

From
the Old

World

From the
Old Continent
to the World
Portugal leads
Europe into the
Modern Age

Europe

Modern Age





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SÃO ROQUE

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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 peoples' 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 worldwide plant species 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, Mars 13th, 1525 + 500

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 Castellians 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 Macau, 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.

Macau 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!¹ 🍷



FIG. 3
Chafariz D'El Rey, Lisbon. ©Berardo Collection.

¹ See: SCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan; LOWE, Kate, *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2015.

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.¹

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.² 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

¹ 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.

² 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.³

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.⁴ Equally relevant are the few Indo-Portuguese creoles that persist in Chaul/Korlai⁵, Daman and Diu.⁶

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.⁷

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.⁸ Nevertheless, various creoles of Portuguese lexical origin did develop in the region,

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

namely⁹ the Malacca creole (*papiá Kristang*), the Burmese (*Thai*) in Myanmar and Thailand, the Batavia and Tugu in Java, the Moluccas creole,¹⁰ from Flores and Solor Islands and the creole from Bidau, in Timor.¹¹ 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.¹² 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 community¹³ and from foreign scholars.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

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

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ 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 creole¹⁸, 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.¹⁹ In the last century, the Macanese José dos Santos Ferreira (1919–1993) composed a variety of texts of identical nature.²⁰ 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*.²¹

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 Singapore²², 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.²³

¹⁶ 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).

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ BATALHA, Graciete Nogueira (1988), *Glossário do Dialecto Macaense: Notas linguísticas, 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.

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

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

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

²² 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).

²³ 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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*.²⁶ 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* (*āčār*), ‘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*).

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

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ 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 *kong¹gaa¹*); *chau-chau*, ‘frying’ (炒, Cantonese *caau²*), as in the traditional Chinese *chau-chau* rice; the interjection associated to give a toast, *chin-chin*, (請, Cantonese *cing²*, ‘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 *lung⁴ngaan⁵*); or *taufú* (豆腐, Cantonese *dau⁶fu⁶*), 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.²⁷ 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

²⁷ 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*’.²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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.³⁰

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,

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

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ 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 use³¹; *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*, ‘*festá*’ (party); *sabtu*, ‘*sábado*’ (Saturday); *sekolah*, ‘*escola*’ (school); or *sepatu*, ‘*sapato*’ (shoe).³²

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’³³, 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.³⁴ 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. 🍷

³¹ 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.

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

³³ 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.

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

Botany and medicine in the Portuguese overseas expansion

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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-

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 *Nanban-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).

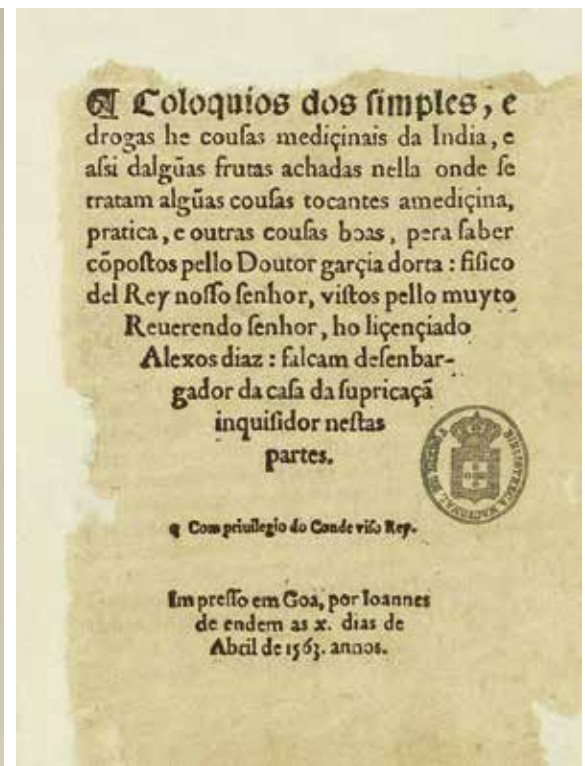
In terms of eastern medical practices and natural world, the more thorough and informative printed work was undoubtedly the monumental treaty '*Colóquios dos simples, drogas e coisas medicinais da Índia*', published by Garcia de Orta in Goa, in 1563. By then, this Portuguese physician had lived in Goa 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*',¹ 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, let's see who the main players were, in this true epic of foodstuffs and flavours.

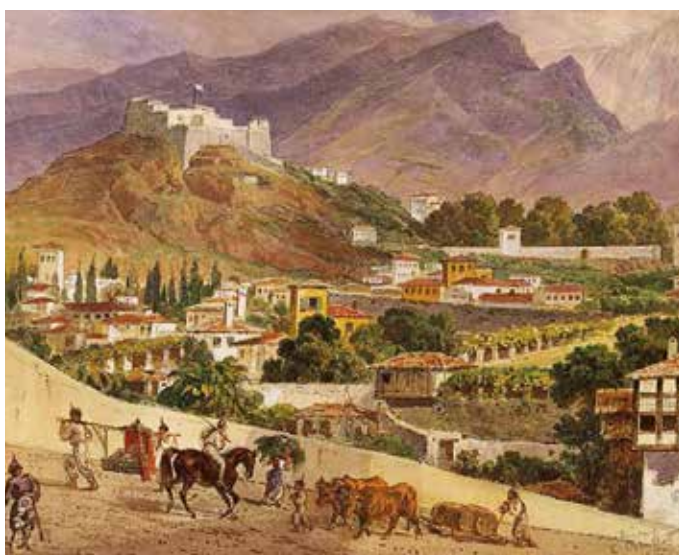
THE MADEIRA ARCHIPELAGO

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

¹ See: 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.²

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*³, 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*.

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

³ See: 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.⁴

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’.⁵ 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

⁴ See: 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.

⁵ 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.⁶

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.

⁶ See: 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 1482 Treaty of Alcáçovas, would entrench.⁷

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.⁸ 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

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

⁸ 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

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.¹¹

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

¹¹ 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.¹²

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).

¹² 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 ‘Nanban Bōeki’ or ‘Nanban trade period’. Nanban 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 nanban to refer to something foreign, exotic, and valuable. Influenced by the *nanban-jin*, southern (nan) barbarian (ban), people (jin), other contexts and expressions do emerge, such as *nanban bijutsu* (nanban art), *nanban bunka* (nanban culture), *nanban bungaku* (nanban literature) and also *nanban ryōri* (nanban 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 *nanban kashi*. Nowadays there are three types of indispensable *nanban 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* (*nanban* 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 'Nanban ryōrisho'¹³ 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, *The Portuguese in Japan*.

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

Fernão de Magalhães, known as Magellan

The renowned Portuguese navigator, ‘Fernão de Magalhães’ (c. 1480–1521), achieved fame for his historic circumnavigation of the Earth (between 1519 and 1522), together with Sebastião de Elcano (1486/1487–1526), ‘embracing’ both the East and West, marking the commencement of what is now recognized as the first globalization.¹

Pursuing a military career, ‘Magalhães’ or *Magellan* (*Magallans* in Spanish) departed for India in 1505, serving in the fleet led by D. Francisco de Almeida, and in the subsequent year joined the Nuno Vaz Pereira’s expedition. In 1510, he fought alongside Afonso de Albuquerque in the conquest of Goa, followed by Malacca, and three years later, he took part in the significant military campaign to Azamor, under the command of the Duke of Bragança.²

In 1521, Magellan proposed to King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521) his project to reach the precious Spice Islands—the Moluccas—from the West, sailing around America, instead of the eastern route sailed by the Portuguese, around Africa.³ The Portuguese navigator and cartographer believed there was the possibility of a connection with the Indian Ocean in southern America.⁴ This proposal was brought from India and encouraged by his friend Francisco Serrão, who served as captain in Malacca in 1511, who provided crucial information about the Maluco Islands (known as the Moluccas, a group of five main islands located in the easternmost part of present-day Indonesia, south of the Philippines), where the Portuguese had previously reached in 1512, as part of an expedition commanded by António de Abreu.

Seeing his plan rejected by the Portuguese monarch, Magellan sought support from the Spanish kingdom to pursue his expedition. Serving the court of Castile, he arrived in Seville in 1517, where he delved into a comprehensive study of the identification and precise demarcation of the antimeridian established by the Treaty of Tordesillas⁵ signed in 1494, between the King of Portugal, João II, and the Kings of Aragon and Castile, Ferdinand and Isabella.

With the support of Carlos I of Spain (crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1520, bearing the name Carlos V) and financial backing for his project, Magellan set sail with a five-ship fleet from Seville, in 1519. After exploring Rio de la Plata in South America and quelling a rebellion among part of the crew, he departed from the Bay of Santa Cruz in 1520. With only three ships, they entered a vast gulf which extended into a strait, located in Chile—subsequently named ‘Magellan’s Strait’ or the ‘Gateway to the Pacific’—beginning the long and arduous crossing of this immense Ocean, named the Pacific, undertaken by the navigator.⁶ These reports were documented by the chronicler of Vincenza, António Pigafetta.⁷

In 1521, they reached an island in the Marianas archipelago before proceeding to the future Philippines—named in honour of the King of Spain—initially referred to as ‘Saint Lazarus’ by Magellan. However, when they docked on other islands, attempting to impose vassalage taxes, mandated by the Spanish king, the indigenous people revolted, culminating in the death of Magellan in April 1521.

Only two ships reached the Moluccas. Sebastião de Elcano, who had assumed the captaincy of the ship *Victoria*, opted to return via the traditional Indian Run, skilfully navigating past Portuguese

¹ GARCIA, José Manuel, *Fernão de Magalhães, Herói, Traidor ou Mito: A História do Primeiro Homem a Abraçar o Mundo*, Manuscrito/Editorial Presença, 2019, pp. 11–12.

² ALBUQUERQUE, Luís de (direc.), *Dicionário de História dos Descobrimientos Portugueses*, Vol. II, Caminho, 1994, pp. 644–645.

³ ZWEIG, Stefan, *Magalhães—O Homem e o seu Feito*, Assírio & Alvim, 2017, p. 71.

⁴ ALBUQUERQUE, Luís de (direc.), *Dicionário de História dos Descobrimientos Portugueses*, Vol. II, Caminho, 1994, p. 757.

⁵ Dividing line of the world that demarcated the spheres of influence and expansion of the peninsular powers (IDEM, *ibidem*, pp. 1039–1040).

⁶ IDEM, *ibidem* p. 646.

⁷ PIGAFETTA, Antonio, *Il primo viaggio intorno al mondo. Lo storico racconto della prima circumnavigazione del globo terrestre*, Milan, Edizioni Ghibli, 2014.



FIG. 1
Kunstmans IV planisphere, ca. 1519, attributed to Jorge and Pedro Reinel; possibly presented by Fernão de Magalhães to Carlos I of Spain while seeking the monarch's support for his expedition.

naval forces, completing the voyage in 1522. Magellan and Elcano managed to connect all the oceans, effectively linking all the major continents to each other.⁸

The Spanish arrival to the Moluccas sparked a dispute between João III, King of Portugal, and Carlos V of Spain, concerning the rightful possession of the islands by these two major powers. Referred to as the 'Spice Islands', these territories were the exclusive global suppliers of clove and nutmeg, highly valued spices in European markets, which arrived in Venice through Arab merchants at exorbitant prices. Their origin was unknown since these merchants kept it secret, and it was only unveiled when the Portuguese reached the Moluccas in 1512.

Portugal asserted its claim to the archipelago not only on the grounds that it fell within Portuguese territory according to the demarcation line established by the Treaty of Tordesillas, but also because the Portuguese had already reached the islands in 1512. Spain contended that, based on the initial information provided by Magellan, their jurisdiction was attributed to the Castilian crown.

The initial conflict was mediated by Pope Adrian VI, and in 1529, with the Treaty of Zaragoza, the trade with these islands was definitively assigned to Portugal. Portuguese advancements in astronomical and cartographic navigation techniques made it possible to prove that these islands fell within the Portuguese exploration zone as established by the Treaty of Tordesillas. Consequently, in the service of the Spanish crown, the Portuguese navigator, found himself at a crossroads as he had initially believed the Moluccas were under Spanish jurisdiction. His involvement in tribal conflicts ultimately led to his death.

Magellan was remarkable for achieving one of the most significant feats in history and science, having been responsible for the most challenging and prolonged sea voyage, reshaping the perception and understanding of the so called 'Planet Ocean', having shown that the maritime expanse of the Earth was more extensive than its terrestrial counterpart.

The conquest and colonization of the Philippines commenced in 1565 with the arrival of López Legazpi in Cebu, proclaiming Spanish sovereignty. The occupation was overseen by General Governors,

⁸ GARCIA, José Manuel, Fernão de Magalhães, *Herói, Traidor ou Mito: A História do Primeiro Homem a Abraçar o Mundo*, Manuscrito/Editorial Presença, 2019, p. 13.



FIG. 2
Antonio Pigafetta's map of Tidore and some other Malukan islands in 1521.

and reported to the Viceroy of 'Nueva España', present-day Mexico, persisting until its independence in 1898. Its two main cities are located in the central plain of 'Lução' island: Manila, the old capital, founded in 1571, and Quezon City.⁹ The evangelization initiated with the arrival of European missionaries following the discovery of the Moluccas archipelago found expression in the creation of ivory works for private devotion, intended for use in both churches and convents, illustrating the swift conversion of the Filipino people to Christianity.

Differing from Indo-Portuguese, Sino-Portuguese, and Singalo-Portuguese ivories, the Philippine ivories, crafted by indigenous Chinese carvers known as 'Sangleys' (or traders settled in Manila), exhibit distinctive expressions and demonstrate the 'Sangleys' ability to replicate European prototypes while incorporating and synthesizing local iconographic, technical, and cultural elements, quickly spreading throughout Latin American countries and Spain.¹⁰

⁹ TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginárias Hispano-Filipina e Indo-Portuguesa*, Guimarães, 1974, pp. 10–11.

¹⁰ IDEM, p. 11.

Indo-Portuguese civil architecture in Goa

POLITICAL STRATEGIES AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

The deep cultural exchange between Indian and Portuguese traditions in Goa is well represented by the region's architecture, which offers many distinctly original and unique examples of a colonial influence. In both art and architecture, this style is referred to as 'Indo-Portuguese'. In terms of civil architecture, this cultural melding is evident in the numerous palaces and large stately homes found within a relatively small area compared to the vast expanse of the Indian Union. Most of these buildings—constructed not by the Portuguese but primarily by families of Christian converts, both Brahmin and Chardo—are a testimony to a cultural and economic legacy shaped by over four centuries of intercultural relations.

In the 16th century, the small state of Goa comprised the metropolitan area of the capital of a vast maritime empire that extended from the east coast of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to China and Japan. It was in Goa that East and West first met, in a dialogue marked by tensions and disputes but also by peaceful coexistence and reciprocal assimilation.

In possession of an empire that was disproportionately large for the human resources available from a small country, the Portuguese engaged in miscegenation with the native populations. At the same time, they acknowledged the ancient rights of the Brahmins and Chardos, by integrating the members of these privileged communities into colonial economic and social structures and involving them in the empire's administration. Moreover, the Portuguese adopted various behaviours of the Eastern ruling class, aligning themselves with Hindu cultural norms. This divergence from their own culture became a defining characteristic of the Portuguese cultural approach in India, clearly manifested in Indo-Portuguese art and architecture.

Consequently, the resulting aesthetics reflect obvious Portuguese influences as well as an Eastern decorative aesthetic. The rich heritage that emerges from this cultural exchange is all the more striking in that it is the product of two civilisations that hold profoundly different concepts of space and time. As such, it provides a rare example in world history, particularly when viewed through the cultural lens of the period.

'SCISSOR' ROOFS AND CAREPA WINDOWS

Within the context of the architecture developed by the Portuguese in the East during the early centuries of occupation, scissor roofs (*telhados de tesoura*) are particularly interesting due to their originality. They also testify to the remarkable ability of the Portuguese to adapt their construction practices and culture to new environments.

These steeply sloped, four-sided roofs offered several advantages. First, they facilitated the drainage of the torrential monsoon rains. Second, the high ceilings of these structures created an interior that offered the inhabitants relief from India's hot, humid climate. Third, due to the difference between the outdoor and indoor temperatures, a continuous air current was created, with the cooler air entering through the windows and rising to the highest points of the rooms.

Finally, the use of discontinuous tiles enabled hot air to escape after it rose toward the roof. This ventilation system was complemented by openings at the top of the walls, located near the mouldings. In the 19th century, ceramic roof tile vents were also commonly installed on the roofs to enhance airflow.

The development of this architectural solution began early; in 1567, the Jesuit priest Gaspar Dias, in a letter to his brothers in Lisbon, noted the widespread presence of certain structures in Goa's architecture. He reported that '... the houses have high, steep roofs like spires that look very well intertwined with the trees, it is very graceful; both the city and the island...'¹ The distinctive character of these roofs

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¹ '... as casas têm os telhados altos e impinados a modo de curicheus que estão parecendo muito bem antresachados com os arvoredos, tem muita graça; assi a cidade como a ilha...', in REGO, António da Silva. *Documentação para a história das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente. Fundação Oriente*, Lisbon, 1995, Vol. X, p. 243.



FIG. 1
Santana da Silva Palace, Margao,
second half of the 20th century.

is also recorded in the iconography of the colonial period. A significant example from the mid-16th century can be found in the *Book of Lisuarte de Abreu*,² in which a depiction of the Mandovi River sand bar includes two architectural complexes, located in the Betim and Reis Magos areas, that bear these distinct roofs. Watercolours by John Johnson (c. 1769–1846)³ produced between 1795 and 1801 also document the use of scissor roofs in Goan architecture.

Although now reduced to a few examples, scissor roofs were still quite common in Goa's urban landscapes in the 19th century. This is evidenced in the early 19th-century paintings by José Gonçalves,⁴ depicting views of Goa, as well as in the photo albums of Souza & Paul⁵ and the drawings by Lopes Mendes created between 1862 and 1871 for his study *A India Portuguesa*.⁶ Together, these works offer insights into Goa's heritage during that period.

As suggested by their stately and sophisticated architectural style, scissor roofs were primarily associated with older pleasure palaces and estates, appearing less frequently in convent architecture. Among the most notable of the surviving examples is the Santana da Silva Palace, in Margao. Its four rectangular sections are arranged around an internal courtyard, with a chapel prominently situated in the palace's centre. The elaborate main facade features a protruding central section divided by pilasters into three bays, each topped with a high scissor roof.

Another fine example of the architectural originality developed by the Portuguese in the East is the use of small plates made from oyster shells that served as window panes, replacing traditional glass. These *carepa* windows were constructed with a wooden frame featuring vertical slats and filled with overlapping oyster shell plates. The transparency of this material resulted in a special luminosity within

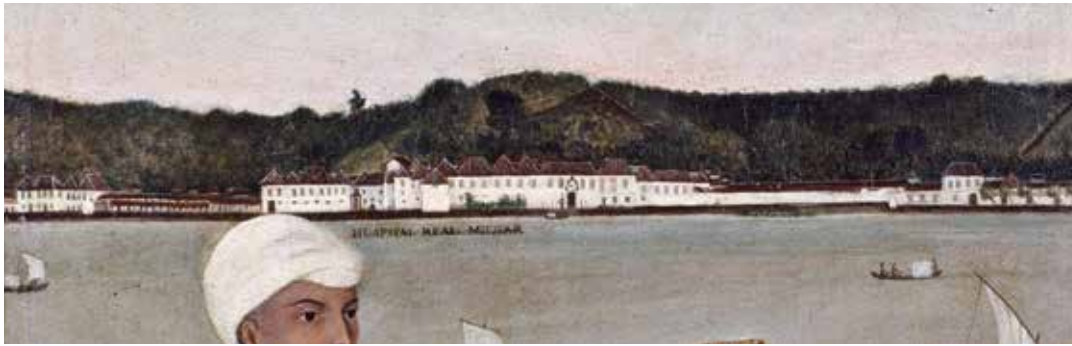
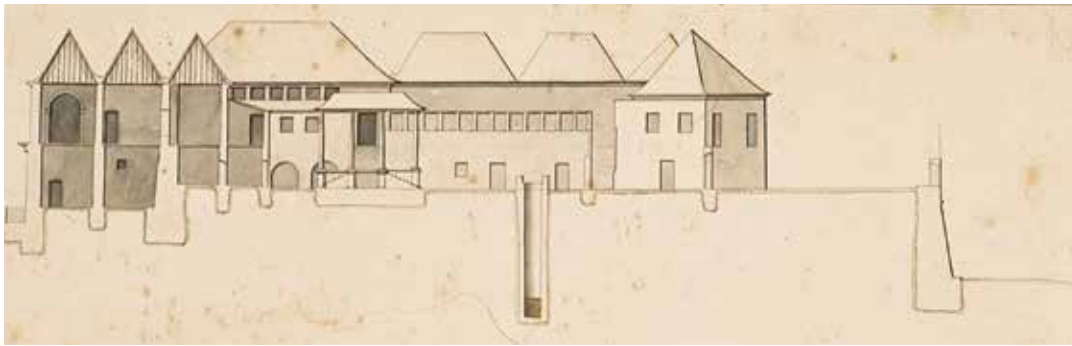
² Pierpont Morgan Library, *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu*. New York, Ms. 525.

³ These watercolours are among the 36 views of South India contained in an album in the collection of the British Library in London, WD 1005.

⁴ This set of oil-on-canvas paintings is reproduced in Helder Carita's book *Os palácios de Goa—Modelos e tipologias de arquitectura civil indo-portuguesa*, Quetzal Editores, Lisbon, 1995.

⁵ Souza & Paul was a Goan photography studio that was very active from the late 19th century to the early 20th century.

