberto Sampaio*, Lisbon, Instituto Português de Museus, 1998, p. 102, cat. 35–42.

<sup>5</sup> *Regimento da Sacristia de 1661–1665* do Arquivo Municipal de Alfredo Pimenta (A–5–4–30, fl.17): IDEM, *ibidem*.



An identically shaped pair, albeit with no inscription other than an engraved flower urn on each angle of the base, was shown at the exhibition 'A Ourivesaria Portuguesa e os Seus Mestres' at Oporto's Soares dos Reis Museum in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

Curiously, one other pair closely related to the candlesticks here presented, albeit with slightly divergent linguistic inscriptions, has also been identified in recent literature. The noticeable differences, in this instance, being in the caption [Soi' De[e]l] S, mo Sacramento

año de 1713] in which the [Soi'] is absent, the [Del] has become [De] and the [año], [ano],<sup>7</sup> suggesting the possibility that, considering the inexplicable gaps, the words have been intentionally altered.

In this context, and considering the unequivocal similarities between both pairs of candlesticks, it is legitimate to assume that they were most certainly part of a single commission to a local Guimarães workshop. ✓ TP

<sup>6</sup> BAPTISTA, José Marques, *A Ourivesaria Portuguesa e os seus Mestres* (cat.), Oporto, Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis (19 June–29 July) 2007, p. 164, Cat. 160.  
<sup>7</sup> VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, *Prataria — Do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal* (Cat.), Oporto, V.O.C. Antiguidades, 2009, p. 66, cat. 25.

## 96

**A PORTUGUESE 16TH CENTURY FOOTED SILVER DISH (TAZZA)**

Silver

Portugal, Lisbon; 2nd half of the 16th century

Dim.: 10.0 × 26.7 × 27.0 cm; Weight: 645.0 g

B305

*Provenance: Private collection, Portugal*

Shallow dishes or low footed bowls, known in Italy as *tazza* and designed for presenting foodstuffs on the dining table were, similarly to those from Renaissance Venice, made in glass or in precious metals. It is likely that the latter *tazze* supplied the glass makers with models from which the glass versions were made. European paintings, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, provide numerous images of how these glass and often silver dishes, were used for serving wine or dressed for displaying a variety of delicacies or sweetmeats, such as biscuits and candied or fresh fruits. Known in Portugal as *salvas*, they were destined for tasting wines or foods for poison.<sup>1</sup>

The present example, probably destined for serving delicacies or fruit, would have been put on display when not in use. Of unusual, squared dish, it is a rare survival of Portuguese Mannerist display silver dating from the second half of the 16th century. Finely chased, its typically Mannerist rolls (*cuir*) and *ferroneries* decoration on punctured ground, as well as its cast lion masks set within

cartouches, were possibly modelled after contemporary printed sources. It comprises of a turned, moulded foot that screws up onto the square dish of circular turned cavetto, by a thick screw-thread.

It features Lisbon's assay-marks (L-14A), alongside the maker's mark 'FA' (L-217A) for an unidentified silversmith working in the second half of the 16th century. Apart from these marks, there are also two later monograms, probably ownership marks dating from the 19th century ('VM' and 'EJ'), engraved onto the recessed circular cavetto. On the dish's underside, a longer handwritten inscription, scratched onto the silver and difficult to interpret.

The assay-marks, for testing the silver purity grade, probably punched when the dish was made or when it was sold, are also evident in the dish's underside and in the foot. An important testimony of late-16th century Portuguese silverwork the present dish was displayed at the 2007 exhibition *A Ourivesaria Portuguesa e os seus Mestres*<sup>2</sup> at the Museu Nacional Soares dos Reis, Oporto. 

<sup>1</sup> CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *At the Prince's Table. Dining at the Lisbon Court (1500–1700). Silver, mother-of-pearl and porcelain*, Lisboa, AR-PAB, 2018, pp. 68–69.

<sup>2</sup> BAPTISTA, José Marques, *A Ourivesaria Portuguesa e os seus Mestres*, Oporto, Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, 2007, p. 8, cat. 3.



## GADROONED SILVER SALVERS

Gadrooned silver salvers, generally of wide concave segments, appear in the late-16th or early-17th century and remain fashionable until the first decades of the 18th century, beyond the reign of King D. Pedro II (1683–1706) and into that of his son D. João V (1706–1750), surviving as a reminiscence of ancient Roman models.

Their aesthetic appeal, resorting to the adoption of smooth, plain surfaces rhythmically defined by the symmetry of repetition, reflects options defined by a contemporary artistic current that argued for the simplicity of shape in detriment of profuse and exuberant Baroque decoration.

The plain beauty of these salvers is uniquely based on their shape — robust, sober and smooth, and in the interaction between these aesthetics and the diffused light reflections of their concave segments, giving these pieces an unusual artistic quality that would be hidden by unnecessary or superfluous ornamentation.

This same matrix was adopted in the production of other typologies such as bowls, wine tasters and water basins, equally manufactured without any added unnecessary decorative elements, valuing uniquely the beauty of their sobriety and the diffuse reflection of their silvery sheen, the characteristics that provide them with their truly uniqueness.

## GADROONED SALVERS FROM THE FORMER COLLECTION OF THE EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA, HAILE SELASSIE I

Both these historical salvers feature identical radial inscriptions to the underside of the central medallion, stating that ‘This silver dish was sold by H.M. the Emperor of Abyssinia in London Anno Domini 1936’, thus revealing one of their former owners.

Dating from the first half of the 18th century, they embody the long relationship between Portugal and the ancient Reign of Abyssinia, which was established from the earliest contact with its territory, in the 16th century, by the Portuguese explorer Pero da Covilhã, in his quest for the Christian kingdom of the mythical Prester John.<sup>1</sup>

Haile Selassie I (1892–1975) was Emperor of Abyssinia from 1930 to 1974. In the 1930s the country was a target for the renewed Imperial endeavours by the then Kingdom of Italy, being eventually invaded in 1935 by Benito Mussolini’s troops. Forced into exile, Selassie I spent four years in the United Kingdom, residing in Fairfield House (1936–1941), in Bath, a property which he donated to the city on his return to Abyssinia. His celebrated speech to the League of Nations, on the subject of his country’s invasion, converted him into an antifascist icon, chosen by Time Magazine to be 1936 Man of the Year.<sup>2</sup>

In that same year, the emperor consigned his English and foreign silver collection, formerly housed in his palace at Harar, to the London auctioneers Puttick & Simpson’s, to be sold off at auction in their premises at the Reynolds Galleries, 47 Leicester Square. Founded by James Fletcher in 1794, the firm would be acquired by Thomas Puttick and William Simpson in 1846, eventually settling at the mentioned address between 1859 and 1937.<sup>3</sup>

Although the purpose of the sale was widely known to be an urgent need for cash flow, it was officially reported to be the lack of a suitable storage location. The collection was eventually auctioned four days before Christmas 1936, raising a total of over £2.530 pounds sterling.<sup>4</sup>

The unequivocal link of these salvers to Emperor Haile Selassie is evidence to the presence of Portuguese civil silverware in the Ethiopian royal collection, and a testimony to the remarkability that justified their collecting and safeguarding. ➤ MSP

<sup>1</sup> ÁGUAS, Neves, ‘Introdução’, in CASTANHOSO, Miguel de, *História das cousas que o mui esforçado (...)*, Lisbon: Europa-América, pp. 9–12.

<sup>2</sup> MARCUS, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia*, Los Angeles: U. California Press, pp.130–153.

<sup>3</sup> Puttick & Simpson, Londres: Museu Britânico, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG42825>

<sup>4</sup> *Haile Selassie lets silver go at auction*, New York: The New York Times, December 22nd, 1936.

## A PORTUGUESE GADROONED SALVER FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA

Portuguese silver, 1721–1750

Oporto assay-mark for João do Couto de Azevedo (1703–1768)

Goldsmith mark MF for Manuel Soares Ferreira

Dim.: 4.0 × 32.5 × 32.5 cm; Weight: 392.0 g

B317

*Provenance: Haile Selassie collection, Ethiopia; private collection, Portugal*

*Inscribed: 'This silver dish was sold by H.M. the Emperor of Abyssinia in London Anno Domini 1936' on the reverse*



Round, beaten silver sheet salver. Undecorated and of raised and scalloped edge, it is defined by twenty-eight concave and grooved centrifugal sections radiating from a plain medallion encased by a reeded frame. The engraved note *'This silver dish was sold by H.M. the Emperor of Abyssinia in London Anno Domini 1936'* is inscribed peripherally around the underside of this central medallion.