⁶ MENDES, António Lopes. *A India Portuguesa*, Imprensa Nacional, Lisbon, 1886.



the interior spaces. In addition, the overlapping plates enabled air circulation between the interior and exterior environments, a design that, like the scissor roofs, was particularly suited to the tropical climate of southern India. This unique feature added a distinct character to both civil and religious architecture.

The origin and spread of *carepa* windows can be traced to at least the second half of the 16th century. François Pyrard of Laval, who lived in Goa between 1608 and 1610, provided detailed accounts of the use of oyster shells and their applications in architecture. In his appraisal of the churches and palaces in Goa, the French navigator describes: ‘... the buildings of these Churches and palaces, both public and private, are very sumptuous and magnificent (...) they cover them with tiles; they do not use glass panes but instead use very thin and polished oyster shells which they set in wood in the shape of diamonds’.⁷

Benefiting from an Indian tradition of exceptional craftsmanship, *carepa* windows represent a fusion of Portuguese construction methods with influences from distant regions, including southern China and Macao. In Macao, oyster shells were commonly used in architectural doorways, as noted by Macanese historian Wong Shiu Kwan in his book *Macao Architecture*: ‘... in the past, thin laminae of oyster shells were used as a substitute for glass’.⁸ The use of *carepa* windows is also seen not only in other cities in Portuguese India but also along the east coast of Africa, particularly in Mozambique. Within Portuguese India itself, there is no evidence of this practice outside of Goa, such that *carepa* windows imparted a distinctive characteristic to the facades of the grand stately homes of this small region.

Several other structural features of the *carepa* windows in Goa contributed to their unique design. By rotating on vertical hinges, the windows could be tilted horizontally but also raised and lowered along vertical tracks, similar to traditional sash windows. During this investigation, it was discovered that sash windows are the oldest type of fenestration, and their use predominated in Goan architecture from the late 16th century to the first half of the 18th century.

⁷ ‘...les bastiments de ces Eglises et Palais, tant publiques que particuliers, sont fort somptueux e magnifiques (...) ils les couvrent de thuille; ils n’usent des vitres de verre, mais se servent aux lieu, d’escailles d’huitres fort ténues, et polies, qu’ils enchassent dans du bois en forme de losanges’. PYRARD, François de Laval. *Voyage de François Pyrard, de Laval, contenant sa navigation aux Indes orientales Maldives, Moluques et au Brésil*. Chez Remi Dallin, Paris, 1619.

⁸ KWAN, Wong Shiu. *Macao Architecture: An integrate of Chinese and Portuguese influence*. Macao, Imprensa Nacional, 1970.

FIG. 2

Elevation and section of the Palace of the Viceroys in Goa. Survey of the second half of the 18th century, drawing by J.B. Vieira Godinho, Library of the Lisbon Geographical Society.

FIG. 3

Pleasure palace of the viceroys, also known as *Palácio da Casa da Pólvora* (Gunpowder Palace). Detail of a painting by José Maria Goncalves, early 19th century. Private collection, Lisbon.



FIG. 4, 5, 6 AND 7

Interior and exterior views of carepa windows: Rachol Seminary, Salcete; Monteiro House in Candolim, Bardez, Salcete; Benalva Velsao House, Salcete; Frias House, Candolim, Bardez.

An interesting variation of *carepa* sash windows was their manner of use on balconies and entrance porticoes, where large panels were installed in a continuous fashion. The few remaining, isolated examples in Goa's built heritage are either holdovers or later adaptations of earlier periods, particularly the 16th and 17th centuries, which coincided with the era known as Golden Goa. For example, this type of balcony can still be seen on the facade of the Archbishops' Palace, facing the Mandovi River, and on the balcony of Cabo Convent.

The influence of *carepa* windows and the architecture introduced by the Portuguese is reflected in the Asian languages that adopted the Portuguese word *janela* (window)—one of the many examples of the impact of the Portuguese in South Asia. Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado, in his publication *Portuguese Vocables in Asiatic Languages*, presents fourteen examples of the integration of *janela* in different languages: *zanel* (Konkani), *jilmil* (Hindustani), *janala* (Bengali), *jhirmiri* (Sindhi), *janelayala* (Sinhala), *janala* (Tamil), *janel* (Malayalam), *janala* (Malay), *jandela* (Sundanese), *jendelo* (Javanese), *jindelo* (Madurese), *jendela* (Balinese), *jandela* (Makassarese), *jinela* (Tetum) and *janela* (Galoli).⁹

PLAIN ARCHITECTURE AS THE FIRST AESTHETIC MODEL IN THE PALACES OF GOA

The collection of palaces and farms that can still be seen today mostly date to the second half of the 18th century and the 19th century, following the legendary era of Goa's great splendour. The magnificent palaces built by the Portuguese during Golden Goa have nearly all vanished, as have the luxurious pleasure estates that, as late as the 18th century, lined the banks of the Mandovi River, '... adorned with flourishing farms and plantations and other fruit trees...'¹⁰

The first Portuguese civil architecture in India was characterised by a strong emphasis on simplicity. This so-called plain style was seen in the larger construction efforts undertaken by the Portuguese in the 16th century, particularly in the building of fortresses. While the architectural approach of the colonialists was closely linked to military building practices, it deviated from the international aesthetic values

⁹ DALGADO, Sebastião R. *Influência do vocabulário português em línguas asiáticas*. Imprensa da Universidade, Coimbra, 1913, p. 91.

¹⁰ IVES, Eduard. *A voyage from England to India*. London, 1773, p. 195.



FIG. 8
Proenças House in Calangute,
Bardez, Goa. Photo: Nicolas Sapiéha.

of Italian Mannerism, resulting in the development of a distinctive originality within the Portuguese cultural context.

One of the oldest examples among the preserved Indo-Portuguese architecture is the Archbishops' Palace, built at the end of the 16th century. The Palace of the Viceroys' Fortress (*Palácio da Fortaleza*), which served as a residence of the viceroys, also dates from this period but was demolished in the 19th century. However, it was included in an 18th-century survey,¹¹ allowing its architectural style to be assessed to some extent. Application of the plain architectural model, employing simple, solid and autonomous volumes, is evident in both palaces. The functional and utilitarian spirit that guided plain architecture contributed to its development. The use of very tall, steeply sloped hipped roofs further emphasised the organic nature of this style of architecture while the minimal fenestration of the ground floor reinforced the sense of solidity and strength that seemed to emanate from these buildings.

Another of the viceroys' residences was the *Casa da Pólvora* Palace (comprising a gunpowder factory), built by Viceroy D. Francisco da Gama at the end of the 16th century. The location of this palace, along the banks of the Mandovi River, and its enclosure by gardens and woodlands kept it well separated from the numerous government departments and public services surrounding the *Palácio da Fortaleza* (Fortress Palace).

In Portuguese colonial architecture, this palace was a symbol of the power dynamics and interests of the dominant class established by the Portuguese. The viceroy's guard, dressed in blue livery and armed with halberds, was aligned along the staircase. The archbishops and the nobility similarly displayed their status in terms of the number of servants and the grandeur of their representation. This desire to showcase oneself accompanied by numerous attendants was not exclusive to the Portuguese. During his visit to Goa, Tavernier noted: '(...) The blacks are seen followed by thirty slaves and magnificently dressed (...)'.¹²

¹¹ These surveys are currently dispersed across different locations. The survey from the Palace of the Viceroys' Fortress is housed in the Library of the Geographical Society in Lisbon. The survey of the Palace of the Inquisition is located at *Gabinete de Estudos Arqueológicos de Engenharia Militar* (Office of Archaeological Studies of Military Engineering), also in Lisbon.

¹² '(...) on voit de ces noirs suivis de trente esclaves e superbement vétus (...)'. In TAVERNIER, Jean-Baptiste. *Les Six Voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Ecuier, Baron D'Aubonne, en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes*. 'Voyages des Indes, Livre Premier', chapitre XVIII. Paris, 1678, p. 121.



FIG. 9
Palace of the Counts of Nova Goa in Panjim. Photograph by Souza & Paul, end of the 19th century. Collection of the Counts of Nova Goa, Lisbon.

The Archbishops' Palace in Goa has retained its captivating appearance to this day. The main floor is accessed by an external staircase and features a portico reminiscent of those of 16th-century Portuguese palaces. The main facade was once enclosed within a walled courtyard, a common element in plain architecture. While it at some point disappeared, it can still be seen in photographs taken by Souza & Paul.

In the Fortress Palace, the facade is prominently marked by a monumental external staircase, protected by a portico with Tuscan columns and leading to a walled great square, then known as *Terreiro do Sabaio*.

Due to their connections to the city, these palace-castles reference a late Gothic style while remaining as distinct elements within an urban landscape. Their gardens, enclosed by a walled courtyard, symbolised their discontinuous yet strongly hierarchical structure.

Although it was constructed later, in the 18th century, the *Palácio dos Reis de Sudém* in Pondá exhibits many of the features of plain architecture and thus the Portuguese colonial model. The building's somewhat archaic character stems from the desire of the kings of Sudém to align themselves with an aesthetic that served as a symbol of political power in Portuguese India. Recently, one of its main facades has been altered; however, the palace still boasts a large section facing the garden, featuring a front elevation. The striking similarities with the Archbishops' Palace include the use of straight, undecorated bay windows that reflect the purest traditions of plain architecture.

MANNERIST AESTHETICS FROM THE LATE 16TH TO THE 17TH CENTURY

Between the late 16th and 17th centuries, a Mannerist style emerged whose strong Italian influences significantly differed from the plain architecture preferred in the Goan metropolis during the same period and was not seen in the architecture of Lisbon. Its introduction was closely linked to the economic supremacy of the Church and the Society of Jesus. It also coincided with a time when the Portuguese Empire reached the height of its wealth and splendour—an era of relative political calm in the years following the end of the war with the Sultanate of Bijapur, in 1580, and before the fall of Ormuz, in 1622.

Unfortunately, there are even fewer surviving examples of Mannerist architecture than plain architecture. Nonetheless, those that remain are some of the most significant religious buildings that can be



FIG. 10
Palace of the Kings of Sudém. Photo
by Souza & Paul, end of the 19th
century. Helder Carita collection.

seen today. Their structures illustrate the lasting influence of Italian Mannerism in Indo-Portuguese civil architecture during the 18th century, which has no parallel in metropolitan architectural developments from the same time. Besides the Palace of the Inquisition, the Indo-Portuguese adoption of Mannerism is evident in the pleasure palaces and estates built by the Portuguese nobility along the banks of the Mandovi River, which gained new significance in the city from the mid-16th century onwards. These structures reflected the aesthetic and urbanistic values that coincided with a shift from a straightforward representation of military power to a more nuanced expression of power through aesthetic and formal means.

The Mandovi River was a major urban waterway. Dellon, writing about Goa in 1678–1679, noted: ‘...from both sides of the river, there are many beautiful houses belonging to the inhabitants of Goa... The gardens are filled with trees, flowers, and fruits throughout the year. Panjim, located near the city, is a large village or hamlet that surpasses many cities in beauty, serving as a place where the affluent have palaces to retreat to during the heat. The gardens reflect the beauty of the buildings, and everything is admirable...’¹³

Hamilton described his visits to Goa between 1692 and 1704: ‘... the Banks of the River are beautified with noble Structures of Churches, Castles and Gentlemens [sic] Houses... Their Houses are large, and their Outsides magnificent...’¹⁴

The palaces distributed along the Mandovi River together create an architectural ensemble of significant visual impact. Their distinct aesthetic, rooted in the Mannerist tradition, was retained in civil architecture throughout the 18th and even into the 19th century. Typical features of the facades included the alternating use of pilasters and windows and the adoption of the Corinthian order—elements that only emerged in Portugal during the Joanine Baroque period—as well as the triangular pediment

¹³ ‘...e des deux côtéz du rivage, quantité de belles maisons qui appartiennent aux habitants de Goa... les jardins y sont pleins d’arbres, chargez toute l’année de fleurs, de feuilles, e de fruits. Pangim, qui est à une lieue de la Ville, est un grand village ou Aldea, qui surpasse beaucoup de villes en beauté, c’est un lieu où toutes les personnes de qualité ont des Palais pour se retirer pendant la chaleur. Les jardins répont à la beauté des édifices, e tout en est admirable’...’. DELLON, Charles. *Nouvelle relation d’un voyage fait aux Indes Orientales*. Amsterdam, 1699, p. 202.

¹⁴ HAMILTON, Captain Alexander. *A new account of the East Indies*. London, 1744, vol. I, p. 249.



FIG. 11
Monteiro's house in Calangute,
Bardez, Goa. Photo: Helder Carita.



FIG. 12
House of the Quadros Costa family,
Loutulim, Salcete. Photo: Joaquim.

that crowned each bay window on the main floor. This latter element, while not entirely unknown in the metropolis, was limited to a few exceptional and particularly sophisticated examples, such as the now-vanished *Paço Real da Ribeira* in Lisbon or the *Palácio dos Duques de Bragança* in Vila Viçosa, and was not significantly incorporated in typical palatial architecture.

These stylistic elements and architectural models seem to have originated from an interaction between religious and civil architecture, evidenced by the similarities in the respective decorative models and revealing a similar understanding of their design elements. Although there is little formal representation today, an appreciation of the aesthetic principles underlying Mannerism and plain architecture is essential in understanding the evolution of Indo-Portuguese architecture as it emerged in the provinces of Bardez and Salcete during the late 17th century and extending into the 18th and 19th centuries. The buildings that remain today constitute the majority of the existing domestic heritage.

THE COURTYARD HOUSE MODEL AND GOAN ARCHITECTURE

Though in decline, Goa and a small group of territories stretching from Macao to the east African coast underwent significant changes throughout the 18th century. The wealth from Brazil was insufficient to support the colonial economy, but Goa remained a crucial hub for trade between Europe and the East, which necessarily included Brazil. In this new context, Christianized Indian communities, particularly Brahmins and Chardos, were gradually invited to participate as true subjects of the king, receiving various



privileges, including nobility and coats of arms. While this period corresponded to a time of economic decline for the Portuguese, it was also a time of economic and social consolidation for the Goan upper classes.

Consequently, throughout the second half of the 18th century and especially in the 19th century, the courtyard house became the typical Indo-Portuguese residence. The architecture of these houses, which were widely distributed across Goa, was not only well suited to the climate and landscape, it also reflected a remarkable aesthetic sensibility in which an intrinsic aesthetic unity nonetheless allowed a continuous variation of decorative elements and architectural details.

Many of the distinctive features that gradually emerged in 18th-century houses eventually became permanent elements. This is exemplified by the central courtyard, which initially tended to be open but by the 19th century became fully enclosed, resulting in their forming the central element of the house, shaping its interior structure.

Towards the end of the 18th century, balconies began to gain prominence as favoured spaces for socialising, unencumbered by the privacy concerns of the previous centuries. As a result, the *carepas* windows became unnecessary; instead, decorative preferences focussed on balcony railings and the supporting posts of the veranda. In more elaborate examples, the wooden support columns echoed the shapes and artistic details of gilded carved columns. A prime illustration of this can be seen in the House of the Bragança Pereira family, in Utorda, which features balcony columns adorned with fluted shafts and Corinthian capitals. While this is one of the most exquisite examples, it is not unique, as the influence of altar columns can also be seen in houses such as that of the Monteiros family, in Assolna. These design choices underscored the long-standing impact of religious forms on domestic architecture in Goa over the centuries.

As the 19th century progressed, decorative styles began to diverge from ecclesiastical and late-Baroque Portuguese influences. More exotic shapes began to appear on balcony railings, columns and eaves. These often included floral designs, but as they required continuous maintenance, much of this heritage has been lost, especially the intricately cut wooden eaves. The bases of the balconies also evolved during this period, as the three small consoles common in the 17th and 18th centuries were replaced by a single

FIG. 13
Palace of the Bragança Pereira family
in Chandor, Salcete. Photo: Nicolas
Sapieha.



FIG. 14
Balcão of the Dean's Palace, Quepém.
Photo: Joaquim dos Santos.

FIG. 15
Balcão of the Figueiredo House,
Loutulim, Salcete. Helder Carita
archive.

FIG. 16
Balcão of the Colaço House, Margão.

unit, in step with the developments in architectural design. Variations included balconies whose roofs extended directly from the main structure and were supported by thick columns. In the Cabrais family house, in Nagoa, these columns were decorated with foliage created using stucco relief, clearly drawing inspiration from the columns used in altars.

The intricate artisanal traditions of carpentry and decorative plasterwork are evident in the innovative styles used in the design of porches, staircases, columns, balcony railings and eaves. The skills of the carpenters and craftsmen fuelled a rich imagination, resulting in diverse designs in which the vibrant Indian colour palette added an exotic flair and highlighted an enduring Indian aesthetic.

Among the most distinctive features of the courtyard house was the elaborately decorated *balcão* (entrance portico). Its formal evolution reflected the aesthetic transformations that occurred from the late 18th through the 19th century. With its strong Portuguese influences, the *balcão* held a unique significance within the structure of Goan houses and was a particularly interesting development in the evolution of Indo-Portuguese architecture. As a living space, it acquired significant symbolic value especially in the courtyard houses of the 19th century, as it served as both a distinct identifying feature of the house and a marker of the family's prestige.

The social function of the Goan *balcão* also acquired special relevance. The progressive secularisation of domestic life from the mid-18th century onwards facilitated changes in habits, including the greater participation of women in social life. However, it also posed challenges for Brahmin and Chardo families, particularly concerning interactions with lower social classes. The *balcão*, as a semi-exterior area, thus became an important meeting place while still preserving the intimacy of the house's interior.

The surviving steeply pitched scissor roofs that had previously distinguished the homes of the Portuguese nobility provide a final reminder of an aristocratic past. Even today, they retain their original function of internal ventilation, with the porch often elevated above the eaves of the house, incorporating an upper grille to allow the escape of hot air. Serving as an extended living room, the *balcões* that still exist today typically feature long masonry benches, with smaller benches, originally intended for servants, distributed along the steps, a setup seen in old photographs. As a social element that fostered interactions between different castes, the *balcão* represented a humanist influence rooted in Christian values. ➤

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 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 Quiloa, on

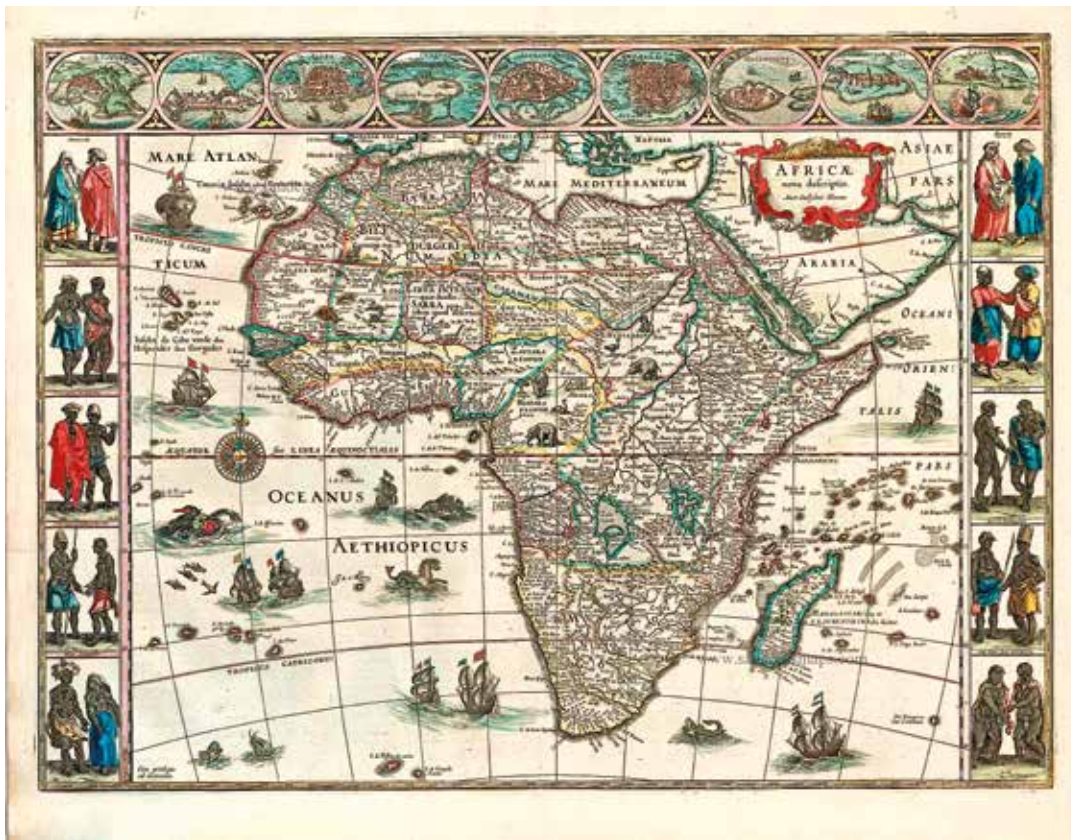


FIG. 1
*Map of Africa, Willem Janszoon
 Blaeu, 1640.*

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. ✓

Sierra Leone



Four years after Gil Eanes crossed the Bojador cape (1434), King D. Duarte died, consequently postponing the arrival to the Guinean region, also called *Terra dos Negros*, to 1444.

The arrival at the mouth of the Senegal River and the Casamansa River followed one year later. Gambia was reached in 1446 (Senegambia) and, in 1460, Pedro de Cintra arrived in Sierra Leone, which was part of the Sapes' Kingdoms.

The name 'Serra Leoa' was given to the territory by the same Portuguese explorer. Regarding its etymology, Luíz de Cadamosto in 'Navegação do Capitão Pedro de Cintra' affirms, 'the mountain was named Serra Leoa for its great roar, which is continually felt because of constant thunderstorms on its summit, which is always surrounded by clouds'.¹

In 1462 the first trading posts were founded, which can still be witnessed today. In the 16th century, Mandingo warriors of Mandé origin invaded the region and began the commerce of slaves with the European slave traders. In a brief period, the area became the object of a fierce commercial dispute between Portuguese, French, English, Danish and Prussian slave traders. The Portuguese were then expelled from the territory, by the English, in the 17th century. 🏹

FIG. 1
16th century map of the Guinea Coast identifying Sierra Leone by the Portuguese name *Serra Leoa*.

¹ In *Collecção de Noticias para a Historia e Geografia das Nações Ultramarinas, que vivem nos Dominios Portuguezes, ou lhes são visinhas*, published by Academia Real das Sciencias, Academia Real das Ciências, 1812, 2nd tome, p. 76.

01

SAPI-PORTUGUESE SPOON DISPLAYING A PORTUGUESE NAVIGATOR FIGURE

Ivory

Sierra Leone; ca. 1490–1530

Height: 17.5 cm

F1338

Provenance: Claude Mayer collection, France (inv. 2022), J.J.F., Portugal and private collection Portugal.

Published: DIAS, Pedro, 'Arte de Portugal no Mundo—Africa Occidental', Lisbon, Público, Comunicação Social SA, 2008, p. 46, fig. 28.



This São Roque's spoon, featuring a male figure to the handle, probably a Portuguese attired in contemporary fashion and with his hands joined in prayer. The delicate and stylized carving reveals the elaborate aesthetics of this interesting Sapi-Portuguese object, belonging to a group of sculpted ivories produced by the *Sapes*, or *Sapi*¹—Peoples from Sierra Leone—, between 1490 and ca. 1525,² during the earliest contacts with the Portuguese, upon Pedro de Sintra's arrival to this Guinean Coast region in 1462.

The spoon bowl shape can be compared to the spoon at the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 1), a characteristic that is common to all the Sapi spoons.³

Human depictions are very unusual in forks and spoons from Sierra Leone, just as they are in pieces from the Kingdom of

Benin. In fact, European figures can be only seen in three spoons from Sierra Leone—this spoon from São Roque collection, one from the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the third one, just a fragment, from a private collection (Bassani, 2000, p. 248, fig. 764).

The cluster of carved objects from Sierra Leone, referred to as 'Sapi-Portuguese', includes salt cellars, oliphants and other typologies.⁴ Resulting directly from these cultural and artistic interactions, these items were produced for exporting,⁵ identified for their hybrid nature, and consequently classified by William Fagg (1959) as 'Afro-Portuguese'.

Within this generic categorisation, they are joined by ivory carvings from a second western African production centre, the ancient Kingdom of Benin, in present-day Nigeria.⁶ From the six-

¹ The term 'Sapi' appears in Portuguese records as a broad classification for the Peoples from Sierra Leone's coast (the Bullom, the Temne and possibly the Baga), in HORTA, José da Silva, 'A Guiné do Cabo Verde', in *Produção textual e representações* (1578–1684). Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian/FCT, 2011, pp. 52–53.

² AFONSO, Luís U. 'Sapi Export Ivories and Manueline Art', Viator, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 52 no. 1, Brepols Publishers, 2021, p. 442. Kathy Curnow considers that this production would have been more extensive, framing it to between ca. 1490 e 1550. Cf. CURNOW, Kathy, *The Afro-Portuguese Ivories: classification and stylistic analysis of a hybrid art form* [s.l.], 1983, PhD Dissertation, University of Indiana, 2 Vols, 1983, p. 68.

³ See this Sapi-Portuguese spoon in BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800*, London: British Museum, 2000, p. 247.

⁴ Extant Sierra Leone ivories add up to one hundred items, of which approximately ten are spoons. See: BASSANI, E., FAGG, W., *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestael Verlag, 1988, p. 61; and BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800*, London: British Museum, 2000.

⁵ Spoon export continued, quite possibly, until the late 17th century, as is stated in Portuguese written sources, in MOTA, A. Teixeira da, 'Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII', in *Africa* 30, 1975, pp. 580–589.

⁶ See: CURNOW, Kathy, *The Afro-Portuguese Ivories: classification and stylistic analysis of a hybrid art form*, [s.l.], PhD Dissertation, University of Indiana, 2 vol., 1983; and BASSANI, E., FAGG, W., *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestael Verlag, 1988.

ty-one recorded from Benin, only one features a barefoot European figure, probably a Portuguese sailor, attired in doublet, hat, and sheathed sword, analogous to those represented in saltcellars.⁷

Comparatively to the Edo-Portuguese (or Bini-Portuguese) ivories, the Sierra Leone production was considerably smaller. In Ezio Bassani's catalogue (2000) were merely recorded ten Sapi-Portuguese items, including our spoon, featuring an anthropomorphic figure.

Studied as tangible historical 'records', these artworks are revealing of encounters between different cultures, and hence combine African and European, mainly Portuguese, shapes, techniques, and iconographic motifs, generating a new style. A later classification—*Luso-African* ivories—was aimed at emphasising their local character, the African context in which they were produced.⁸ It must also be noted that the syncretic nature of these carved objects, evidences the fact that this production resulted from a fruitful intercultural phenomenon.⁹

Integrated in princely and aristocratic European *kunstkamern* from the 16th century onwards, these ivories were soon mentioned in contemporary Portuguese records. The receipt letter from Afonso Eannes do Campo (1491–1493), represents one of the earliest references to pieces of this typology, specifying that this Keeper of the Royal Warehouses in the Cape Verde Islands, received fourteen ivory spoons, most likely originating from Sierra Leone.¹⁰ Equally relevant are the accounts by Duarte Pacheco Pereira (1505–1508), noting that in Sierra Leone were made the most delicate, and better carved ivory spoons from these western African regions.¹¹

Testifying to the provenance of such objects, other references do also supply relevant details regarding their production processes, such as those by Valentim Fernandes (ca. 1506–1510), one of the German origin printers that settled in Portugal. Praising the skills of these sculptors, he mentions their ability in producing saltcellars and spoons, as well as the drawings that were supplied

for this ivory production, qualifying these pieces as '*muy maravilhosas de ver*' (very wonderful to see).¹²

Similarly, and still recalling references to these Sierra Leone productions in European inventories dated from 1560 onwards, Father Manuel Álvares (1616), registers his appreciation of such spoons, that feature various motifs such as, '(...) *cabeças de bichos, pássaros e seus próprios corofis, com tanta perfeição que não há mais que ver*' (beasts heads, birds and their own corofis, with such perfection that there is nothing else to see).¹³ '*Corofis*' or *krifi* were Temne People spirits or deities, alluding to a religious use of the spoons made by the Sapes, and highlighting the symbolism attributed to ivory, which is present in both European and African societies.

A cluster of Luso-African cutlery from these two African regions, as well as some fragments, have also been recently unearthed in Lisbon and in southern Portugal's archaeological contexts, namely in locations connected to religious cult, such as convents, churches, and monasteries, as well as close to aristocratic residential buildings.¹⁴

Distinct sculpture workshops in which various artisans operated, have been identified in Sierra Leone.¹⁵ In such instance it is only expectable that carving differences between objects featuring identical iconographic motifs, could occur. In fact, there are some marked differences between spoons produced by different hands, despite some sharing the same ornamental motifs.

The depiction of Portuguese in pieces from both production centres—Benin and Sierra Leone—is revealing of differing perceptions of these foreigners, as well as of the development of the Luso-African relations. Despite their stylistic differences, the way the Portuguese are represented reveals the degree of local acceptance in the two ivory carving regions.¹⁶

Considering this artistic and cultural intersection, other factors must be considered relating to the iconography, which are associated to the commissioning and circulation of this type of items, such as the period when they were ordered (or exchanged), between the late-15th and the 17th centuries, and the continuous

⁷ AMARAL, Leonor, *Os marfins luso-africanos do reino do Benim (séculos XVI e XVII). Estudo histórico-artístico e material*, Lisbon: FL/Universidade de Lisboa. PhD Dissertation, 2022, p. 201.

⁸ MARK, Peter, 'Towards a Reassessment of the Dating and the geographical Origins of the Luso-African Ivories: fifteenth–seventeenth Century', in *History in Africa* 34, 2007, pp. 189–211.

⁹ See: AMARAL, Leonor L., *Os marfins luso-africanos do reino do Benim (séculos XVI e XVII). Estudo histórico-artístico e material*. Lisbon: FL/Universidade de Lisboa. PhD Dissertation, 2022.

¹⁰ In MOTA, A. Teixeira da, 'Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII', in *Africa* 30, 1975, p. 580.

¹¹ IDEM, *ibidem*.

¹² FERNANDES, Valentim, *Códice Valentim Fernandes. Leitura Paleográfica, leitura, notas e índice por José Pereira da Costa*, Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa da História, 1997, p. 111.

¹³ In MOTA, A. Teixeira da, 'Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII', in *Africa* 30, 1975, p. 585.

¹⁴ GOMES, M. Varela, CASIMIRO, T., MANSO, C., 'Afro-Portuguese ivories from Sierra Leone and Nigeria (Yoruba and Benin Kingdoms) in archaeological contexts from Southern Portugal', in *African Arts* 53, 2020, pp. 24–37.

¹⁵ 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, p. 94.

¹⁶ CURNOW, Kathy, 'Alien or Accepted: African Perspectives on the Western Other in 15th and 16th Century Art', in *Society for Visual Anthropology Review* 6, no. 1, 1990, p. 39.



FIG. 1
Sapi-Portuguese spoon, ivory, ca. 1490–1530, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Bequest of Nelson A. Rockefeller, 1979, Inv. 1979.206.116.

expertise of artisans from distinct workshops, producing more of less elaborate objects according to the skills they had themselves mastered in carving; and also the status of the recipients of these objects: for themselves, for indigenous diplomatic offers, or as gifts for the European elites through the Antwerp trading outpost, amongst others.

In conclusion, the eclecticism and syncretism present in the exporting ivory production from Sierra Leone, and concomitantly, in Manueline art, reflect not only the hybrid character of Sapi ivories, but also the Euro-African cultural relations established at that period, which were characterised by mutual artistic transfers.¹⁷ LLA



¹⁷ AFONSO, Luís U., 'Sapi Export Ivories and Manueline Art', *Viator, Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 52, no. 1, Brepols Publishers, 2021, p. 446.

02

OLIPHANT WITH THE PORTUGUESE ROYAL COAT OF ARMS

Carved ivory

Sierra Leone; ca. 1490–1530

Length: 30.5 cm

F1340

*Provenance: G. Ladrière collection, Paris; P.A.B. Portugal and private collection, Portugal.**Published: BASSANI, Ezio, 'African Art and Artefacts in European collections, 1400–1500', London, British Museum Press, 2000, no. 786; BASSANI, Ezio, et al., 'Sièges africains, Réunion des Musées Nationaux', Paris, 1994, p. 253, no. 5; DIAS, Pedro, 'A Arte do Marfim—O Mundo onde os Portugueses Chegaram', Oporto, V.O.C. Antiquidades, 2004, p. 42, no. 9.*

The first artworks resulting from the initial commercial contacts between the Portuguese and the ethnically diverse West-African populations living between the Upper Guinea Coast and the Kingdoms of Kongo and Angola, are the earliest truly multi-cultural objects that emerge from the Portuguese overseas expansion. As for the carved ivory objects made for the Portuguese clientele, their attraction lay primarily in the raw material, given the time-honoured appreciation for the manufacturing and artistic qualities of elephant ivory, reinforced by its relative rarity in Europe until then. During the Renaissance, it was the quality of the materials and the exquisite craftsmanship that lay at the heart of the European elites' consumerism, and this is also true for objects made worldwide, which arrived in Europe aboard the Portuguese ships from the late fifteenth century onwards.

Over the last few decades there has been considerable academic interest in West African carved ivories, produced under more or less direct Portuguese influence at the dawn of the early modern period. Research by scholars such as William Fagg, Ezio Bassani, Kathy Curnow, Peter Mark, Jean Michel Massing, and Kate Lowe, among others, have provided new and valuable insights on the subject.

The first, and probably the largest and most important ivory carving centre on the West African coast has been identified as present-day Sierra Leone, a fact that is easily understood considering the chronology of the Portuguese coastal exploration and the abundance of elephant ivory. There has also been consensus regarding the attribution of the craftsmen origin to the Temne and Bullom peoples of Sierra Leone, based on contemporary literary and documentary sources, and stylistic comparisons with earlier productions from the same region, namely of small sized stone sculptures known as *nomoli*. In his work *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*, written around 1506, Duarte Pacheco Pereira (1460–1533), a Portuguese sea captain, soldier, explorer, and cosmographer, refers that in Sierra Leone, next to the Kolenté river, they make some very pretty palm fibre mats and also ivory spoons, adding that the Bullom make the most subtle, that is, the most delicate and the better made spoons than elsewhere. Writing between 1506 and 1510, based on reports by Álvaro Velho do Barreiro regarding Sierra Leone, the German-born book publisher Valentim Fernandes (†ca. 1518–1519), states that the black men of this land are very subtle in manual arts, namely



in making ivory salt cellars and spoons, and anything presented to them in drawing they cut it, that is, carve it, in ivory.

Oliphants, or hunting horns—of European-derived imagery and shape—adapted from late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century prints depicting hunting scenes, are amongst the most fascinating objects made in this context in Sierra Leone.¹ The present example, featuring the Portuguese royal coat of arms, is exceptional for its surface wear and tear, a testimony to the effective practical use of such objects, that contrasts with pristine examples surviving in Renaissance princely collections or *Kunstkammer*.² HMC



FIG. 1
E. Bassani, 2000, p. 253, no. 786.

¹ See: AFONSO, Luís U., HORTA, José da Silva, 'Afro-Portuguese Olifants with hunting scenes (c.1490–c.1540)', *Mande Studies*, 15 (2013), pp. 79–97.

² Published in BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1500*, London, British Museum Press, 2000, p. 253, no. 786. It was previously in the collection of Pedro Aguiar Branco, Oporto.

Kingdoms of Benin and Owo

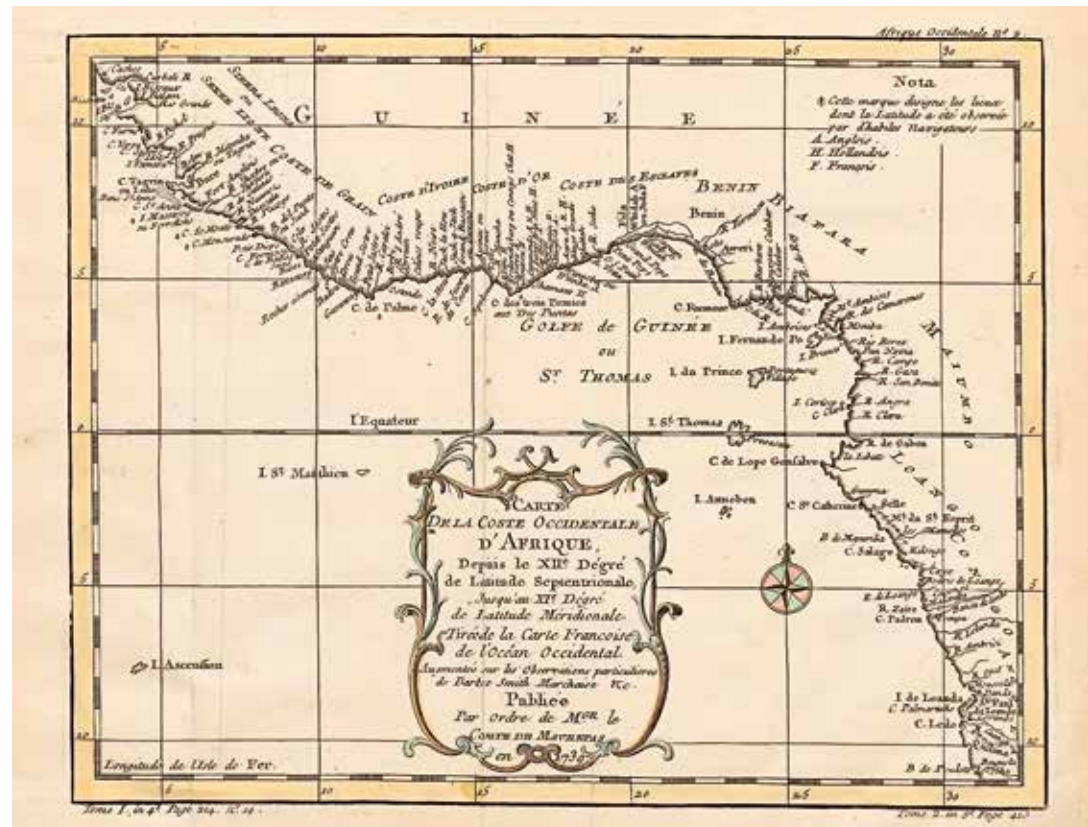


FIG. 1
West coast of Africa.
Jacques-Nicolas Bellin.

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. ↗

Highly refined elephant ivory carved Edo-Portuguese spoons¹, also referred as ‘Bini-Portuguese’², belong to a group of objects commissioned by the Portuguese during the early exploration of the western African coast, in the *protoglobalisation*³ period.

Revealing cultural encounters between Europe (Portuguese) and Africa (Kingdom of Benin Edo Peoples), these interesting hybrid and novel objects represent major historical testimonies to the cultural and artistic interrelations that occurred from the late 15th century onwards in that southwestern region of modern-day Nigeria.

Produced by the guild *Igbesanmwana*, or royal ivory and wood sculpture workshop, between 1520 and 1620, spoons from Benin (such as saltcellars and oliphants) are categorised as export goods, a class that includes gifts and diplomatic exchanges, combining local and foreigner styles, forms, motifs, iconographies and technologies.⁴ During this period, these workshops, which had previously produced carved ivories for local consumption, witnessed exponential growth connected to the fulfilment of foreign commissions in the 16th century, which, in turn, were related to the strengthening of international trade on both raw ivory and other products, such as benin pepper, the earliest to be carried into Portugal.⁵

These ivory objects were exchanged for metal articles, much in demand in the Kingdom of Benin, namely bracelets or ‘manillas’, as well as copper and brass basins. Customs accounts for Lisbon’s House of Guinea (1504–1505), record carved ivory items, specifically saltcellars as well as spoons, arriving at the Port of Lisbon from various Western African origins, the latter being highly praised by European travellers in extant contemporary sources. In his work *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis* (1505–1508), Duarte Pacheco Pereira, explorer, cosmographer, knight of the Portuguese Royal House, and Governor of Saint George of the Mine Castle from 1519 to 1522, reports that, regarding the raw material, he had been to the Kingdom of Benin for four times, where ‘há muitos elefantes, dos quais os dentes, a que chamamos marfim, muitas vezes compramos (...)’ [there are many elephants, of which the teeth, that we call ivory, we often purchase (...)].⁶

European taste for ivory art, produced in various typologies of exquisitely carved objects, was evidenced by its inclusion in European aristocratic *Kunstskammern* from the 1500s onwards, a particularly important group of Edo-Portuguese spoons standing out from the inventory records of Cosimo de Medici collection (Florence, 1560).⁷ This appreciation of Luso-African spoons is quite explicit in the account of English Captain James Welsh (1588) who, on referring the trade carried out in Benin, mentions the production of curious elephant tusk spoons, carved with various animals (*‘birds and beasts’*) as well as of beautiful rugs. In 1621, Garcia Mendes Castelo Branco also refer that from Benin came ‘some very curious ivory spoons (...)’.⁸

As such, the circulation and absorption of this type of rare objects—thus understood mainly in the early period of Portuguese commercial and maritime expansion along the western African coast, and considering the strategic role of Portuguese trading posts, including the one at Antwerp—determined

¹ See: 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.

² BASSANI, Ezio; FAGG, William, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestael Verlag, 1988.

³ For this classification see: SCHÄFFER, Wolf, ‘Global History’, in *Encyclopedia of Globalization*, ed. Roland Robertson and Jan A. Scholte, New York: Routledge, 2007.

⁴ See: CURNOW, Kathy, *The Afro-Portuguese Ivories: classification and stylistic analysis of a hybrid art form*, [s.l.], PhD Dissertation, University of Indiana, 2 vol., 1983; and 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.

⁵ Cf. PINA, Rui de, *Crónica de D. João II, Direc. e comentário de Luís de Albuquerque*, Biblioteca da Expansão Portuguesa, 36. Lisbon: Alfa, 1989, p. 57.

⁶ In PERES, Damião, *Os Mais Antigos Roteiros da Guiné*, Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa da História, 1992, pp. 130–131.

⁷ See: BASSANI, Ezio; FAGG, William, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, New York, Prestael Verlag, 1988, p. 153.

⁸ In MOTA, Avelino Teixeira da, ‘Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII’, in *Africa 30*, 1975, p. 580–589.

the roles and meanings that were assigned to them through time. The use of such objects would have been effectively more widespread in Renaissance Lisbon, as it is evidenced by recent archaeological data.⁹

Extant records do also reveal that Edo Peoples were able to respond to foreign commissions with great efficacy, by translating the intercultural dialogues that were being established. While resembling a type of sophisticated metal made spoons used by Renaissance elites, it must be emphasized that these spoons from Benin, would have been highly unusual to European eyes, not least because they were the ivory made typology that combined the least elements from both cultures, predominating nonetheless, African faunal depictions.

The bowl shapes of these Benin spoons differentiate them from those produced in Sierra Leone, which feature different aesthetic characteristics. Other spoons, contemporary to these and produced in other African regions, have not survived in the record and, although European metal made spoons have been associated to these ivory pieces¹⁰, it remains a fact that no similar shapes have so far been identified. The Oba of Benin held the ivory trade monopoly, as well as the power over the Royal guilds, in which were included these ivory carved pieces, whose material highlighted their symbolism. 🍌

⁹ See: GOMES, M. Varela, CASIMIRO, T., MANSO, C., 'Afro-Portuguese ivories from Sierra Leone and Nigeria (Yoruba and Benin Kingdoms) in archaeological contexts from Southern Portugal', in *African Arts* 53, 2020, pp. 24–37.