The stamped Oporto Municipal assay-mark (P12.0),<sup>1</sup> denotes a production date between 1721 and 1750. João do Couto de Azevedo, the son of Manuel do Couto de Azevedo, was appointed

silver assayer following from his father's death, having been sworn in in 1721, the stamp featured on the salver's underside being used up until 1750.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, the São Roque collection owns one other gadrooned salver (B200) stamped by the father of this assayer, Manuel do Couto de Azevedo.

Complementing it, the maker's mark MF (P487.0) identifies the salver has having been manufactured by the goldsmith Manuel Soares Ferreira, registered in 1718.<sup>3</sup> *MSP*

<sup>1</sup> ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, P12.0, p. 219.

<sup>2</sup> SOUSA, Gonçalo de Vasconcelos e, *Dicionário de Ourives e Lavrantes da Prata do Porto*, Lisbon: Civilização Editora, 2005, p.44–45.

<sup>3</sup> ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, P487.0, p. 314.

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**A PORTUGUESE GADROONED SALVER FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA**

Portuguese silver

Early 18th century

Aveiro assay-mark; Goldsmith mark F for Gabriel de Figueiredo

Dim.: 4.0 × 36.5 × 36.5 cm; Weight: 640.0 g

B316

*Provenance: Haile Selassie collection, Ethiopia; Private collection, Portugal**Inscribed: Engraved IT monogram; 'This silver dish was sold by H.M. the Emperor of Abyssinia in London Anno Domini 1936' on the reverse*

Plain round salver of scalloped edge defined by thirty-two concave and grooved radial sections, centred by a medallion encircled by reeded frame. This plain roundel is occupied by the engraved monogram 'IT' and, peripherally to its underside, framed by the engraved note 'This silver dish was sold by H.M. the Emperor of Abyssinia in London Anno Domini 1936' in cursive script.

The city of Aveiro assay mark A3.0, or its variant,<sup>1</sup> points to a manufacture date in the early 18th century. Objects stamped with municipal marks for Aveiro are rare, what makes this salver a singular example within the context of Portuguese silverware production.

While curating the 1940 exhibition on Portuguese Goldsmithing, at the Machado de Castro National Museum, in Coimbra, António Nogueira Gonçalves, a master at the city's ancient University, identi-

fied for the first time an example of an Aveiro Municipal assay-mark.<sup>2</sup> Another seven identically stamped objects have since been recorded.

A similar salver, from the former collection Francisco Barros e Sá, can be seen at the National Museum of Ancient Art, in Lisbon.<sup>3</sup>

Attributable to Gabriel de Figueiredo, the goldsmith's mark F (A11.0),<sup>4</sup> substantiates a dating to the first half of the 18th century. A total of seven objects of varying types made by this goldsmith have so far been identified, the present salver being the only one of its typology. Of the eleven known Aveiro goldsmith's marks only Figueiredo has been identified up until now. ➤ MSP

<sup>1</sup> ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, A3.0 or a variant, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> BRANCO, Pedro Aguiar, *Prataria do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal*, Oporto: V.O.C. Antiguidades, 2009, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> SANTOS, Reynaldo dos; QUILHÓ, Irene, *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleções Particulares*, Lisbon: 1974, p. 139, no. 171.

<sup>4</sup> ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, A11.0, p. 26.



## A MADONNA AND CHILD PORTUGUESE FAIENCE STATUE OF THE 17TH CENTURY

Enamelled faience sculpture

Lisbon (?), 1630–1640

Dim.: 58.0 × 21.5 × 26.0 cm

C782

Provenance: Private collection, France



**FIG. 1**  
*Virgin and child*, faience, 1601–1650,  
 Portugal, MNSR



**FIG. 2**  
*Our Lady of Joy*, faience, 1639,  
 Church of Our Lady of Joy, Portugal,  
 Castelo de Vide

Devotional sculpture depicting the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus as *Salvator Mundi*. Produced in the 17th century, it features polychrome decoration on tin-white enamelled ground. Standing in a frontal position, the Virgin reveals a serene gaze and hieratic posture, albeit exposing the right shoe tip as if suggesting subtle movement.