¹⁰ 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, p. 221.

A 'MANILLA' EDO/BINI-PORTUGUESE SPOON

Carved ivory

Kingdom of Benin (present-day southwestern Nigeria); 16th century

Height: 24.5 cm

F1335

Provenance: Charles Ratton (1895–1986) and Guy Ladrière collections, Paris and J.J.F. and T.P. collections, Portugal.

Published: BASSANI, Ezio, 'African Art and Artefacts in European collections, 1400–1500', London, British Museum Press, 2000, no. 813; TRNEK, Helmut, VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, 'Exotica. The Portuguese Discoveries and the renaissance *Kunstammer*' (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001, p. 101, no. 9; DIAS, Pedro, 'A Arte do Marfim—O Mundo onde os Portugueses Chegaram', Oporto, V.O.C. Antiguidades, 2004, pp. 40–41; AMARAL, Leonor de Liz, '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 (cat. no. 70).



This elephant ivory carved Edo-Portuguese spoon features a broad and shallow bowl, shaped as a pear or fig, that terminates in an elegant scroll, suggesting a tripartite leaf. The carver skills are evidenced by the transparency of the bowl, whose outer face is split by a fine ridge that follows the length of the convex surface, perhaps alluding to marine elements, shells and sea snails, details. The spoon handle is composed of a textured zoomorphic head, a crocodile that swallows a human arm, ending in a hand holding a horseshoe shaped element, probably a manilla or a copper or brass bracelet.

The object's syncretism is revealed by the combination and/or fusion of forms, both African and European iconographic motifs, with Edo carving techniques, creating a new style that differs from the local art and from the Portuguese, and broader European art.

Effectively, the terminal carved motif alludes to the manillas that were taken to Benin by the Portuguese, which were used as currency in the transatlantic trade, and often mentioned in European written records. These metal items were melted to produce royal artistic objects, such as the commemorative heads destined to Royal altars (on whose tops were placed elephant tusks),

as well as the low-relief plaques featuring courtly and foreign figures (Portuguese), that decorated the palace entrance *impluvium*.

In Benin royal art, materials are highly valued and endowed with specific meanings. The metal foundry guild, the *Igun Eronmwon*, was at the top of these hereditary workshop's hierarchy, followed by the ivory and wood guild, the *Igbesnmwan*, that produced objects destined to the rituals in which the Oba or King, patron of the arts, participated.

Concerning the crocodile (*agbaka*) depiction, a reptile species from Benin's tropical forest, it is an animal associated with royal power and, simultaneously, to the God Olokun, the God of the underwater realm, of wealth, health, and fertility, that lies between the spirits and the terrestrial worlds, which the Edo linked to the Portuguese, arrived from the rivers and the sea.¹

The extant group of Edo-Portuguese, or Bini-Portuguese, ivory spoons, adds up to sixty-one pieces, in addition to seventeen salt cellars and three oliphants.² All the spoons feature identical bowl shapes, but diverse iconographic motifs. Only three feature the hand terminal, albeit differing in the positioning of the fingers, as well as stylistically. One of these three spoons belongs to Vienna's

¹ BLACKMUN, Barbara, 'From Trader to Priest in Two Hundred Years: The Transformation of a Foreign Figure on Benin Ivories', in *Art Journal* 47, no. 2, 1988, p. 131.

² 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.



FIG. 1
BASSANI, E. and FAGG, W. (p. 301).
Edo artist, Benin. Detail of rattle-staff,
16th–19th century, brass. Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York.

Museum für Völkerkunde (inv. 91914), corresponding probably to one of the six that belonged to Archduke Ferdinand's of Tyrol *kunstkammer* (1596, Ambras Castle)³, its iconography more closely related to the Europeans, for its Christian blessing gesture. Another spoon from the *Musée du Quai Branly*, in Paris (inv. 70.2004.31.1), is like ours in terms of style and carving technique. A fragment exposed from an African archaeological context at Ksar es-Seghir, featuring a pointing hand handle, has been recently identified as originally part of an Edo-Portuguese spoon, contributing as such for defining the temporal production of Luso-African ivories in the Kingdom of Benin.⁴

The hand is represented in other objects, such as the idiophones used in Benin's rituals, particularly in ancestors' altars dedicated to the hand, symbolizing the acquisition of wealth or status, related to warriors, hunters, and artisans' skills—such as the case of a bronze idiophone that ends in a clenched fist holding a mudfish.⁵

According to oral traditions, the cult of the hand dates back to the reign of Oba Ewuare, the 15th century warrior king, based on the belief that the right hand or arm, embodies the human accomplishment capacity, while simultaneously protecting against evil spirits and enemies.

The arrival of the Portuguese coincided with Benin's territorial expansion and geopolitical affirmation, the presence of Lusitanian soldiers in the Edo army being well documented⁶, together with the commercial and diplomatic exchanges that contributed to the kingdom's increasing wealth throughout the 16th century.

It must also be referred that, during this period, the Kingdom of Owo—one of the Yoruba Peoples—was under Benin's influence, wherefore the artistic workshops of both kingdoms presented some permeability and, as it has been suggested, the leaves iconographic motif—the bowl shape for the sixty extant Edo-Portuguese spoons—might have resulted from the contribution of this People from north-western Nigeria.⁷ In Benin, the deity Edo—God Osun—embodies the power of leaves and herbs gathered in the forest, to be used in magical and medicinal compounds.⁸

Carved ivory spoons, symbolic raw material highly valued by both participants, are revealing of evident cultural and artistic hybridism, recalling that these early foreigners that had docked at Ughoton, before arriving at the City of Benin, were perceived as transitional beings coming from the world of spirits.⁹ *LLA*

³ Cf. BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800*, London: British Museum, 2000, pp. 3–6.

⁴ LUÍS, U. Afonso, GOMES, M. Varela, 'An Afro-Portuguese ivory from Ksar es-Seghir, Morocco', in *Burlington Magazine*, no. 163, 2021, pp. 822–824; In AMARAL, Leonor, *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.

⁵ For the image of this idiophone see: EZRA, Kate, *Royal Art of Benin. The Pearls Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, p. 95, 107.

⁶ 'Letter by Duarte Pires to King Manuel I', dated 1516, In BRÁSIO, A. (ed.), *Monumenta Missionaria Africana*, Lisbon: Agência Geral do Ultramar, 1952, 1, pp. 369–370.

⁷ BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections, 1400–1800*, London: British Museum, 2000, p. 302.

⁸ BEN-AMOS, Paula in 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. 310.

⁹ BLIER, Suzanne P., 'Imaging Otherness in Ivory: African Portrayals of the Portuguese ca. 1492', in *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 75, no. 3, College Art Association, 1993, p. 389.



04

A 'BIRD OF PROPHECY' EDO/BINI-PORTUGUESE SPOON

Carved ivory

Kingdom of Benin (present-day southwestern Nigeria); 16th century

Height: 25.0 cm

F1336

*Provenance: Charles Rattou (1895–1986) and Guy Ladrière collections, Paris and J.J.F. and T.P. collections, Portugal.**Published: BASSANI, Ezio, 'African Art and Artefacts in European collections, 1400–1500', London, British Museum Press, 2000, no. 812; TRNEK, Helmut, VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, 'Exotica. The Portuguese Discoveries and the renaissance Kunstammer' (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, 2001, p. 101, no. 10; DIAS, Pedro, 'A Arte do Marfim—O Mundo onde os Portugueses Chegaram', Oporto, V.O.C. Antiguidades, 2004, pp. 42–43; JORDAN, A.M. and LOWE, K., 'The Global City', P.H. Publishers 2015, p. 168; GSCHWEND, A. J., LOWE, K. J. P. (eds.), 'A Cidade Global, Lisboa no Renascimento' (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2017, cat. 48, p. 119; AMARAL, Leonor de Liz, '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 (cat. no. 36).*

An almost transparent spoon of elongated and shallow bowl, terminating in a leaf shaped scroll, a characteristic detail common in Edo-Portuguese spoons. The handle alternates plain areas with high-relief zoomorphic iconographic motifs. From above the bowl stands out a frontally depicted antelope's head, from which emerges a stringy segment surmounted by a bird holding onto the plain lower section with its claws. Of textured body, suggesting plumage, it is depicted in a torsion posture, with its head facing sideways, and one open wing being touched by the beak, while the other folds backwards.

Animal depictions in Edo-Portuguese spoons portray the local fauna of Benin, generally pointing to local inspiration, combined with other elements that can be associated to the Portuguese. Animals are highly relevant in African culture, wherefore their hierarchy is related to the social and political organization of Edo Peoples themselves. In the case of the antelope head represented in this object, it is a motif that is also present in other Edo-Portuguese spoons, as well as in various local art forms.

Rituals performed at ancestors' altars did frequently included sacrificed animals' heads, which fulfilled a relevant role in those ancestral practices. Antelopes, such as cows, are animals

considered aesthetically beautiful and of docile sociability, characteristics that, associated to their edibility, endow them with added sacrificial value.¹

The bird is the commonest representation in this group of ivories. In Edo art this element reflects a particular species of bird, with long, curving beak, nearly always of open wings, that corresponds to the 'Bird of Prophecy' (*Oro*). This mythic bird, probably an African ibis, associated to the Oba's divine power, correlates concomitantly to the Portuguese mercenaries that had an active role in an event that occurred during the battle of Idah (ca. 1517), during the reign of Oba Esigie. This Benin ruler was close to the Portuguese, including to King Manuel I, having been catechised and baptized by Lusitanian missionaries.

The event described below was passed from generation to generation via Edo oral traditions, and by royal art itself, through its representation in numerous media, having also been attested by Portuguese written sources.² Coming across a bird whose chirps predicted misfortune if the ruler insisted on going forward, while simultaneously advising him to step back, Esigie chose to ignore this presage, ordering two Portuguese soldiers to kill the bird. Despite defying the omen, the Oba returned victorious to Benin City, or-

¹ BEN-AMOS, P. Girshick, 'Men and Animals in Benin Art', in *Man*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (Jun. 1976), New Series, 1976, pp. 243–252.

² See: CURNOW, Kathy, 'Autobiography via objects and ceremony: Oba Esigie's prophetic bird and Benin export ivories', in *African Ivories in the Atlantic World/Marfins Africanos no Mundo Atlântico, 1400–1900*, org. HORTA, José Silva, ALMEIDA, Carlos and MARK, Peter, Edições Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa, 2021, pp. 139–177.



FIG. 1
E. Bassani, 2000, p. 261, no. 812.

dering the casting of a bronze bird statue, so that his people would remember his skill and confidence in overcoming his own fate.³

This motif's ambiguity, in terms of the identification of European visual sources, relates to the fact that the bird's posture can evoke the Christian piety of the pelican feeding its own blood to its young, a detail that might have contributed to making the spoon attractive to the buyer.⁴ This interpretative overlapping, referring to both local rituals and foreign intervention in internal warfare, as well as the association to Christianity imagery, contributes to reinforcing the significance of these objects that have emerged from the fruitful dialogue between the two cultures involved in their creation. ✍️ LLA



³ GUNSCH, Kathryn, *The Benin Plaques: a 16th century imperial monument*, London: Routledge, 2018, p. 35.

⁴ LOWE, Kate, 'Colheres da África Ocidental na Lisboa renascentista: marfim, prata e a representação do estatuto social', in GSCHWEND, A. J., K.J.P. Lowe (eds.), *A Cidade Global, Lisboa no Renascimento* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2017, p. 119.

05

OLOWO BRACELET, OWO/YORUBA

Ivory

Nigeria; probably 18th century

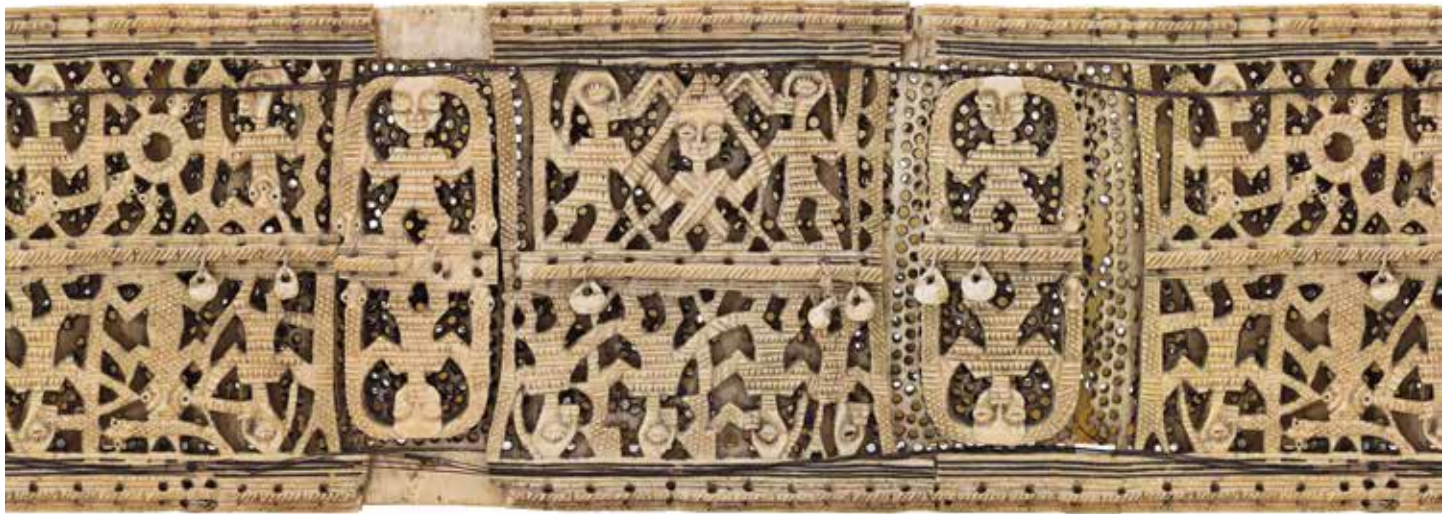
Height: 12.7 cm

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 fur 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 subordinates¹ 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

¹ 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*²—a cult and divination object—whose frame is circled by mudfish.³ Equally mirrored and horizontal, two profiled warriors appear next to a crocodile⁴ 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 appear 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.⁵ The technical virtuosity of the artist that produced it, is more than evidenced in this extraordinary masterpiece.

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

³ 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.

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

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

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 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 century and also originating from the Kingdom of Owo in Nigeria.⁶ 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



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.

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*⁷ 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)⁸, 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 *Igbesamwan*—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

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

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

⁸ 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. (JSTOR)



06

A BENIN OLIPHANT

Ivory

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

Length: 38.0 cm

F866

Provenance: Former 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 onwards¹. 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

¹ 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.

ancient Sierra Leone and the Kingdom of Benin, in the territory of modern day Nigeria.² 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 centre³, 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 oliphants⁴—European commissioned horns—is the location of the blowing opening which, in local cultures, is always 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ Others, smaller sized, were also used in hunts or simply as display objects.⁹

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'.¹⁰ A 'small ivory horn' is also listed in the inventory of Álvaro Borges (1507), Capitán of the Island of São Tomé, a strategic point for commercial exchanges with western and central Africa.¹¹

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.¹² Additionally, a contemporary Dutch merchant reported, amongst other curious details, that the Oba's servants played 'horns and flutes'.¹³

Depictions of similar instruments do also appear in Portuguese paintings from the 1500s, namely in 'The Marriage of Saint Ursula with Prince Conan' (Saint Auta altarpiece, MNAA, 1522–1525), in which African musicians play various wind instruments in a gallery (fig. 1), as was customary in Portuguese courtly

² 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, Prestael Verlag, 1988.

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

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

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

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

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ RADULET, Apud, IDEM, *Ibidem*, p. 23.

¹¹ In MOTA, A. Teixeira da, 'Gli avori africani nella documentazione portoghese dei secoli XV–XVII', in *Africa*, no. 30, 1975, p. 585.

¹² 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.

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



FIG. 1
 'The Marriage of Saint Ursula
 with Prince Conan' (Saint Auta
 altarpiece), painted on panel,
 MNAA, 1522–1525.

occasions marking solemn events or ceremonies.¹⁴ 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 (...).¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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

¹⁴ 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.

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

¹⁶ 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.

07

ARMLET

Brass

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

Dim.: 12.5 × 8.0 × 8.0 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.¹

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*

¹ 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 merchants²—, 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).³ HMC

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

³ 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. ✨

STAFF FINIAL—*MVWALA* REPRESENTING A PORTUGUESE

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'¹ 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 waistcoat² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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*

¹ Musée Dapper, *Le Geste Kongo* (cat.), Paris, Editions Dapper, 2002, p. 37.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.



symbolizes the world axis and expands the sense of authority and energy of the rulers⁵ who, similarly to religious leaders⁶, 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 latter⁷ 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.⁸ 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 power⁹, invoking ancestral protection, as if 'he sat on the past to build the future'.¹⁰ For the Bakongo people¹¹, 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.¹² 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 ancestors¹³ 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'.¹⁴ The left arm, flexed close to

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

⁶ 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.

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

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

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

¹⁰ IDEM, *ibidem*.

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

¹² Musée Dapper, *Op. cit.*, p. 26

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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 sculptures¹⁶, 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.¹⁷ 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 religion¹⁸, 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.¹⁹

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 book²⁰, embodies a glorious historic period of the Kingdom of Kongo in which the Portuguese actively partook. ✎ TP

¹⁵ FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 150, figs: 813, 817.

¹⁶ FÉLIX, Marc Leo, *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁷ IDEM, *ibidem*, fig. 841.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ SOUSA, Marina de Mello e, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

²⁰ 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,¹ 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.²

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)’.³

Thus, courtly art flourished in the Kuba kingdom, characterized by formal and stylistic features tied to the pursuit of power.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ BASSANI, Ezio, *African Art*, Skira, 2012, p. 229.

KUBA PALM WINE CONTAINER

Wood, brown patina

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

Height: 20.5 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.¹

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.² 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

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

² 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

FIG. 1
Vitor Meireles, *First Mass in Brazil*,
oil on canvas, 1860.

10

IMPERIAL PRINCESS D. JANUÁRIA DE BRAGANÇA FOLDING FAN

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

France; 1861(?) or 1874(?)

Signed *Adolphe d'Hastrel* (1804–1875)

Diam.: 28.0 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**

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.

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 Rivedoux¹ (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 Bragança², Imperial Highness of Brazil, Infanta of Portugal and Royal Princess of France,

¹ 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.

² Carolina Joana Carlota Leopoldina Romana Xavier de Paula Micaela Rafaela Gabriela Gonzaga.





FIG. 2
Portrait of D. Januária, Simplicio Rodrigues, 1830.



FIG. 3
Arms of the Imperial House of Brazil.
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*³, 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.

³ *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 Bragança⁴, 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

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

India



FIG. 1
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

11

THE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

India, Goa; 17th century

Height: 20.0 cm

F1291

Provenance: J. C. collection, Oporto.

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 Life¹. On the mountain summit, the well-proportioned Good Shepherd, defined by strands of short curly hair, round face, 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.

In a clear and unequivocal example of cultural symbioses, the Child Christ features some of Buddha's defining characteristics, such as the attitude of ecstasy², 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

¹ 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: Master's Dissertation in Art History, FLUP, 1996, p. 85

² 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



spreads out down the hill, joined by Birds of paradise, symbols of the Souls of the World.

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

The canonical hill-shaped and terraced stand features three superimposed scenes³. On the first level the Fountain of Life—*Fons Vitae*—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.⁴ Allegories to the Divine Word are the two Birds of Paradise, on the second terrace, drinking from the water that gushes from the springs above⁵.

The third level reveals a rocky cave, in which reclines Mary Magdalene dressed in a long cloak, with loose, long straight hair and flanked by two lions. In parallel to the Good Shepherd, her face rests on her right hand, while her left-hand points to an open book on the ground, an allusion to contemplative life and missionary activity. To Her right the crucifix, one of Mary Magdalene’s attributes and symbol of her love for Christ and of her reverence

for the Passion of the Lord⁶. An unassuming beaded frieze frames the stand’s lower edge.

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.⁷

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 expansion⁸. 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

³ 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.

⁴ See: MARCOS, Margarida Mercedes Estella, *Marfiles de las provincias ultramarinas orientales de España e Portugal*, Monterrey: G.M. Editores, 2010, pp. 283–287.

⁵ See: DIAS, Pedro, *A arte do marfim, o mundo onde os portugueses chegaram*, Oporto: V.O.C. Antiguidades, Lda., 2004, p. 70.

⁶ See: OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 109–110.

⁷ 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.

⁸ See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-oriental*, p. 86.



12

ARCHANGEL MICHAEL SLAYING THE DRAGON

Carved ivory with traces of polychromy

India, Goa; 17th century

Height: 32.0 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.¹ 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.² Demons, similar to ours, are depicted in contemporary examples

¹ 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.

² 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.³

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.⁴ HMC

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

13

THE CHILD JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Ivory

India; 17th century

Height: 25,3 cm

F862

Provenance: M. H. Roque collection, Portugal.

Handsome 17th century Indo-Portuguese ivory sculpture portraying 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* and of *Maitreya*. From the tightly curled hair strands, simulating cornucopias, stands out the one on the forehead, corresponding to the Buddhist Urna.

The figure is attired in shepherd's tunic, carved in deeply grooved lozenges, tied at the waist by a bow knotted cord, from which hangs a gourd, one of its attributes. Over the shoulder and on its lap, rest two sheep whose fleece is identical to the shepherd's garment.