The white face exhibits simplified blue outlined features and large almond-shaped eyes of arched and accentuated brows, in identical blue shade, that frame the glance. A straight nose of clearly defined nostrils, and a small mouth of finely designed lips, endow the image with serenity and solemnity. The hair, yellow of ferrous highlights resulting from a denser concentration of iron pigment and consequent decrease of the characteristic lustre of antimony lead, frames the face and falls straight over the shoulders, reinforcing the figure's formal stiffness and markedly hieratic character.

The Virgin Mary is attired in yellow brimmed blue cloak, punctuated by white stars, that part covers the yellowish robe of greenish nuances, resulting from the run-off of the neckband blue pigment, which is in turn adorned by ferrous pattern similar to the *ferronerie* scrolls characteristic of the Mannerist *grotesche* tradition. The figure's left arm is outstretched, while the right is bent at the elbow to hold the seated Child Jesus. The white enamelled hands stand out for their blue outlined fingers and nails.

The Child Jesus *Salvator Mundi*, also frontally positioned, is crowned and attired in an orange-coloured robe of identical decoration to that of His mother. He holds the globe in the left hand, His attribute and symbol of the world, and raises the right hand in blessing.

This type of sculpture is unusual in the generic context of 17th century Portuguese faience. In Lisbon however, similar pieces were indeed produced during the first half of the century. The best-known example (Fig. 1) belongs to the *Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis* collection, in Oporto (Inv. 315 CMP), and presents various similarities to our sculpture, namely the iconographic features, the shape and colours of the body and garments, the tin-white pigment of blue outlines, as well as the positioning and disproportionate size of the hands. Its most significant variation nonetheless relates to how it was conceived; while the sculpture from Oporto will have been produced for displaying in an alcove<sup>1</sup>—hence its undecorated back—ours is decorated all around, its wrapping cloak forming a *tutto tondo* sculpture to be admired from all sides. Such characteristic suggests that it may have been destined to be carried on a processional float, thus facilitating its observation from all angles when in motion. The possibly higher-level positioning may also justify the disproportionate dimensions of hands and head, details that, from a distance, would increase its visibility.

<sup>1</sup> PAIS, Alexandre Nobre da Silva, *Fabricado no Reino Lusitano (...)*, Decorative Arts PHD Dissertation, Oporto, Universidade Católica, 2012, p. 301.





In addition to this sculpture, which the *Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis* dates from the first-half of the 17th century,<sup>2</sup> we must also refer a Marian representation, published by Art Historian Alexandre Pais, the only one of unequivocal dating, which is displayed in an alcove on the façade of the Church of Our Lady of Joy at Castelo de Vide (Fig. 2),<sup>3</sup> in the Alentejo region. Depicting the church's Patron Saint,<sup>4</sup> the sculpture reveals a meticulous manufacture, comprising of various consolidated structural elements, previous to the applying of the painting on its surface, in a similar fashion to the image herewith described. It does also bear identical hieratic posture and tin-white enameled face of large blue outlined eyes and arched brows. The blue cloak is equally hemmed in yellow while its, in this instance, plain robe, has a ferrous colour. On its stand, the date 1639 is coherent with the temple construction.

In addition to these faience sculptures, which range in size from 50 to 70 cm, it must also be mentioned the Madonna image from the Church of Mercy in Óbidos, which is also exhibited in an outer alcove. Its rigid and formal posture, the equally forward right foot and the, albeit reduced, decorative colour palette, mostly comprising of blue stars on the white robe and cloak, do reinforce the stylistic analogies.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of its particularities, the Portuguese production of figural faience sculptures during this specific period, reflects strong influence from Italian majolica, as well as from Flemish and Spanish faience traditions.<sup>6</sup> The closest example, to be found at

the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, in Lisbon, is a figural sculpture depicting The Virgin and Child, also known as Our Lady of Stars, originally from Lisbon's Monastery of Saint Mary of Bethlehem (the Hieronymites Monastery), in which our potter might have found inspiration. Attributed to the Italian artist Andrea de la Robbia it was, according to Friar Agostinho de Santa Maria (1642–1728), a gift from Pope Julius II to King Manuel I of Portugal.<sup>7</sup> In this instance, the Virgin is depicted standing, holding the Child in Her arms and dressed in a blue cloak of scattered stars decoration.

The arrival of Chinese porcelain to Portuguese ports had a decisive impact on the production of 17th century Portuguese faience, namely in its adoption of the tin-white pigment, chalky and opaque, which allows for decorating and glazing previous to firing. Effectively, the trade in Chinese porcelain—up until then under Portuguese control—did boost significantly the development of national pottery, mainly in regard to ornamentation, evidencing the intensive use of cobalt-blue pigment on tin-white enameled grounds.<sup>8</sup>

The extant scarcity of these sculptures does most certainly derive from human negligence through the centuries, as well as from the complexity of producing such pieces. These unique circumstances, allied to the balanced simplicity and symbolic depth of the Virgin and Child iconography, endows our sculpture with a truly unique character, highlighting it as a remarkable testimony of artistic mastery. — TP

<sup>2</sup> It is equally dated to the last quarter of the 16th century: Cf. *Formas de Devoção* (cat), Exhibition Lisbon, 17th august to 10th October 1999, Museu Nacional do Azulejo, p.16, cat. 1.

<sup>3</sup> <https://imovel.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/detalhes.php?code=155626>

<sup>4</sup> KEIL, Luís, *Inventário Artístico de Portugal—Distrito de Portalegre*, Lisbon: Academia Nacional de Belas Artes, 1943, p. 42; *Apud* PAIS, Alexandre Nobre da Silva, *Op. Cit.*, 2012, p. 302.

<sup>5</sup> IDEM, *Ibidem*, p. 308.

<sup>6</sup> The settling of Italian ceramists in Antwerp transformed the city in one of the major centres for majolica production, whereas the migration of ceramists and potters from Flanders to Portugal and Spain, considerably intensified from the mid-16th century onwards, consolidated definitely the faience (majolica) production techniques in those countries. Cf.: *Lisboa Na Origem da Chinoiserie—A Faiança Portuguesa do Século XVII* (cat.), Lisbon, São Roque Antiquities e Galeria de Arte, 2018 e 2024.

<sup>7</sup> *No Tempo das Feitorias—A Arte Portuguesa na Época dos Descobrimentos* (Cat.), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Vol. I, Junho a Dezembro de 1992, cat. 73, p. 282 e 283.

<sup>8</sup> Cf.: *Lisboa Na Origem da Chinoiserie—A Faiança Portuguesa do Século XVII* (cat.).



## 100

## A PORTUGUESE 17TH CENTURY FAIENCE VASE

Portuguese faience

Lisbon, 1620-1640

H.: 34.0 cm

C795



Magnificent 17th century Portuguese faience vase, of ovoid body and short neck, decorated in cobalt-blue tones on a tin-white enamelled glaze.

The ornamentation of the bulbous body is divided into three horizontal bands, separated by thin plain fillets. In the central register, exuberant branches of flowering chrysanthemums alternate with architectural groupings. The vegetal composition is markedly symmetrical, structured around a central axis, where buds and leaves are arranged in mirrored fashion, creating a harmonious design in which each element corresponds to its counterpart on the opposite side. These motifs are separated by a group of buildings shown in perspective—probably a set of kilns—and set within a yard featuring a leafy tree with three canopies of probable Oriental influence. This pattern is repeated on the upper band of the vase, near the neck.

In the lower band, the surrounding decoration is composed of repeated vertical panels, arranged radially.