Cross legged, The Child is seated on a heart¹ emerging from a prismatic stand simulating a throne. This representation, materialised in the late Middle Ages, is probably illustrative of Saint Augustine's theological meditation 'Thou hast stricken my heart with Thy word, and I loved Thee', from Confessions X:6,8, and considered the Saint's attribute.² Later, Saint Theresa's Mystical Heart Transverberation, in 1560, and the testimony of a Carmelite nun claiming to have seen the Child Jesus resting on Saint Theresa's heart, would also contribute for this imagery's dissemination.³

On the stand's front, a finely carved winged cherub, of accurate features, Indian style hair curls and flowers to its chest, is framed by a minutely beaded band. Outlining the base, a diamond tips frieze.

From the late-16th and through the following century, the increasing impact of the Good Shepherd subject led to the production of numerous carved ivory images, not only as essential missionary tools, but also for exporting. Furthermore, as a major means of communication between the Catholic Church and those it

wished to convert, its attempted iconographic blending with native deities, was evident. Although sometimes confused with Saint John the Baptist, this representation corresponds to an adaptation of a Hindu depiction of Lord Vishnu's sleep. This overlapping resulted from the ecclesiastical hierarchy's condescendence, in an attempt at facilitating the conversion processes of local populations.

The dissemination of Christianity was the determining factor in the origin of the generic Indo-Portuguese artistic production fuelled by the Portuguese presence in the East. Jesus The Good Shepherd, with the mission of being the Saviour, is a symbolic iconography referred in numerous New Testament Evangelical parables: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'

Francisco da Gama's (1565–1632)⁴ 1682 inventory, is the earliest mention to this particular imagery, referring: [(...) *hũ menino Jesu de Marfim sobre hũ coração (...)*]⁵ (an ivory Child Jesus, over a heart). ➤ TP

¹ See: OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, pp. 79–86.

² See: CARDOSO, Isabel Maria Alçada, 'Da humildade à caridade: o "coração" em Santo Agostinho', in *Revista Didaskalia* (Vol. 47), Universidade Católica Portuguesa, 2017, pp. 163–167.

³ See: OSSWALD, Maria Cristina, *O Bom Pastor na Imaginária Indo-portuguesa em Marfim*, p. 84.

⁴ Governor and Viceroy of India.

⁵ BNP (Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal), Codices, COD. 1986, fls 8V–20V.



14

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).*

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





FIG. 1
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 Nagesh (or *Nagesh*), a manifestation of Shiva, in his temple in the village of Bandivade (or *Bandode*) in taluka Pondá, Goa. *HMC*

15

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GOAN VIRGIN AND CHILD

Cast, repoussé and chased silver

India, Goa; 2nd half of the 17th century

Dim.: 52.0 × 24.4 × 22.0 cm

Weight: 5125.0 g

B296

Provenance: Mário Duarte, collection Coimbra; M.P. and J.M.J. collections, Portugal.

Exhibited: 'Índia in Portugal—Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas', Museu N. de Soares dos Reis, Oporto 2021 (cat. no. 41).

This exceptional sculpture, impressive for both its dimensions and its weight, as well as for the technical mastery of its execution, is a *tour de force* of Portuguese India made jewellery, only comparable to a small number of other extant examples connected to Jesuit Religious Houses in Goa and to one other sculpture at Evora Cathedral.¹

Portraying the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception with the Child, and entirely made in silver, it was most certainly created for a wealthy patron or a major religious institution. Furthermore, due to its truly exceptional artistic merits, it has survived the destiny of many such pieces which were dismantled and melted to be recast into other, more modern objects.

The image is composed of three separate elements; a plinth decorated with large protruding volutes and cherubs, the full body sculpture of the Virgin Mary and the independently cast figure of The Child Jesus.

The sturdy squared pedestal is composed by a thick plate of repoussé and chased silver with cast elements welded to the structure and equally chiselled. These elements, probably sand cast, are characterised by narrow Mannerist style panels and cherub's heads. The Virgin Mary, standing and attached to the pedestal by four quatrefoil screws welded to the sculpture's base, is made out of a thick sheet of repoussé and chiselled silver, with the exception of the head, which was probably moulded by lost wax casting. The arms and shoulders were produced separately and welded to the body, while the sand-cast hands are riveted to the Virgin's cloak.

The hollow and equally sand-cast sculpture of the Child Jesus is fixed to the larger figure by two finely made bolts; a longer one, fixing the Child's left leg to the Virgin's left arm, and a shorter flattened headed bolt that fastens the Child's right arm, in raised, blessing gesture, to the Virgin's torso, from the interior of the body cavity.

The evidence of threaded orifices to the top of the Virgin's head suggests the presence of a now missing crown, while the two quatrefoil headed bolts attached to the sculpture's back might correspond to structural attachments for a missing element, perhaps a large silver radiant halo, similar to the one described further along in this text.

Gracious but rather hieratic, the figure betrays its Indian origin in its proportions, facial characteristics and obvious decorative *horror vacui*. The Virgin Mary, portrayed in profound contemplation and standing on the lunar crescent, holds the Child, of outstretched arms, on the left, while keeping Her right arm identically outstretched. Unveiled and with exposed ears—a detail characteristic of Hindu religious idols—and long curly hair, the figure is attired in a long draped robe that hides the feet. The whole costume is finely chased, in a European style 'feronnerie' pattern that simulates damask or brocade, on a punctured ground, the lining decorated in a different lattice pattern.

A similar European textile design, albeit not as refined in execution, has been identified on the back of a late 17th century Goa made silver coated wooden reliquary that guards a fragment

¹ Published in CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal, um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 120–127, e p. 152, cat. 41.



of Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552) surplice. Once kept at Saint Paul's College it now belongs to the Museum of Christian Art at the former Convent of Saint Monica in Old Goa (inv. 01.1.119).² These complex textile patterns, in addition to the plinth's erudite late Mannerist decorative motifs, the 'obra de laço' and the acanthus leaves frieze, suggest and reinforce a second-half of the 17th century dating for this sculpture.

Iconography representing the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception acquires particular relevance in Goa from the mid-17th century onwards, once the Portuguese crown was formally gifted to the Virgin Mary by King João IV in 1646, as thanksgiving for intervening in freeing the Kingdom from 60 years of Spanish ruling (1580–1640).

This particular sculpture shares both stylistic and production characteristics with a well-known part gilt, repoussé and chiselled monumental image (143 cm) of Saint Francis Xavier. Made ca. 1670 from the silver bequeathed by a devoted Genoese, Geronima Maria Francesca Sopranis, specifically for the making of an ornament for Old Goa's Bom Jesus Basilica, it remained for centuries close to the saint's tomb.³ It was recorded in 1717 as holding as attributes an enamelled silver lily and a silver cross, reason why the arms were articulated, similarly to the Hindu *utsava murti*. Another silver example, albeit of earlier dating and probably depicting Saint Geracina, does also evidence identical local characteristics, its quality of execution clearly recognisable in the sophistication of the chiselled decoration.⁴

Also comparable in size (70.0 × 30.0 cm) and related in its iconography is a silver image of The Virgin and Child that, according to the inscription featured, was commissioned by Diogo de Brito⁵. Now belonging to Evora Cathedral Museum this large sculpture keeps both of its gilt silver crowns and a large radiant halo, set with stones and coloured glasses, and holds a large gold Rosary in the Virgin's outstretched hands, details that allow for its identification as The Virgin of the Rosary, imagery of intense devotion in Portuguese controlled Asia. Of polychrome face and hands, details that somehow alter the Indian facial characteristics that the image might have portrayed, if indeed it is original, its chased decoration is of identical quality and follows an identical decorative repertoire which, as if produced by the best Lisbon workshops from the reign of King Pedro II, betrays the same erudition of models.

Despite the presence of the lunar crescent, the fact that the Virgin's hands are represented in a position identical to the Évora example, allows for an identification of the present silver sculpture as the Virgin of the Rosary.

Notwithstanding its size and importance, we are still unsure of the original provenance of our Virgin and Child. Research carried out on the inventories of the various Goan Religious Houses, mostly dated from the 19th century, have not shed light onto its original context. However, for its exceptional quality it is undoubtedly one of the most important silver objects ever made in Portuguese India that remain in private hands, having most certainly been produced by local Goan artisans under close Portuguese supervision. ✎ HMC

² VASSALLO E SILVA, Nuno, *A Ourivesaria entre Portugal e a Índia do século XVI ao século XVIII*, Lisbon, Santander Totta, 2008, pp. 188–191.

³ See: KRASS, Urte, "Qualche ornamento stabile, e perpetuo", Die Silberstatue des Hl. Franz Xaver' in *Goa und ihre performative Vereinnahmung im 17. Jahrhundert*, Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz, 2013, pp. 72–93.

⁴ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *As Jóias da Carreira da Índia* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2014, pp. 145–151, cat. 123.

⁵ See: GUEDES, Maria Natália Correia (ed.), *Encontro de Culturas. Oito Séculos de Missão Portuguesa* (cat.), Lisbon, Conferência Episcopal Portuguesa, 1994, p. 227, cat. XV.219.



16

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GOAN CIBORIUM

Gilt silver

India, Goa; ca. 1680–1700

Dim.: 32.0 × 12.5 cm

B326

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

This rare pyx or ciborium with lid, made in gilt silver, is a notable example of precious metalwork made in Goa. This ciborium features a shallow bowl set atop a baluster-shaped stem, which is connected to the round foot by a turned disc. The round *bombée* lid, tapering into a conical finial, is crowned by a sphere surmounted by a cross. For added solemnity, small bells are suspended from loops near the rim of the bowl.

The Mannerist-style decoration of the ciborium, worked in *repoussé* and finely chased, includes stylised friezes of acanthus leaves on the rounded surfaces of the foot, bowl, and lid, as well as gadrooning on the fluted, splayed sections of the foot, the baluster-shaped knot, and the conical upper section of the lid. The sphere crowning the lid features chased, rounded acanthus leaves.

A ciborium is a container for the consecrated pieces of bread, or communion wafers, used during Catholic Mass. A ciborium is thus a lidded chalice-shaped vessel designed to store and protect the consecrated communion wafers that remain unused during Mass. Its use derives from the Catholic belief in transubstanti-

ation, whereby the consecrated bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ during the service.

The overall form of the ciborium is reminiscent of seventeenth-century examples made in Portugal, such as one from ca. 1600–1650, similarly worked in repoussé and chased, featuring cherubs, and now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. 163–1866).

The material, style, decorative motifs, and techniques used on this ciborium closely resemble those found on a late seventeenth-century monstrance in a Portuguese private collection. Likely produced in the same goldsmith workshop in Goa, the monstrance features identical gadrooning and similarly shaped small bells. Both objects may have been conceived as part of a set of liturgical vessels, which could have also included a matching chalice. *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



FIG. 1
A Gujarati tortoiseshell casket from the second half of the sixteenth century (29.5 × 17.5 × 13.5). Mário Roque collection.

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. ✨

17

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI WINE BOWL (KASHKUL)

Mother-of-pearl and brass

India, Gujarat; ca. 1550–1620

Dim.: 7.0 × 17.0 × 8.0 cm

F767

Provenance: M.H.R. collection, Portugal.



The first examples of Gujarati mother-of-pearl objects to arrive in sixteenth-century Lisbon were destined for the royal court and the princely collections of the time, as was recorded in surviving inventories.¹ The earliest documented pieces are listed in the 1522 *post-mortem* inventory of the Great Wardrobe (*guarda-roupa*) of King Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1495–1521): ‘a small casket of mother-of-pearl marquetry with some fake gems; and an Indian casket of mother-of-pearl marquetry set with eighteen silver bands and the front clasp without lock’.² Some of the first references to the consumption of such Gujarati objects in Europe are related to the French royal court. In 1529, King François I (r. 1515–1547) of France acquired a cup from Pierre Lemoyne, a Lisbon-based French merchant. It is recorded as ‘un chalice, marqueté à feuillages de nacle de perle, fait au pays d’Andye’ or in English translation, ‘a chalice of mother-of-pearl marquetry, made in India’.³

Drinking vessels of this production are less common than dishes, saucers or bowls. Like the present example, they usually follow local shapes. Shaped like a boat, our wine bowl is modelled after an Iranian prototype, that of the begging bowl or *kashkul*, used by wandering dervishes to collect alms. An early sixteenth-century

late Timurid tinned copper and brass begging bowl made in Iran from the David Collection, Copenhagen (inv. 3/2009), stands as a good example of this form, with its stylised dragon finials. Unlike the large begging bowls used by dervishes, usually made from wood and other less expensive materials, a mother-of-pearl drinking vessel like the present would be used for wine. The same applies to similarly shaped ceramic bowls made in mid-seventeenth-century Safavid Iran mimicking blue-and-white Chinese porcelain.⁴

Similarly rare examples of Gujarati household items made from mother-of-pearl are found in the British Museum, London, which houses a Gujarati garniture consisting of a bottle (inv. OA+2642), a pair of candlesticks (inv. OA+2643,1-2), a basin (inv. OA+2644), and a pair of ewers (inv. OA+2645,1-2). The set was recently studied with special regard to their construction.⁵ The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, holds a basin with gilt silver mounts (inv. M.17–1968), a round cup or bowl with a cover set with gilded silver mounts (inv. M.18&A–1968), a pair of ewers and basins (inv. 4257–1857 and 4258–1857; 4282–1857 and 4283–1857), a rare European-type powder flask with silver fittings (inv. M.22–1964) and a unique ceremonial mace or chob (inv. IM.228–1927).⁶ HMC

¹ For this production, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 28–42 (with previous bibliography).

² FREIRE, Anselmo Braamcamp, ‘Inventario da Guarda-roupa de D. Manuel’, in *Arquivo Historico Portuguez* 2 (1904), pp. 381–417, at p. 412.

³ LABORDE, M. de, *Notice des émaux, bijoux et objets divers, exposés dans les galeries du Musée du Louvre*, vol. 2, Paris, Vinchon, Imprimeur des Musées Impériaux, 1853, p. 423. This cup was probably identical to an example, set with Iberian silver mounts, in the British Museum, London (inv. AF.317).

⁴ See CANBY, Sheila R., *Shah ‘Abbas. The Remaking of Iran* (cat.), London, The British Museum Press, 2009, p. 136, cat. 54.

⁵ WILLS, Barbara, LA NIECE, Susan, MCLEOD, Bet, CARTWRIGHT, Caroline, ‘A shell garniture from Gujarat, India in the British Museum’, in *The British Museum Technical Research Journal* 1 (2007), pp. 1–8.

⁶ JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, pp. 36–43, cat. 10–14.

18

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 symmet-

rically 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 leaves 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

19

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI CASKET

Tortoiseshell; silver mounts

India, Gujarat; 2nd half of the 16th century

Dim.: 13.5 × 19.5 × 13.5 cm

F1376

Provenance: Pedro Costa collection, Portugal.

This rare, precious casket, from the second half of the sixteenth century, used originally as a jewel-box, is made out of golden, translucent tortoiseshell plaques devoid of the usual darker splotches which are characteristic of this exotic material. This means that the whole casket was made from the scutes of the ventral side of the tortoise. The physical process to which the material—the scutes from the carapace of the hawksbill sea turtle—was subjected in order to produce pieces of this size and thickness is termed autografting and ensures that no visible junctions are visible. Contrary to what has previously been assumed, it is possible to identify with certainty the animal species that served as the source for the material for this and all the other tortoiseshell caskets produced in Gujarat, in Cambay or Surat using this method.¹

In fact, of the two marine tortoise species used in the production of decorative objects since time immemorial in Asia, the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), only the latter is susceptible to this autograft process.² One of the oldest documentary references to specific Gujarati tortoiseshell caskets, albeit no longer extant, is to be found

on the *post-mortem* inventory of Afonso de Castelo Branco, bailiff of the Lisbon royal court dated to 1556: ‘one tortoiseshell casket mounted in silver worth 2,000 reais’.³

The unusual proportions of this casket tell us that it was profoundly altered or restored. It must have suffered a serious accident, most likely during its transport aboard the India Run, and was probably restored upon arrival in Lisbon. The front and back correspond to the sides of the original casket, thus shortened to around a third of its original length. This transformation entailed a new arrangement of the silver mounts, namely the removal of the original side handles (of which traces of the matching holes may be observed) and the repositioning of the lock. It is modelled after a fourteenth-century European prototype of a casket made to store precious books of hours, with the fluted lid being a rare feature of some of these caskets.⁴ A rare example of this type belongs to the Musée de Cluny-Musée national du Moyen Âge, Paris (inv. NNI 952).

The silver mounts are also unusual, although their decoration of lizards (or dragons), lions, deer and birds on a background

¹ FELGUEIRAS, José Jordão, ‘Uma Família de Objectos Preciosos do Guzarate. A Family of Precious Gujarati Works’, in SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e (ed.), *A Herança de Rauluchantim. The Heritage of Rauluchantim* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu de S. Roque, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1996, pp. 151–153.

² CAUNES, Lison de, MORABITO, Jacques, *L'écaillé. Tortoiseshell*, Paris, Éditions Vial, 1997; and FRAZIER, J., ‘Exploitation of Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean’, in *Human Ecology*, 8.4, 1980, pp. 329–370, ref. p. 350.

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

⁴ On these caskets, made to store books of hours, usually decorated on the interior side of the lid with contemporary religious prints, 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.



of vegetal scrolls and the outline of the Timurid-inspired brackets is common to a well-known group of these tortoiseshell caskets. One of the best known is the casket (12.0 × 27.3 × 21.0 cm), with a similar fluted lid and relief mounts, from the Igreja Matriz do Montijo.⁵ Interestingly, on the hinges that crown the locks of the present example and in the casket in Montijo, we see an Indian rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), while the heraldic shield-shaped locks are also identical, differing only in the latch; the original one in the casket in Montijo with its customary lizard, and the one in the present casket (chased with European vegetal motifs) probably dating from when it was transformed. To the same group belong the large caskets (30.5 cm long) in the Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial, Madrid (invs. 10044680; and 10044687), gifted by Empress Maria of Austria (1528–1603) to Felipe II of Spain (r.1556–1598) in

1589.⁶ The present casket stands out from all those known from this rare group as the silver bands in relief, probably made using metallic dies (bronze or iron) have a pierced openwork background, making the mounts lighter and highlighting the contrast with the tortoiseshell. It is likely that this difference also resides in the coeval alterations that the present casket underwent. *HMC*

⁵ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jewels from the India Run* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015, pp. 66–71, cat. 48.

⁶ 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, maxime pp. 131–132, e p. 140, cats. VII.9–VII.10.

20

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE CASKET

Tortoiseshell and silver

India, Gujarat and Goa (mounts); 2nd-half of the 16th century

Dim.: 21.0 × 9.5 × 9.5 cm

F1187

Provenance: Luis Keil collection, former Director of MNNA, Portugal.

A rectangular Gujarati tortoiseshell casket of prismatic lid, a well-known shape often favoured for such objects. The chased silver mounts protecting the box's angles mimic contemporary European wooden caskets reinforced with iron bars and coated in tooled leather or *cuir bouilli*. Its silver lid edges and horizontal band mounts are engraved with overlapping fish-scale motifs, flanked by fish-scale or feather friezes of decorated edges. Additionally the palmette-shaped corner brackets that raise the casket's height while simultaneously protecting the fragile tortoiseshell edges, are decorated with foliage scrolls and animals on a European-style streaked ground. The raised square box lock, set on a pierced cartouche plate, features a lizard shaped latch characteristic of this particular production. Probably due to accidental damage shortly after completion, the casket lid was reinforced with a thin sheet of silver along its top length.

The bracket fittings, the lock and the hinges chased decoration of foliage sprays, birds and animals is, in its simplicity, somewhat reminiscent of European Renaissance decorative prints. Only the brackets shape reminds us of the sumptuary arts of the Deccan.

This rare and precious casket dating from the second-half of the 16th century, originally used as a jewellery box, is constructed out of golden and translucent tortoiseshell plaques without any of the darker markings characteristic of this exotic material as, unlike the majority of other known examples, the raw material for its making was selected from the turtle dorsal spotless scutes rather than from the densely patterned dorsal area.

The physical process to which the material was subjected in order to achieve large plaques of invisible joints and specific gauge is known as autografting. Contrary to previous assumptions it is possible to identify with certainty the specific turtle species

that provided the raw material for this, as well as for all the other Gujarati, Cambay or Surat tortoiseshell caskets made using identical technique.¹ In fact, of two marine turtle species used in Asia for producing decorative objects, the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), only the latter is viable for autografting.² These caskets are therefore free standing and do not require any metal elements to ensure functionality.³ As such the metal fittings were often not made in Gujarat but in other Indian regions or even as far afield as China.⁴

One of the earliest specific documental references to Gujarati tortoiseshell caskets is to be found in the 1556 *post-mortem* inventory of Afonso de Castelo-Branco, Lisbon court bailiff: 'one tortoiseshell casket mounted in silver worth 2,000 reais'.⁵

One casket of identical shape and European character as well as of similar chased silver decoration and corner brackets albeit made from mottled tortoiseshell plaques, formerly in the Alfredo Guimarães and Arthur de Sandão collections has been recently published.⁶ One other identical casket but of more native silver decoration and exclusively made of hawksbill turtle ventral scutes belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (inv. M.10&A-1945). The present casket, rare for its spotless tortoiseshell carcass, belonged to Luís Cristiano Cinatti Keil (1881-1947), son of the artist Alfredo Cristiano Keil (1850-1907), curator and interim director at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga and director at the Museu Nacional dos Coches. It would be inherited by his nephew, architect Francisco Keil do Amaral (1910-1975) and then by the latter's son Francisco Pires Keil do Amaral (b. 1935). *— HMC*

¹ FELGUEIRAS, José Jordão, 'Uma Família de Objectos Preciosos do Guzarate. A Family of Precious Gujarati Works', in SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e, (ed.), *A Herança de Rauluchantim. The Heritage of Rauluchantim* (cat.), Lisbon, Museu de S. Roque, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1996, pp. 151-153.