The piece displays yellowish earthenware, characteristic of Lisbon production, and was covered with an opaque tin-white enamelled glaze and subsequently decorated in cobalt blue over

the unfired glaze, with fixation of both colour and glaze achieved through firing.<sup>1</sup>

The ‘bleeding’ of the cobalt-blue pigment, visible in the ornamentation, corresponds to a phenomenon also known as ‘reboar.’ It becomes particularly evident through the dragging of the pigments, and may result from excessive solubility of the colouring oxides. To prevent it, a reduction of the maximum firing temperature would have been necessary, a technical solution that was still unknown or unachievable at the time, due to the limited ability to control the rudimentary kilns of the period.<sup>2</sup>

This appearance should not be understood as an imperfection, but rather as a common mark of manual production, which confers the piece a distinct aesthetic and expressive value, resulting here in a vibrant and lively surface.

In Lisbon, several workshops were devoted to the production of faience, frequently referred to as ‘porcelain’,<sup>3</sup> due to the mimetic parallel established with this art of Oriental origin, referencing its manufacturing quality. Here, we highlight the ‘blue and white’ decoration, applied to the body in tripartite bands, with particular emphasis on the lower pattern, which evokes Chinese

<sup>1</sup> In this context, the ‘high-firing’ colours used in Portuguese pottery faience are generally limited to blue—based on cobalt oxide—characterised by having a melting point close to that of the glazes that serve as their base, at around 900°C.

<sup>2</sup> CANOTILHO, Maria Helena Pires César, *Processos de cozedura em Cerâmica*, Séries Estudos, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança ed., 1999, p. 58. *Apud* SÉBASTIAN, Luis, *A Produção Oleira de Faiança em Portugal, séculos XVI–XVIII*, Doctoral dissertation in Archaeology, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2010, p. 463.

<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese faience, due to its ‘counterfeit resemblance (imitation) to Chinese porcelain’.





Ming-dynasty vases through the radial arrangement of repeated cartouches decorated with lotus flowers. The high decorative density and the landscape in which the expanded chrysanthemums—one of the noble plants of the Chinese tradition—are set reinforce this formal and iconographic affiliation.

This allegorical valorisation of national faience production as ‘porcelain’ was expressed in the commemorative arch erected by the potters in 1619, on the occasion of the visit of Philip III of Spain (II of Portugal), in which the kingdom’s ability to manufacture locally what had previously been imported from China was exalted. This arch displayed pottery objects, such as a faience vase inspired by Chinese porcelain, and a quatrain addressed to the monarch with the following verses:

*Aqui monarcha excelso soberano  
Vos oferece a arte peregrina  
Fabricado no reino lusitano  
O que antes nos vendeu tão caro a China*<sup>4</sup>

(Here exalted and sovereign monarch,  
Offers you the wondrous art  
Made in the Lusitanian realm  
What China sold us so expensively before)

In these workshops, kilns played a central role. João Miguel dos Santos Simões notes, in the first volume of his *Corpus da Azulejaria Portuguesa*, that “it was undoubtedly in the mid-16th century that the first ‘Venetian kilns’, also known as ‘Pisan kilns’, were installed in Lisbon, capable of firing glazed wares with opaque white glaze, distinguishing themselves from the ‘Moorish kilns’, with direct flame, used for firing red ceramics.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, in Frei Nicolau de Oliveira’s *Livro das Grandezas de Lisboa*, published in 1620, we find reference to the existence, in Lisbon, of twenty-eight ‘Venetian kilns’.<sup>6</sup>

Associated with the Oriental inspiration of this vase are motifs of a symbolic nature referencing the productive universe of pottery. The schematic representation of firing kilns, arranged on uneven ground and accompanied by vegetal elements, suggests a peripheral pottery workshop, evoking production spaces located outside the urban centre, as was customary in Lisbon pottery manufacture, especially for safety reasons.

This is an emblematic rather than topographical scene, a common practice in the 17th century, in which ceramic decoration incorporates stylised references to the artisan world, affirming the identity of pottery production in the creation of Portuguese faience.

The mark left by the potter on this vase thus goes beyond the utilitarian function of the piece, fixing in matter the sensitive memory of the creative gesture with a view to its projection through time. ✍ TP

<sup>4</sup> LAVANHA, João Baptista, *Viagem da Catholica Magestade d’el Rey D. Filipe II*, N.S. Madrid, 1622.

<sup>5</sup> SIMÕES, João Miguel dos Santos, *Azulejaria em Portugal nos séculos XV e XVI*, Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1990, p. 101 (1st ed. 1969).

<sup>6</sup> OLIVEIRA, Frei Nicolau de, *Livro das Grandezas de Lisboa*, Lisbon, Na Impressão Régia, MDCCCIV, p. 179: “8 Fornos de louça vidrada; 28 Fornos de ‘Louça de Veneza’”.



## 101

## A TWO-HANDLED 17TH CENTURY PORTUGUESE FAIENCE URN

Portuguese faience

Lisbon, 1660–1680

Dim. : 39.7 × 32.0 × 27.0 cm

C467

*Provenance: Eduardo Coelho, Oporto, Vasco Valente, Oporto e J.M.J., Lisbon**Exhib.: 'Un Siècle em BLanc et Bleu', Galerie Mendes, Paris, 2016 (cat. p. 110–113)**Pub.: 'Lisboa na Origem da Chinoiserie', 2018, pp. 156–159*

Extraordinary wheel-thrown Portuguese faience urn dating from the second half of the 17th century, its shape defined by a bulbous body, large raising handles, elevated robust neck and elegantly scalloped flaring rim. The tin-white under glaze is unusually painted in bright polychrome pigments in aesthetic grammar normally associated with decorative painted tiles of the same period.

The cobalt-blue and antimony-yellow glazes that cover most of the surface are complemented by small, carefully placed details in green, resulting from the mixing of the two pigments, and by the black outlining and filleting, a colour obtained by a high concentration of manganese pigment. This apparently irrelevant detail, however, is the key for the quite specific dating timeframe of between 1660–1680.

Such short time span is supported by comparative studies with pieces of similar colour palette that were dated by the painter, and documented tile panels still in situ, namely at the gardens of the Marquess of Fronteira estate at São Domingos de Benfica in Lisbon that are known to date to between the late 1660's and 1673.

The decorative language of this vase is particularly unusual; on each side of the body two heart shaped cartouches envelop a central roundel surrounded by a frame of Mannerist scrolls of clear Flemish flavour. In the centre, completing the composition, a gracious allegory of love; a Cupid carrying a bow and arrow is standing on a winged heart within the word 'AMOR' (LOVE). On the opposite surface a female figure holds a floral cornucopia, the Horn of Plenty, in a clear allusion to abundance.

A more unusual type of ornamentation can however be noticed in the denser patterns that were chosen to frame the handles. This type of exotic floral branches are not only present in the decoration of 17th century faience, but also in most contemporary tiled altar fronts generally defined as of 'birds and foliage', which attempt to fuse the simulation of textile altar fronts with the reinterpretation of textile and embroidery patterns from India and China.

Beneath the handles two naturalistic owls perched on branches, do surprise as the most original decorative detail of the whole composition.

Related depictions can be found in mid-17th century tiled altar fronts such as the ones at São Pedro Church in Almargem do Bispo (near Sintra) and *Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro* in Coimbra, this particular one depicting a Carmelite Emblem, as well as in some of the tile panels at the already referred Marquess of Fronteira estate gardens, which date from circa 1670.

A similar piece with styled cartouches encircling a vase with Franciscan insignia was illustrated by Artur de Sandão, a renowned historian and art collector.<sup>1</sup>

Also, in the collection of the Count of Ameal, there existed a carving of analogous form, but decorated in blue and manganese, in 'desenho miúdo.' On the upper part of the body, it features, among other figures, a Cupid, accompanied by the inscription: 'Não Quero Nada do Amor' (I Want Nothing from Love), in clear contrast with the inscription on our piece.<sup>2</sup> JM

<sup>1</sup> SANDÃO, Arthur, *Faiança Portuguesa, Séculos XVIII e XIX*, Vol. I, Livraria Civilização, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Collections *Comte de Ameal*—Catalogue descriptif, Coimbra, 1921, Cat. 1105, p. 78 e image 1105; QUEIRÓS, José, *Cerâmica Portuguesa e Outros Estudos*, Barcarena, Editorial Presença, 1907 (1.ª ed.), pp. 42 and 46, gr. 22.



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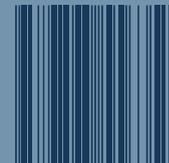
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