² CAUNES, Lison de, MORABITO, Jacques, *L'écaillé. Tortoiseshell*, Paris, Éditions Vial, 1997; and FRAZIER, J., 'Exploitation of Marine Turtles in the Indian Ocean', *Human Ecology*, 8.4, 1980, pp. 329-370, ref. p. 350.

³ JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, cat. 2, p. 17.

⁴ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jewels from the India Run* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015, p. 65.

⁵ IDEM, *ibidem*, pp. 65-67

⁶ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, cat. 14, pp. 130-135.



21

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE GUJARATI WRITING DESK (VENTÓ)

Teak, tortoiseshell, ebony, ivory and gilded copper

India, Gujarat; early 17th century

Dim.: 22.5 × 20.5 × 29.5 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 Iapam’, 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.¹ TP

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



22

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING CABINET

Teak, ebony, turtle shell, bone, and ivory; silver and iron hardware

Northern India, possibly Gujarat; 17th century

Dim.: 21.5 × 33.0 × 25.0 cm

F1095

Provenance: M. Roque collection, Portugal.



Exuberant northern Indian small sized writing cabinet, veneered in turtle shell, ivory, and bone. Probably made in Gujarat for exporting, its design follows well known European prototypes dating from the late 16th century¹.

Comprising of a teak carcass fully coated in gold leaf, the box was then veneered in highly polished mottled turtle shell plaques, probably from Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), on account of its brownish markings on translucent orange ground.² The turtle shell veneers are fixed to the structure by pegs in the same material, and by bone trims of identical fixation.

Repeated on every outer face and on the inner writing top, a central rectangular shaped plaque encased by geometric reticulated bone, teak, and ebony frieze, and framed by a broader

bone band. These central components are surrounded by eight quadrilateral sections, each surrounded by bone filleting bands. This geometric composition is framed in bone, ebony, and teak bands of rhythmic reticulated motifs, with peripheral bone filleting. The back elevation, of similar decorative composition, differs in the number of turtle shell plaques, in this instance ten, and in their placement.

When open, the cabinet is characterized by an arrangement of seven real drawers of various dimensions, simulating nine, distributed over three tiers and subdivided in their interiors. The drawer fronts are all equally decorated in turtle shell plaques framed by bone and ebony bands, with elegant, scalloped bone corner pieces, in all but two drawers, and turned button pull knobs in the same material. Identical decorative corner pieces were also applied to the inner drawer angle joints. The drawer divider frames are bone filleted.

Comprising of scalloped, floral motifs engraved lock escutcheon, *fleur de lys* shaped corner pieces, hinges and large side handles, the sophisticated silver hardware is fixed to the structure by pins in the same metal.

Similar cabinets were also manufactured elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent, be it in Gujarat or in other western Indian coastal production centres, and in Ceylon, modern day Sri Lanka. Gujarat was however one of the main Mughal controlled regions to produce this type of furniture, exporting it directly to Europe via the ports of Cambay and Sindh. The majority was however shipped to Goa, to fulfil the Portuguese demand for such objects, either in the overseas territories or in continental Portugal.

Generically, the various furniture typologies produced in these regions followed European prototypes that were adapted by the local artisans to the requirements of a western clientele³ fascinated by the exotic, indigenous raw materials, and decorative motifs. Often produced considering portability requirements, these objects accompanied their owners in their travels throughout the Orient, and on their return to Europe.

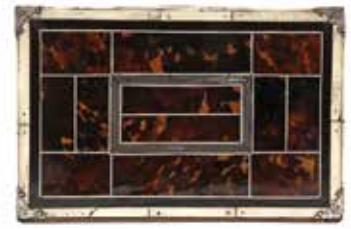
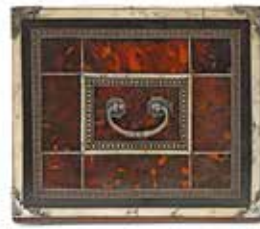
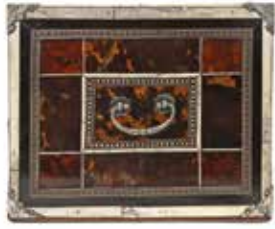
Of evident aesthetic, technical and functional syncretism between Portuguese and Hindustan cultures, ‘in no other discipline did East and West fuse in such homogenous manner, the European utilitarianism and the Hindustani techniques and decoration, blending to form distinct aesthetic families’⁴. ✎ MSP

¹ See: DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, p. 115.

² See: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal, Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 27–28.

³ See: DIAS, Pedro, *Índia, Artes Decorativas e Iconográficas*, Vol. Arte de Portugal no Mundo, 11, Lisbon, Público, 2008, pp. 115–120; JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Good from India: The Art of the Indian Cabinet Maker*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, pp. 9–13.

⁴ See: DIAS, Pedro, *História da Arte Portuguesa no Mundo—O Espaço Índico (Séculos XV–XIX)*, Vol. II, Lisbon, Círculo de Leitores, 1999, p. 324.



**INDO-PORTUGUESE
FURNITURE**

The classification of 'Indo-Portuguese Art' is applied to a large group of objects and artefacts that were manufactured in and originate from the former Portuguese State of India, particularly from the Malabar Coast workshops operating from Goa and Cochin, two major commercial outposts that would reach their zenith in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Soon after Vasco da Gama opened the sea route to India in 1498, the Portuguese Crown defined a clear and aggressive expansionist policy, focusing intensely on developing and securing a permanent contact with Asia, which, beyond the evangelical arguments, had a strong and undeniable commercial purpose.

Domestic furniture, as it was known in Europe, had no counterpart in early 16th century India. That fact drove the need for the new colonising elites to commission replicas or adaptations of the various typologies required, following European prototypes, which the local cabinet makers readily adapted to their traditions and decorative references.

It is therefore possible to suggest that India's role in the History of Furniture from the 16th century onwards is related to this reinterpretation and adaptation of European typologies and decorative models, which were reworked in local and exotic materials and impacted by local iconography, symbolism and decorative detail. It was this successful symbiosis that created the concept of an Indo-Portuguese style, whose production would become highly admired and desirable in the West, rapidly acquiring an allure of exotic luxury, status and good taste.

This interesting and successful miscegenation of differing cultural references can be admired in the outstanding extant pieces preserved in international museums and private collections, testifying to the creative strength of this hybrid Indo-Portuguese production throughout the Modern Age.

Some of the most relevant and admired examples of Indo-Portuguese furniture are certainly the pieces with elaborate inlaid decoration that were so attractive to 17th century taste. Usually made in teak they are often elaborately inlaid in sissou and ebony, occasionally with plain or dyed ivory elements, and often adorned with pierced metal mounts. This inlaying technique, favoured by Indian cabinet-makers, enhances the interesting dark/light effect and is of great visual impact and aesthetic harmony.

The decorative language adopted by Indian cabinet makers in the manufacturing of these highly desirable pieces is also deeply rooted in Hindu models full of subtle contrasts of light and shade, geometric patterns, elaborate stylised floral motifs often associated to human, animal or mythological figures.

It is safe to argue that Furniture is one of the most successful chapters in the context of Indo-Portuguese Decorative Arts. In no other area was the fusion between east and west so successfully achieved. ✨

A 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 × 38.0 cm

F1366

Provenance: John Dixon 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.¹ 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.²

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*.³ 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

¹ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 28–42.

² 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.

³ 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)⁴, 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*

⁴ 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.



24

INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING CABINET WITH TWO PORTUGUESE NOBLEMEN

Teak, Indian rosewood ivory, brass and iron; iron fittings

India, Gujarat; late 16th century

Dim.: 28.0 × 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.¹ 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.²

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.³

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*

¹ Regarding these productions, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 10–58.

² 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.

³ 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.



25

A LARGE CABINET WITH PORTUGUESE NOBLES AND HUNTING SCENES

Exotic wood, ebony, ivory, bone, brass, and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, Gujarat; late 16th century

Dim.: 38.5 × 80.5 × 36.5 cm

F1399

Provenance: Private collection, Spain.



This large sized cabinet can be considered one of the best pieces of furniture commissioned, and produced, in late-16th century Gujarat for a Portuguese patron.¹ The so far unidentified exotic wood carcass is veneered in ebony (*Dyospirus ebenum*), and lavishly decorated in ivory and green dyed bone inlaid elements. This sophisticated ornamentation combines, rather skilfully, the erudite repertoire of Chinese inspired foliage scrolls and stylised lotus flowers, with the International Timurid style of impactful figurative scenes. Originally it would have been supported on, possibly, an ebony stand or plain table.

Arranged around a large central drawer, the cabinet front features fifteen additional smaller drawers, simulating eighteen. Each drawer front is decorated with hunting scenes depicting elephants, tigers and deer, as well as a Portuguese nobleman, attired in contemporary costume and accompanied by his indigenous servant. On the larger drawer, a representation of a high-ranking couple reinforces the cabinet's marriage character, as is often evident in much of this luxurious export production. The couple is dressed in the typical Portuguese costume adapted to the region's

climate. The male wears jerkin over shirt and broad ruff collar, loose trousers and tall hat, in 1560s–1570s fashion. The female is portrayed in short waisted (*saio*) bodice—similar to her companion's jerkin—and long skirt, her hair tied in a chignon, the standard female hairstyle in Portuguese India, particularly in Goa.

The box top and lateral panels, of typically local decorative style, follow the international Timurid ornamental grammar of carpet like patterns, featuring a cartouche motif on the top and central lobate medallions in the laterals, on fields framed by foliage scroll borders of eight petalled rosettes and comma shaped foliage.

Despite its lesser quality, in terms of inlaying techniques and design, we must refer an oblong writing box of single, long and narrow drawer, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York (inv. 2000.301).² Made in teak veneered in ebony and opulently inlaid in ivory, exotic wood and green dyed bone elements, it portrays hunting scenes with tigers and deer, as well as Portuguese figures riding elephants and horses, attired in identical costume to those in our cabinet. *HMC*

¹ Regarding this production, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 26–58.

² EKHTIAR, Maryam, SOUCEK, Priscilla P., CANBY, Sheila R., HAIDAR, Navina (eds.), *Masterpieces from the Department of Islamic Art in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011, pp. 341, 378–379, cat. 267.



26

GUJARATI FALL-FRONT WRITING CABINET

Teak, ebony, ivory, green-dyed bone, brass and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, Gujarat; late 16th century

Dim.: 25.0 × 39.5 × 28.5 cm

F1253

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.



This rare fall-front writing cabinet, now missing its original lid, was made in Gujarat for the Portuguese market in the second half of the 16th century. Assembled in teak (*Tectona grandis*), it is lavishly veneered in ebony (*Dyospiros ebenum*), rather than in the more common East Indian rosewood, inlaid with teak, ivory and green-dyed bone marquetry motifs and ornamented with gilt copper fittings that include side handles and drawer pulls, as well as a central lock-plate shaped as a double-headed eagle or *gandabherund*—a Hindu mythological bird believed to possess magical strength and the power to ward off evil.¹ Similarly to its contemporary congeners, its shape reflects a European prototype that ranked highly amongst prestigious 16th century pieces of storage furniture.

The missing hinged front would open to reveal a writing surface and the multiple drawers for storing writing paraphernalia and all kinds of smaller treasured objects. Such utilitarian objects made in the Orient with exotic raw materials became highly desir-

able in Europe both due to their decorative appeal and technical sophistication. The production of this type of furniture was based in north-western India, namely in Gujarat.²

The lateral elevations, as well as the cabinet's top panel, are characterised by a central composition with floral scrolls of Timurid (Persian) origin, set in double symmetry. These decorative elements, comprising large stylized lotus flowers derived from Chinese ceramics and textile patterns skilfully outlined by fine metallic thread, a detail rare in this production, are closely related to the contemporary Gujarati furniture production with mother-of-pearl inlays on a dark mastic ground.

The wide border 'S' shaped motifs of zoomorphic terminals, used solely on the cabinet's top panel, are rare elements in this production that are also present on the altar front, converted into a table top, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. IS.15–1882). Another object from the same museum (inv. 18–1897)

¹ For a similarly decorated writing box of this same production, from the collection of the Victoria and 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, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, p. 151, cat. 37.

² 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.



and identical origin, a writing cabinet also missing its fall-front, does feature a border with the same type of 'S' shaped motif on the top panel.

In clear contrast, the back panel features a central ground with five flowering trees alternating with four vultures pecking their chests, the *jatayuh*, another apotropaic figure of similar symbolic value to the double-headed eagle or *gandabherund*.

The cabinet is fitted with nine drawers over four tiers with a larger central square drawer. While the decorative motifs on the

fronts of the smaller drawers consist of symmetrically arranged flowering plants and birds, including pea hens, the central drawer front features a large flowering tree flanked by a couple in Islamic attire, a detail that reinforces the cabinet's matrimonial association. On the left hand side, the male figure is wearing *jama* (coat), *pay-jama* (tight-fitting pants), *patka* (waist sash) and *kulahdar* (small turban), and, on the right, the female in *ghaghra* (long pleated skirt), *odhani* (long veil) and *choli* (blouse). HMC

27

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE CABINET (VENTÓ)

Teak, ebony, ivory and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, Goa; ca. 1600–1700

Dim.: 27.5 × 25.5 × 34.0 cm

F1236

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

An Indo-Portuguese teakwood (*Tectona grandis*) cabinet, thickly veneered and inlaid in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) highlighted with ivory decorative pegs.

Raised on flattened ball-shaped gilt copper feet, it features highly elaborate openwork fire-gilt copper mounts that include corner braces, large hinges, lock escutcheon plate, drawer pulls, and top handle. The back and sides, of carpet-like pattern decoration, feature a field of fine floral scrolls arranged in double symmetry with central rosette and broad ebony border. Identical type of highly stylised foliage decoration, probably inspired by European ornamental engravings, can be seen on the drawer fronts.

The front door is characterised by a central medallion featuring a stylised lion, or *simha*, a beast present for its apotropaic role in protecting the valuable contents once held in the cabinet's drawers. The inner door surface, a field of ebony geometric squares punctuated by ivory pegs that contrast with the darker teakwood, also features a circular medallion of *simha* lion mask.

For its chosen materials and ornamental grammar, as well as for the sophisticated openwork fittings typical of such production, it is possible to identify its origin as from Goa.¹ A *ventó* (26.0 × 22.7 × 33.6 cm) of identical origin, and featuring similar ornamental repertoire, albeit of silver fittings and missing the stylised lions, belongs to the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, in Oporto (inv. 29 Div MNSR).²

In its shape, this cabinet reproduces an East Asian prototype known as *ventó*. The Japanese term *bentō*, which was absorbed into the Portuguese language, referred to,—according to the *Nippo jisho* the first Japanese-Portuguese dictionary published in 1603 as *Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam*—a lunch box. In fact, the original Japanese model for the *ventó* is known as *kakesuzuri-bako*, or 'portable writing box', which, when it has a frontal door and fittings like a strong box, is called *funa-dansu*, or 'ship chest with drawers': a box for seals (documents, writing paraphernalia, and ink stones) and money, with a single hinged front door, usually adorned with intricate metal fittings hiding various inner drawers or compartments. Fall-front writing cabinets, *ventós*, and small table cabinets were made in Asia in exotic and expensive materials and became highly admired and eagerly sought after in Europe, not just for their exotic shape but also for their technical mastery. ✨ HMC

¹ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 115–120.

² IDEM, p. 152, cat. 44.



28

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING TABLE

Teak, sissoo, ebony and ivory; gilt copper fittings

India; 17th century

Dim.: 69.0 × 74.5 × 51.0 cm

A296

Provenance: Luísa Ferreira de Almeida collection, Portugal.

Unusual 17th century Indo-Portuguese writing-table. The teak and sissoo carcass inlaid in an ivory and ebony decorative stylized composition of animals, plants and scrollwork.

The tabletop is profusely ornate, in a pattern that radiates from a central rosette encircled by double filleting that, in turn, frames a row of alternating lozenge and circle motifs, from which radiate centripetal amphorae with stylized vegetal motifs. The outer edge of the tabletop is decorated in a dense and elaborate composition of ebony inlay and long ivory filaments in circles and scrolls, ending in the stylized eye and beak of the Hindu demi-god eagle Jatayu¹.

The frame is fitted with two drawers with compartmented interiors designed for storage of writing paraphernalia. The drawer fronts are decorated by inlaid scrollwork and enriched by pierced and gilt copper escutcheons. On the sides and on the back of the case a central amphora from which emerge floral scrolls ending in blossoming flowers.

The outer angled legs follow a similar matrix of inlaid alternating circles and lozenge motifs, standing on feet shaped as the Hindu mythological protector figure Jatayu. The legs are linked by double, plain and undulating stretchers fitted at two levels and decorated in a similar pattern.

An essential piece of domestic furniture, writing tables were manufactured by the Indian cabinetmakers from the earliest days of Portuguese colonisation.

One of essentially two types of tables popular in the 17th century, the other being the 'bufete', writing tables were defined by their strong, robust turned legs, applied decorative copper, brass or bronze fittings, large, overhanging tops, double stretchers on all four elevations and compartmented drawers designed for storage of writing utensils. ✍

¹ *Jatayu* is a character in the Ramayana, epic of South East Asian literature. It is represented as an eagle that attempts to rescue Sita, Rama's wife, from Ravana who Jatayu fights to his death.



AN INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING BOX

Teak, ebony, Indian rosewood, exotic wood, ivory, bone, brass and gilt copper

India, probably Thane; second half of the 16th century

Dim.: 17.0 × 43.0 × 32.0 cm

F1382

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.



FIG. 1
Drawing of Pedro Barreto de Resende, *Bandora e Tana, Livro das Plantas de todas as Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*, Goa, 1635.

A rare writing box of ebony veneered (*Dyospirus ebenum*) teakwood carcass (*Tectona grandis*), densely decorated in Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), exotic wood, ivory and green dyed bone inlaid motifs, resting on gilt copper ball feet.

The box upper surface features a delicate quatrefoils frame and broad foliage border of serrated leaves, flowers, and dragon head terminals; Large star shaped rosettes mark the midpoints, while the corners are filled by *nāginī*, Hindu mythological figures with female heads and torsos, touching their own breasts in an allusion to fertility, and snake-like lower body. On the central ground,

equally delimited by a quatrefoil motif, a large flowering plant, rising from a vase, with peacocks perched on its branches. The frontal, rear and side panels ornamentations are defined by foliage scroll motifs of dragon terminals, similarly emerging from vases.

Conceived as a box with a drawer, its design is characterised by a single half-depth sliding case with a frontal tilt top compartment of ebony framed individual lock, and, to the right, an open receptacle for quills and other writing paraphernalia, as well as ebony inkwell and sand pot. Below this upper case, two secret compartments take over the box's full length. These are accessible from the main drawer's lateral panels as concealed lockable ebony framed containers sliding in opposite directions.

Pierced and scalloped, the cast and gilt copper fittings include corner pieces, two spiralled front handles, two side handles, and lock escutcheon shaped as a double headed eagle, or *gandabherunda*, Hindu mythological bird imbued with magical strength for warding off evil and protect the box's precious contents.

This type of writing box, replicating 16th and 17th century European prototypes, is rare. Made for exporting in Portuguese ruled furniture making centres, such as Goa or Kochi, and others along India's western coast, it is decorated in exotic raw materials that were both robust and of powerful decorative effect.

Since that Portuguese contemporary records refer the village of Thane, nowadays absorbed by the city of Mumbai, as a flourishing community of Muslim craftsmen producing precious marquetry furniture, it is likely that the writing box herein described originates from one of such workshops, then located within the Portuguese Indian State Northern Province.¹

This specific production belongs to an intriguing group of rare early Indian furniture made for the Portuguese European market, and only recently attributed in terms of its geographic origin, decorative influences and historic production context.² A similarly shaped writing box (dim.: 17.4 × 44.0 × 36.6 cm), albeit of purely foliage ornamentation and certainly made in Goa, belongs to the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, in Lisbon (inv. 1670 Mov).³ HMC

¹ 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*, Nova Delhi, Primus Books, 2014, pp. 805–814.

² CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–105.

³ 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.



30

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE *VENTÓ* WITH THE MANOEL FAMILY COAT OF ARMS

Teak, ebony, ivory, brass, iron and gilt copper fittings

India, probably Thane; ca. 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.

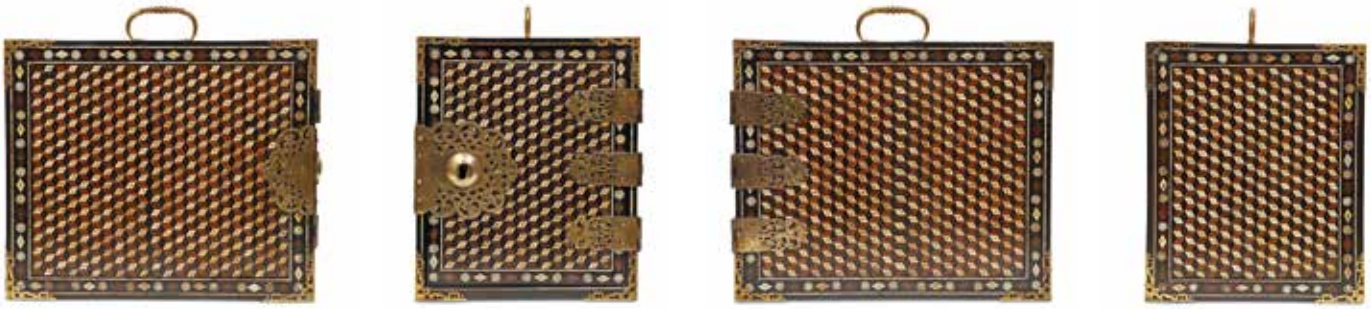
Given this production chronology, from the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, it is likely that this cabinet was commissioned by Pedro Manoel de Ataíde (ca.1570–1628) who became 2nd Count of Atalaia following the death of his elder brother Francisco (1565–1624). Pedro travelled to India 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.¹

Both the cabinet's raw materials and decoration, along with the pierced openwork fittings, point to a Thane manufacture.² A writing box of identical characteristics and similar decoration (15.6 × 26.7 × 36.0 cm), belongs to a private collection.³ HMC

¹ MANOEL, Diogo Maria d'Orey, *Epítome da Família Manoel, Condes de Atalaya e Marqueses de Tancos*, Lisbon, 2020, p. 31.

² 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.

³ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), p. 154, cat. 55.



31

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; ca. 1600–1625

Dim.: 45.5 × 33.0 × 37.5 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.¹ 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).² *HMC*

¹ 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.

² CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), pp. 91–94, figs. 51 and 54, cat. 45.



32

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE WRITING BOX

Teak, ebony, ivory and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Thane; ca. 1560–1630

Dim.: 19.5 × 42.8 × 33.0 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 India¹ 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.²

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).³ *HMC*

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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.



33

INDO-PORTUGUESE TABLE TOP CABINET

Teak, ebony, East Indian rosewood, ivory, and dyed bone; gilt copper fittings

Portuguese State of India Northern Province, probably Thane, Bombay (Mumbai); late 16th century

Dim.: 25.0 × 40.0 × 29.0 cm

F1307

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.



Ebony (*Dyospyrus ebenum*) veneered, teak (*Tectona grandis*) cabinet of sumptuous East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), teak, ivory and green dyed bone inlaid decorative compositions, fixed to the box structure by small brass pins.

Modelled after European prototypes, these 16th century portable cabinets ranked amongst the most valued furniture of their age. With four drawers stacked over three tiers, each with its own lock, but simulating nine for symmetry, this type of box was destined to store a myriad of objects such as documents, writing paraphernalia, jewels or other valuable treasures. Its scalloped and pierced gilt copper fittings, comprising eight corner brackets, two side handles and nine lock escutcheons, are characteristic of contemporary Goan furniture production. In addition to these elements, the cabinet's front is also ornamented by parallel and transversal rows of equidistant dome-shaped gilt copper tacks.

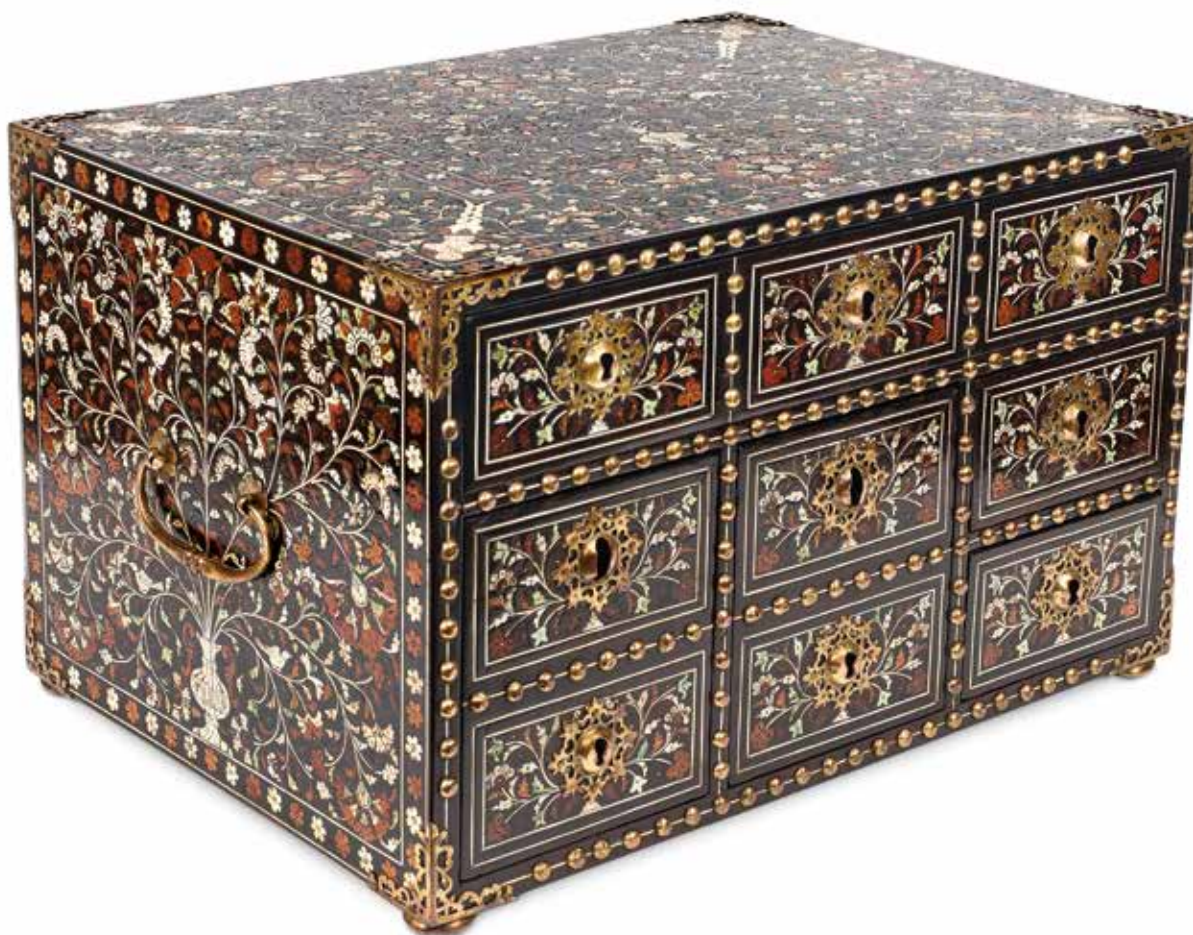
The dense and sophisticated marquetry decorative motifs, consisting of symmetrical designs of flowers and foliage, repeated on each real and simulated drawer front, expand into large car-

pet-like compositions on the cabinet's lateral and rear elevations. Evolving from a central field with flowering vases set in symmetry, from which emerge a profusion of branches of Iranian origin, with foliage and stylised flowers, star-shaped rosettes and fan-shaped carnations interspersed with long-tailed birds, this exuberant, yet harmonious arrangement is achieved by the combination of the various exotic timbers with the ivory and green dyed bone elements. A narrow border of hexafoil rosettes alternating teak and ivory, frames these large panels.

On the top surface an additional carpet-like composition, in this instance featuring a wide border of floral and foliage scrolls combined with large, star-shaped rosettes and frilled carnations, with *nagini* at the corner angles. In the smaller central frame an exuberant flower vase, from which sprout carnations.

Luxurious furnishings were essential items in the decorating of the European elite's homes, and exotic portable table top cabinets such as this, were also indispensable in the daily lives of European officials and others settled or travelling in Asia.¹ Small

¹ 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.



yet expensive, these objects were made with exotic and valuable raw materials, and much admired and desired in Europe, for their perceived sophistication and technical accomplishment.

Given that extant 16th century Portuguese records refer the village of Thane—now absorbed by metropolitan Mumbai (Bombay)—as a place renowned for its large community of Muslim craftsmen that produced precious marquetry furniture, it is possi-

ble that this cabinet might have originated from that production centre, then located in a Portuguese ruled territory.

This table cabinet belongs to an exceptional and exclusive group of rare early furniture, made for the Portuguese market, which has only recently been identified in regards to its geographical origin, decorative inspirational sources (Iranian, Ottoman and European) and historic production context.² *HMC*

² 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.

34

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE THANE WRITING CABINET

Teak, sissoo, and ivory; gilt copper fittings

Portuguese India State Northern Province, probably Thane (Mumbai); late 16th–early 17th century

Dim.: 21.5 × 36.0 × 44.5 cm

F1023

Provenance: Private collection, England.

Parallelepiped teak and ivory inlaid sissoo lifting top writing cabinet with teak inner carcass, decorated with pierced gilt copper mounts.

The lifting top hides a larger squarer central compartment encircled by three rectangular bays for storage of writing implements, interspersed by an inkwell and a sand blotter at each front corner. On the lower half there is a storage drawer whose front is simulated on the upper half.

The front and side elevations' decorative scheme of inlaid symmetrical blossoming plants, in teak and white and green ivory, sits within a double filleted band of white ivory and sissoo four leafed clovers that fill the entire surfaces. The back panel decoration is limited to a double-filleted frame of four leafed clovers.

The more complex and sophisticated decorative scheme of the top panel follows the same matrix but, in this particular case

also encircles a central panel depicting a larger blossoming three leaf, in between a pair of facing peacocks framed by an identical double filleted four leafed sissoo and ivory motif band. The inner lid repeats the same central panel but without the peacock depiction or the larger band of flowers, focusing on highlighting the mellow golden tones of the sissoo timbers.

This unusual cabinet belongs to a limited number of furniture pieces, defined by its sophisticated and exotic decoration of contrasting colour inlays and, especially by the characteristic frieze of four petalled flowers, which are not observed in more abundantly produced 17th century Goan models. These are usually decorated in plainer ebony and ivory inlay patterns.

Considering the clear Persian allusions of this type of decoration, most authors suggest a Mughal origin centred on the Gujarati seaports as well as Sindh (further to the North in present day Pakistan).

Recently the art historian Hugo M. Crespo has suggested as a possible origin the Northern Provinces of the Portuguese State of India, in Gujarat as well as in Maharashtra, north of Goa on the basis that the making of these types of objects for the Portuguese market, from at least the mid 16th century, predates the Mughal conquest of those territories in 1576 and the fall of the Sultanate of Gujarat. Also because the 'Persian' nature of the decoration should be accepted as typical of Mughal art as much as of the rich and sophisticated art of the Deccan Sultanates, such as those of Ahmagdanar e Bijapur that at the time extended along most of the western coast of the Indian subcontinent from Gujarat to Goa. In fact, these Deccan Sultanates resulted from the collapsed Bahmani Sultanate, which between 1347 and 1518 was one of the bastions of Persian culture and art in that geographical area.

Of the various 16th century Portuguese Northern Province coastal outposts, several could claim a furniture making tradition. In fact, some of the earliest documented references to inlaid furniture made in India for the export market name Thane, in the vicinity of Mumbai, as its place of origin as the 1559 cargo inventory for the Ship Garça that specifies 'a brand new writing cabinet with inlaid stand made in Thane' (Crespo, 2014, pp.71–72). ✓ TP



35

CABINET ON STAND

Teak, rosewood, exotic wood, ivory, green-dyed bone, brass and iron; gilt copper fittings
 India, Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India, probably Thane; ca. 1560–1620
 Dim.: 105.0 × 61.5 × 42.0 cm

A602

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.



This rare late sixteenth or early seventeenth century teakwood (*Tectona grandis*) cabinet on stand, veneered in East Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) and ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) is an outstanding example of the Indian marquetry decorated furniture made for exporting. Of sumptuous marquetry ornamentation, it is inlaid in rosewood, ebony, possibly sandalwood, ivory and green-dyed bone elements fixed to the carcass by small brass pins and mounted with pierced gilt copper fittings and large round headed tacks encircling the doors, as well as the case narrow edges.

Rather large, the case features nine drawers, simulating twelve for symmetry, set in four overlapping tiers, each door front of pierced lock escutcheons. The side panels are fitted with large ring handles of openwork plates. The carpet-like decorative composition consists of symmetrically arranged flowering branches of four-petalled rosette borders. On the door fronts the prevalent foliage decoration is complemented by face-to-face pairs of male and female figures in local attire, armed Portuguese hunters and tigers and standing figures leaning on staffs, as well as pairs of elephants and peacocks.

The top and lateral panels are characterised by a central section of isometric cubes alternating ebony, ivory and green-dyed bone elements. This composition is complemented by a wide floral border interspersed with armed Portuguese figures hunting tigers. An unusual decorative feature is certainly the figurative narrow band separating the outer borders from the central fields, which is populated by flowering plants, five-pointed stars within rosettes and pairs of hares positioned face to face. On the top panel a cen-

tral circular medallion depicting two Portuguese men in courtly attire seating face to face on a raised platform amidst vegetation, a flowering plant emerging from a vase in between them. The cabinet stand features two identical drawers. Amongst the dense floral decoration pairs of men and women in regional attire, as if highlighting the marital implication of this important cabinet.

Of double tier stretchers, the stand prismatic structure is decorated with a colourful frieze of alternating ivory, green-dyed bone and exotic wood rosettes inlaid onto the solid rosewood carcass. The feet are in the shape of *Jatāyuh* (literally 'strong wind') vultures, *Rāma*'s 'devout bird' and Hindu demi-god. As depicted in the epic *Rāmāyana*, *Jatāyuh* is the king of vultures and Aruna's, vehicle of the sun-God *Sūrya*, youngest son. As is the case with the cabinet's overall inlaid decoration, the *Jatāyuh* figures are ivory inlaid onto the rosewood background and ornamented with ivory pegs, green-dyed bone and exotic wood.

As is customary in Indian produced furniture under Portuguese patronage, this cabinet typology reflects a European prototype taken to Asia by Portuguese officials and merchants. Its exuberant decorative composition however, as well as its evident *horror vacui*, and intricate openwork and gilt copper fittings, are of local Indian origin. The cabinet overall design stands out as a major testimony to the cultural and artistic synthesis that happened following the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498. Given that sixteenth-century records mention the village of Taná, or Thane, nowadays swallowed by sprawling Mumbai, as a flourishing Muslim community of precious marquetry furniture makers, it is possible



that this cabinet's origin is precisely Thane, then included in the Northern Province of the Portuguese State of India.¹

An unquestionable precious cabinet, it belongs to a group of rare early furniture made in India for the Portuguese market,

which has only recently been identified in terms of its geographical origin, decorative inspiration—Iranian, Ottoman and European—and historical production context.² HMC ✍

¹ 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.

² See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 136–171, cat. 15; CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 88–104; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *From the Northern Province. Marquetries and 'Lacquerware' from Portuguese India*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024.

36

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE NAGAPATTINAM WRITING CABINET

Rosewood, exotic wood, bone, and ivory; iron fittings

India, Coromandel Coast, probably Nagapattinam; ca. 1600–1630

Dim.: 20.0 × 36.5 × 29.0 cm

F1417

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

First-quarter of the seventeenth century east Indian rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*) cabinet of inlaid exotic wood (possibly *Dalbergia sissoo*), animal bone and elephant ivory decoration, and wrought iron fittings.

This distinctive writing box is associated to a, up until recently, unknown production of which one similarly decorated fall-front cabinet, now in a Portuguese private collection, is known to us. In spite of the fact that its raw materials and manufacturing techniques, as well as its inlaid ornamentation, suggest an Indian origin from Sindh, Thane, Chaul, Revdanda Fort, Goa or Kochi¹, its evident Chinese influenced decorative motifs, set it apart from such manufacturing centres sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made for exporting furniture.

The cabinet finely incised decoration is actually reminiscent of a later production from India's eastern coast, the Coromandel Coast, that mostly dates from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This essentially Anglo-Indian production was centred in Vishakhapatnam or Vizagapatam (*Vizagapatão* in contemporary Portuguese sources), nowadays in Andhra Pradesh, the only natural sea harbour between Calcutta and Chennai, formerly Madras.²

Known for its fine ivory-inlaid decorative motifs, Vizagapatam export furniture is characterised by distinctive incised ivory ornamentation filled with black lac. The same technique, albeit streamlined, is also present on our cabinet ivory inlaid surfaces. A small box (3.5 × 10.2 × 6.5 cm), now at London's Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. 717:1,2–1892),³ is another, but later (ca.1720–1730) example of such production. Of ebony veneered sandalwood carcass, it is inlaid in engraved and black lac highlighted ivory elements, featuring a similar, but more evolved, two-fold floral scrolls symmetric design.

As a matter of fact, our cabinet two-fold symmetric pattern, together with its Chinese-derived decorative motifs, mirrors those seen on dyed textiles (*kalamkari*, literally 'pen-work') from the Coromandel Coast. Known in Europe as *chintz* and in India as *palampore*, from the Hindi *palangposh*—bedcover—, these hand-painted mordant and resist-dyed cotton textiles were produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for exporting to Europe. Their decorative patterns often feature a central tree laden with fruits and birds, blending European embroidery designs, Chinese decorative motifs adapted from textiles and other sources, and Indian elements.⁴

¹ For such productions see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence*, Oporto, Bluebook, 2021.

² For this production see JAFFER, Amin, 'Tipu Sultan, Warren Hastings and Queen Charlotte: The Mythology and Typology of Anglo-Indian Ivory Furniture', in *Burlington Magazine*, 141.1154 (1999), pp. 271–281; and JAFFER, Amin, *Furniture from British India and Ceylon. A catalogue of the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001.

³ JAFFER, Amin, *Furniture from British India and Ceylon. A catalogue of the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 2001, p. 186, pl. 36.

⁴ Eastern Asian influence is more evident in certain extant pieces, such as a bedcover or wall hanging (284.5 × 236.0 cm) in the Cleveland Museum of Art (inv. 2003.43). Set against a deep red ground—a highly prized and challenging colour characteristic of this production—this cotton textile depicts cranes, herons and other colourful birds, either perched on distinctly Chinese pointed rocks or in mid-flight.





In earlier *kalamkari* textiles from the Indian south-eastern coast, particularly those made for the Deccan courts, a strong Chinese influence in depictions of trees, rocks, birds, and animals, coexists with Persianate elements, such as figures in Iranian costume. This mixture is evident on a floor spread dating from ca.1630–1640, (inv. IM.160–1929), and on an earlier *rumal* featuring figural groups, dated to ca.1625–1650 (inv.IS.34–1969), both in the same Victoria and Albert Museum.⁵ Equally made in the Golconda Coromandel Coast region, these textiles often feature a central Timurid-style polylobate medallion of floral scroll motifs in two-fold symmetry, forming a knotted motif. This design is comparable to the Iranian-style cartouche on the present cabinet top panel.⁶

The similarity between the two-fold motifs, the Golconda made chintz cloths and those on our fall-front cabinet, suggest a common origin from the southeastern Indian coast. And despite that fact that documented Portuguese presence in the Golconda area is poorly documented, it is officially recorded further south, in Pulicat, or Pazhaverkadu (Paleacate in Portuguese), founded in 1580 north of Chennai, as well as in Mylapore, the Portuguese São

Tomé de Meliapor, now absorbed by Chennai, and Nagapattinam (*Negapatão* in Portuguese), in present-day Tamil Nadu.

Mylapore, the Apostle Saint Thomas final resting place, was the site where the Portuguese build a church in the early 1520s, around which a settlement would grow. Although less populated than Pulicat, Mylapore was described by Cesare Federici as ‘the most beautiful of all in those parts of India.’⁷ By 1580 it already had seven churches. The walled city remained under Portuguese control until 1662, when it was taken by the Qutb Shahis of Golconda, but Portuguese influence was maintained up until the mid-eighteenth century, when the British occupied São Tomé. Well-known for its bustling commercial activity, there is little evidence, apart from silk textile production, of luxury manufactures in the region. It is nonetheless plausible that expensively decorated furniture was made in there to supply demand by wealthy Portuguese residents.

The same may be said for Nagapattinam. By the late 1520s, long before the Dutch arrival in 1662, Portuguese merchants had already established their presence, although it would only become, officially, Portuguese State of India territory in 1642. After surrendering to a Dutch attack in 1658, most of the Portuguese

⁵ For similar *kalamkari rumals* see HAIDAR, Navina Najat, SARDAR, Marika (eds.), *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700. Opulence and fantasy* (cat.), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art–Yale University Press, pp. 271–273, cats. 160–162; for the example discussed in our text, see p. 273, no. 1.

⁶ A *palampore* with a two-fold design (268.0 × 213.0 cm), forming a knotted motif similar to that on our fall-front cabinet and likely dated to ca. 1725–1750 is housed in the same museum in London (inv. IS.10–1976). Collected in the Netherlands in the early twentieth century, its intricate ‘tree of life’ design is composed of four identical stencilled quarters. See Rosemary Crill, *Chintz. Indian textiles for the West*, London, V&A Publishing, 2008, p. 29, cat. 28.

⁷ FEDERICI, Cesare, *Viaggio di M. Cesare de I Fedrici, nell’India Orientale, et oltre l’India [...]*, Venice, Apresso Andrea Muschio, 1587, p. 72.



population resettled in Jaffna, Colombo and Mylapore, by then still under Portuguese control.

Nonetheless, between the eighth and thirteenth centuries, Nagapattinam had been a major port for trading with China, although it would lose much of its dealing to the Islamic port of Nagore, three kilometres to the north, following from Muslim expansion in the Bay of Bengal area. Under Portuguese rule, Nagapattinam once again flourished, benefiting from intense maritime traffic between Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), Bengal, Malacca, and the Malabar ports, as recorded in Cesare Federici's 1567 account⁸, effectively resuming its trading with China, particularly in silk textiles and porcelain, via the Portuguese outpost of Macao.⁹ As such, the presence of luxury Chinese products in Nagapattinam, does also shed some light on our cabinet's Chinese-style decorative motifs.

As was the case in some Portuguese administered cities along India's western coast, namely Thane, Chaul, Goa, and Kochi, it is likely that furniture making for exporting would also flourish in southeastern coastal settlements like Pulicat, Mylapore and, more plausibly, in Nagapattinam. This production must have however occurred on a smaller scale, as suggested by the limited number of extant objects, all from antique Portuguese collections, such as our cabinet. ✍ HMC

⁸ FEDERICI, Cesare, *Viaggio di M. Cesare de I Fedrici, nell'India Orientale, et oltre l'India [...]*, Venice, Apresso Andrea Muschio, 1587, pp. 69–71.

⁹ STEPHEN, S. Jeyaseela, 'East Asian and Southeast Asian Commodities in the Maritime Trade of South India and the Role of the Portuguese in the Early Modern Period', *The Indian Historical Review*, 33.2 (2006), pp. 18–38, namely pp. 28–30.

37

FALL-FRONT SINDH CABINET

Teak, ebony, ivory, exotic wood, green-dyed bone and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Sindh (present-day Pakistan); ca. 1580–1630

Dim.: 42.5 × 88.3 × 42.0 cm

F1421

Provenance: Private collection, France.

This imposing fall-front cabinet was likely made in Sindh, in present-day Pakistan, towards the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.¹ 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).²

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.³ 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

¹ 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.

² CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 76–88.

³ DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 356–357.



38

AN INDO-PORTUGUESE SINDH TABLETOP CABINET

Teak, ebony, ivory, sadely marquetry and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Thatta, modern day Province of Sindh, Pakistan; ca. 1580–1620

Dim.: 25.5 × 37.8 × 27.5 cm

F1350

Provenance: P.A.B. collection, Oporto.

This tabletop cabinet fits into a typically European prototype, its various drawers used for storing valuables such as jewellery, money, and documents.

Ubiquitous in aristocratic interiors of their time, such portable writing boxes and tabletop cabinets would become indispensable utilitarian objects in the daily lives of Imperial officials and merchants, settling or travelling through Asia.¹ This example is constructed in teak (*Tectona grandis*), veneered in ebony (*Diospyrus ebenum*), and decorated with erudite inlaid ivory compositions. Its gilt copper hardware elements include the two side handles and lock escutcheons.

The cabinet's lateral and top panels decoration is austere, being characterised by an ivory inlaid border of circular medallions with cockerels, highlighted by incisions and black and red coloured mastic, that alternate with oblong cartouches of stylised foliage scrolls. In the central field, large ebony Timurid style foliage cartouches on a teakwood ground. The cabinet's back elevation is plainly decorated by an ebony frame enhanced by fine ivory filleting. The box front features nine drawers, simulating twelve identical fronts arranged over four tiers, with a large, centrally placed double height drawer that simulates two. The drawers inlaid decorative compositions comprise of face-to-face rooters, symmetrically placed to

either side of the scalloped lock escutcheons and, similarly to the lateral and top borders described, of *sadeli* marquetry elements.

Sadeli marquetry or micro-mosaic, known as *khatam* in Persian, was initially introduced to India through the Province of Sindh. This technique, which emerged during the Middle Ages in the eastern Mediterranean region, namely in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, would eventually expand into Iran and India.² In Saphavid Iran, *khatam* art, known as *khatam-kari* and *khatam-bandi*, flourished in Isfahan, Shiraz, and Kerman. It became widely practiced in India, having been introduced in Surat from Sindh, perhaps via Shiraz, and becoming known as *Sadeli*.

This technique consists in joining various fine and geometrically cut sticks, mostly of triangular section, in a variety of materials, such as pewter or silver, wood, such as ebony, teak or sandalwood, ivory or bone, either white or dyed, horn, copper or brass, in bundles which are then transversally sliced in thin sections of repeating geometric patterns, more commonly star shaped, that are fixed onto a wooden substrate. The surface is then finished by smoothing, and oiled or waxed before polishing.

The combination of ebony and ivory inlaid motifs and *Sadeli*, with specific typologies of objects, such as the games boards mentioned in Pelsaert's *Remonstrantie*, has assisted recent scholars in proposing a Sindh origin for a determined group of pieces with

¹ See: JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, p. 18; and DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013.

² Regarding this technique see: GOLMOHAMMADI, Javad, 'The Art of Iranian Decorative Veneer, Khâtam-kari', in OHTA, Alison *et al.* (eds.), *Art, Trade and Culture in the Islamic World and Beyond. From the Fatimids to the Mughals*, London, Gingko Library, 2016, pp. 242–253.



strong Islamic characteristics and evident Timurid decorative grammar.³ Similarly to the present cabinet, they feature mostly a non-figurative decoration, and are made in ebony veneered teak inlaid in ivory, dyed bone, exotic timbers and abundant *sadeli* decorative marquetry.

The main ornamental motif in this rare tabletop cabinet is the rooster, ubiquitous on all its surfaces, excepting the back. *Dik* in Arabic, such depiction is an uncommon motif in this restricted group of Sindh made objects. Particularly venerated in Islam, this bird is highly respected by Muslims as a divine symbol. Some hadiths, or 'sayings, talks', attributed to the Prophet Muhammad,

seem to account for the rooster highest esteem. According to one, the Prophet stated that: 'when you hear the crowing rooster, ask God for His favour, as it sees and Angel, but if you hear a donkey's braying, seek refuge from the devil in God, as the donkey sees a demon'. In another instance the Prophet is credited with saying: 'Do not insult the rooster as it summons us to prayer'. As such the crowing rooster symbolizes the daily call for early morning prayer.

Rooster's depictions in objects such as this cabinet, represent an evident concession to the prevailing aniconism of this Islamic production from Thatta, in present-day Pakistan's Province of Sindh.⁴ HMC

³ See: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *A Índia em Portugal. Um Tempo de Confluências Artísticas* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 76–88.

⁴ On rooster symbolism in Islam see: TOTTOLI, Roberto, 'At Cock-Crow: Some Muslim Traditions About the Rooster', *Der Islam*, 76 (1999), pp. 139–147.

39

EXCEPTIONAL CABINET (DRESSOIR) FROM SINDH

Teak, ebony, ivory, exotic wood, green-dyed bone and iron; gilt copper fittings

India, probably Sindh (Pakistan); ca. 1580–1630

Dim.: 182.0 × 97.0 × 61.0 cm

A600

Provenance: Casa da Costeado, J.A.F. collection, Portugal.



This cabinet, made from teak (*Tectona grandis*), is thickly veneered in ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*) and lavishly decorated with ivory inlays and micro-mosaic (*sadeli*). The piece is structured into three sections, with the two lower portions seamlessly joined, and a detachable, open baldachin-shaped upper section. The upper section features four turned columns resting on gilt copper collets, elegantly crowning the uprights on the corners of the middle and lower sections. This heavy, sturdy cabinet rests on four solid ebony feet carved in the shape of a crouched dragon, with eyes inlaid in ivory and decorated with gilt copper dome-shaped studs. Throughout the piece, hemispherical studs are strategically employed to highlight its surfaces complementing the cabinet's gilt copper fittings, which include corner brackets, side handles, hinges, escutcheon-shaped pierced openwork lock plates, and drawer pulls. The upper section was used to showcase display silver as a dresser (from the French *dressoir*) or as a buffet—a sideboard to display cups and dishes featuring a high back or an overhanging canopy. The two-door

middle section was intended for the secure storage of valuables and documents, while the lower section served to store fine table linens and other precious textiles.¹

The lower section is a chest fitted with two large drawers, mimicking four, decorated on the fronts with oblong Timurid-style cartouches featuring ebony borders highlighted with ivory fillets. The middle section is fitted with two doors, each decorated with Timurid-style star-shaped polylobed ebony medallions on particularly beautiful figured or curly grain of teak wood, similarly highlighted with thin ivory fillets. The doors open to reveal twelve drawers, mimicking sixteen arranged in four tiers. The fronts of the drawers are richly decorated with oval-shaped medallions in *sadeli*, bordered by a frieze of contrasting triangles in exotic wood and ivory. The interior sides of the doors follow a carpet-like arrangement boasting a central field with a large circular medallion and an Islamic-type eight-pointed star featuring a complex star pattern of finely-made *sadeli*.

¹ A contemporary Scottish dresser (291.0 × 112.0 × 88.0 cm), with a canopy and a central two-door cupboard, dated 1613 and made from oak, belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. W.28–2022.





This large micro-mosaic star contrasts with the dark ebony ground, decorated with vegetal scrolls of coma-shaped leaves. The corners of the central field are similarly decorated with vegetal scrolls and star-like *sadeli* motifs. The central field is bordered by a narrow frieze of triangles in alternating colours and a wide border of vegetal scrolls dotted with small *sadeli* circles. The square overhanging canopy or baldachin-shaped upper section comprises: four turned ebony columns on the corners; a rear board decorated on the front with two facing large oval-shaped polylobate Timurid-style cartouches in ebony over the teak ground highlighted in ivory; and the multi-arched cornice on top in ebony similarly accentuated with ivory fillets and large gilt copper studs. While the back is in plain, undecorated teak of fine quality, the sides are decorated *en suite* with the middle and lower sections, boasting elegant Timurid-style cartouches.

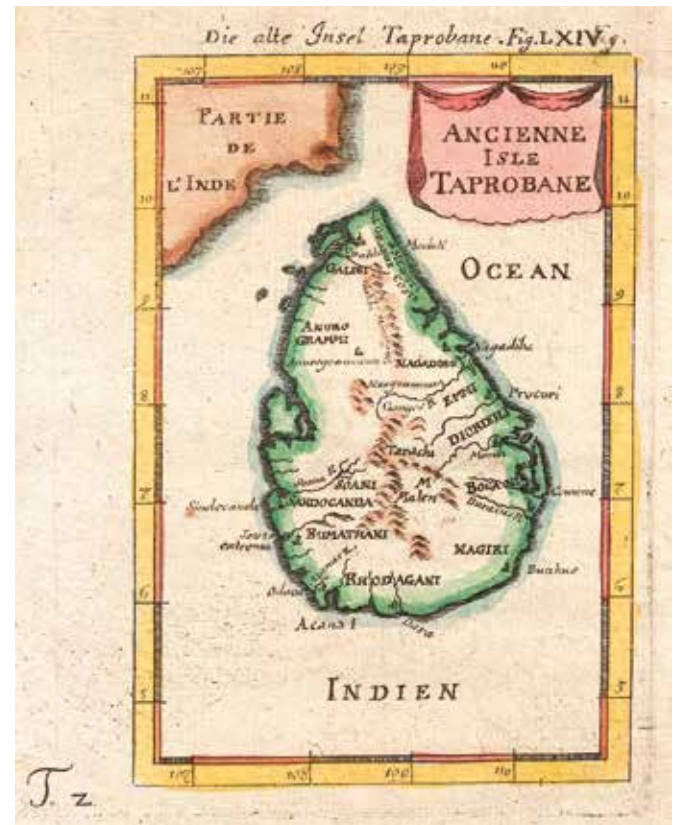
Following a European prototype, this large cabinet was made for a wealthy aristocratic household, reminiscent of contemporary opulent ebony, marquetry or *pietre dure* (hardstones) cabinets made at the most affluent courts of Europe. Bridging Western furniture types with local, highly elaborate decorative techniques and costly exotic materials, this cabinet epitomises the refined taste of the Portuguese clientele that commissioned it. Based on furniture types, preferred materials, and Iranian-derived decorative techniques such

as the time-consuming *sadeli*, this elegant and sombre production, when compared with furniture made for export in Gujarat, has recently been attributed to Thatta in Sindh (present-day Pakistan).² Examples of such large pieces of furniture made for export in the western coastal centres of India are exceptionally rare. A decade ago, a single identical and similarly decorated cabinet (dim.: 181.0 × 90.0 × 64.0 cm) was published, differing solely in the decoration of the inner drawers and the later sledge-form feet.³ The present cabinet, a magnificent example of export furniture made in India under Portuguese patronage, adorned until recently the *Casa do Costeado* in São Miguel de Creixomil, Guimarães—a manor house in the north of Portugal built in the late eighteenth century on an estate documented since the late sixteenth century. ◀ HMC

² CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, pp. 76–88.

³ DIAS, Pedro, *Mobiliário Indo-Português*, Moreira de Cónegos, Imaginalis, 2013, pp. 259–262.

Ceylon



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. ✨

FIG. 1
Map of Ceylon, A. Mallet, 1686.

40

SINHALESE-PORTUGUESE TABERNACLE MASTERPIECE

Ivory and gilt copper; silver fittings

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka), possibly Colombo; ca. 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.¹ 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.² 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.

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 Christ 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.

¹ 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.

² 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.





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).³

The Ceylonese master carver interpretation of these contemporary Dutch prints, most certainly supplied by the Portuguese patron that commissioned the tabernacle, testifies to a considerable 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 supervised 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

³ 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.



door fittings follow analogous elements from other extant objects of identical origin and dating.⁴

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 collection⁵, 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

⁴ TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Mobiliário Português dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, pp. 174–175.

⁵ 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.

41

A SINHALESE-PORTUGUESE CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka), probably Colombo; ca. 1580–1620

Dim.: 12.2 × 12.0 × 3.0 cm

F1411

Provenance: Miguel Baganha collection, Portugal.



From amongst the group of religious ivories carved in Portuguese ruled Ceylon, the most numerous were those related to the Passion of Christ, of which the sculptures depicting the Crucified, of varying dimensions and carving quality, total hundreds of examples.¹

Such sculptures, as mentioned by Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1611) in his *Itinerary* (1596) were much valued: ‘My maister the

Archbishop [of Goa] had a crucifixe of Ivorie of an elle long [\pm 69 cm], presented unto him, by one of the inhabitants of the Ile, and made by him so cunningly and workmanly wrought, that in the hayre, beard, and face, it séemed to be alive, and in al [other parts] so neatly wrought and proportioned in limmes, that the like can not be done in [all] Europe’.²

As with the Archbishop’s magnificent and very large Crucifix, this miniaturized carving of the Crucified Christ reflects the master sculptor analogous obsession for perfection, meticulous anatomical precision, and supreme carving quality and modelling.

The delicate depiction of the skin on the gaunt chest, ribcage, and navel, and the slender, yet muscular arms of bulging veins, is astonishing. Equally amazing is the placement of the tensed muscles and tendons on the dying Christ’s back, the rigidity of the hands and the naturalistic locks of loose hair falling from the lifeless head onto His shoulders and chest. Identical naturalism is evident on the loincloth, or *perisonium* (*perizoma* in Greek) of masterly carved pleats, reminiscent of indigenous portrayals of draped seamless garments of multiple folds.

Considering the pierced hands and feet, it is possible to assume that the sculpture may have been fitted onto a small wooden cross, its miniaturized dimensions pointing to a portable devotional object rather than an image to be exhibited and worshipped in a private altar. One other possibility would be its role as the central element in a larger sculptural composition depicting a Calvary scene, such examples, more or less complete, being also known from this Ceylonese production.³

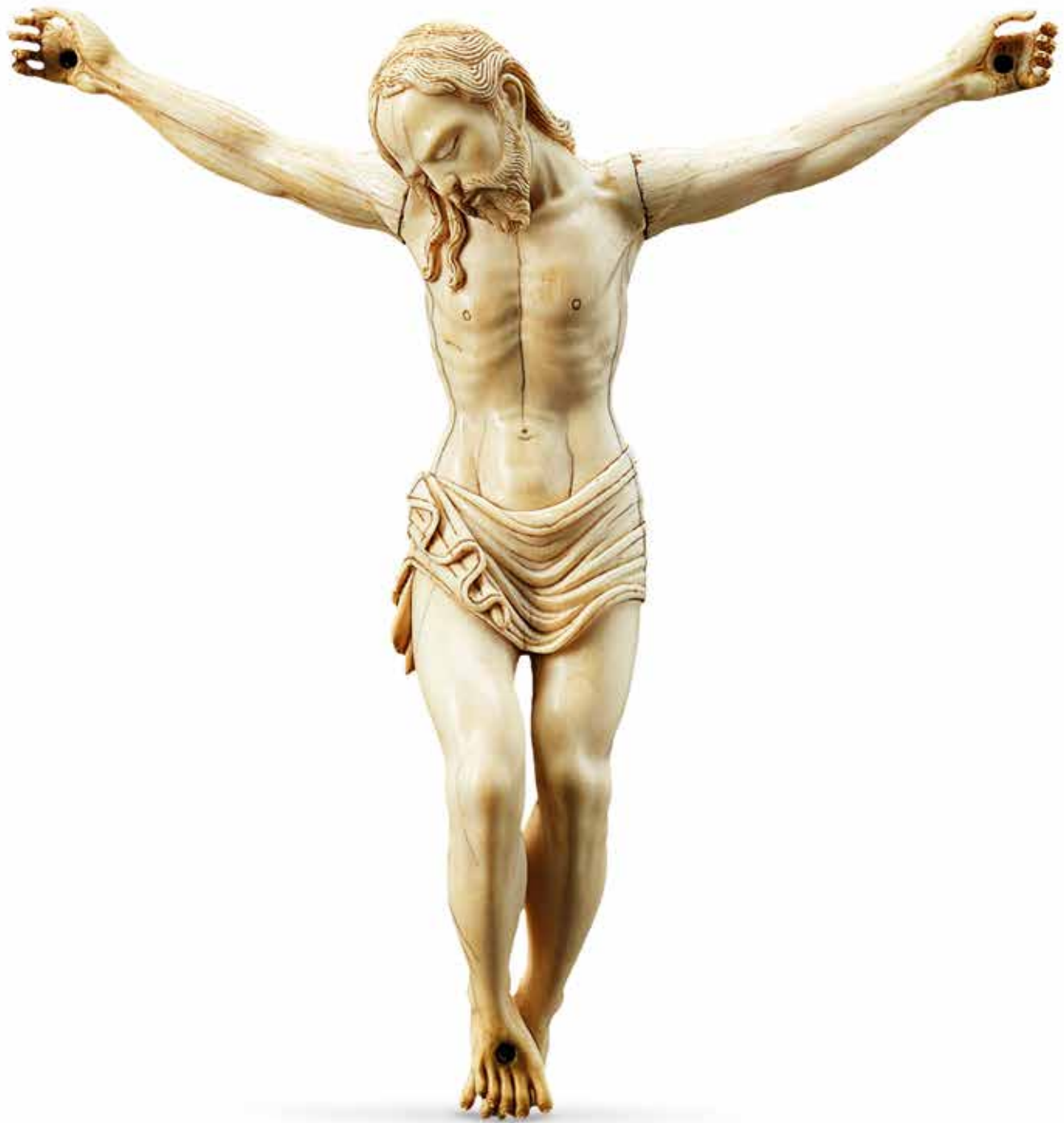
Ceylon made ivory depictions of the Crucified Christ have survived in considerable numbers in both public and private Portuguese collections.⁴ Some were set onto later made wooden crosses or added to complex Calvary compositions of multiple figures, but images of this size, and of such superb quality are, however, extremely rare. *HMC*

¹ Regarding Portuguese ruled Ceylon ivories, 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 (with prior bibliography).

² LINSCHOTEN, Jan Huygen van, *Itinerário, Viagem ou Navegação [...]*, Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para a Comemoração dos Descobrimientos Portugueses, 1997, p. 105.

³ See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983, p. 128 (cat. 168) and p. 131 (cat. 131); and RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses–Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, pp. 134–135 (cats. 359–364).

⁴ See: TÁVORA, Bernardo Ferrão de Tavares e, *Imaginária Luso-Oriental*, Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1983, p. 97 and following; and RAPOSO, Francisco Hipólito (ed.), *A Expansão Portuguesa e a Arte do Marfim* (cat.), Lisbon, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimientos Portugueses–Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991, p. 145 and following.



42

BABY 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*



43

BABY JESUS SALVATOR MUNDI

Polychrome and parcel-gilt ivory

Ceylon (present-day Sri-Lanka); early 17th century

Height: 42.0 cm

F1182

Provenance: P.C. and A.P.T. collection, Portugal.

A partially painted and gilt elephant ivory sculpture of the Child Christ 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).¹

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.² *HMC*

¹ 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.

² 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.



44

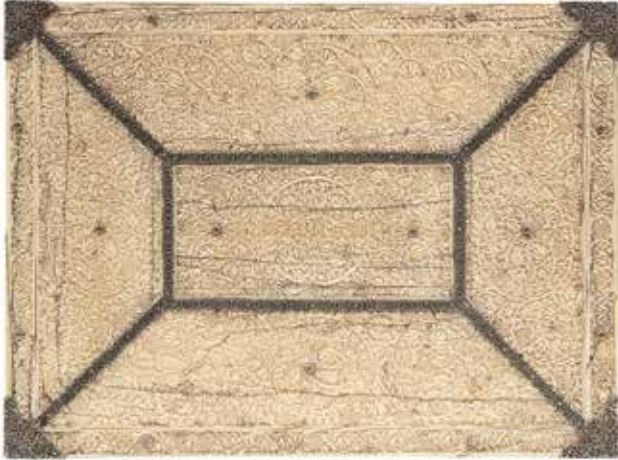
A SINHALESE TABLE CABINET

Exotic wood, ivory and iron; silver fittings

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka); ca. 1650–1700

Dim.: 26.5 × 42.5 × 31.2 cm

F1428

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

This impressive table cabinet, of exotic wood carcass, is fully coated with intricately carved and thin ivory plaques of tight tendrils, flowers, and small birds scrolls decoration. It features six drawers of varying sizes arranged over three tiers. Resting on spherical silver feet, the cabinet is ornamented with sumptuous finely chased pierced and repousse silver fittings of vegetal motifs scrolls that include six corner brackets, oval lock escutcheons on each drawer front, tacks securing the ivory to the wooden structure, two heavy side handles of diamond-shaped escutcheons, and narrow bands decorating the carpet-like composition on the box top panel.

The minutely detailed carved ornamental motifs, featuring vine tendrils and flowers interspersed with small birds, is quintessentially Ceylonese.¹ Similar decorative compositions are also evident throughout the mitred borders of outer surfaces, and also on inner door panels and drawer fronts of some examples from a select group of carved ivory cabinets depicting Adam and Eve after European prints, such as one (24.0 × 27.0 × 18.0 cm) at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. 1067:1 to 6–1855).² According to Veenendaal, one of the scholars who has researched this group, the backward-scrolling tendrils are known as ‘recalcitrant spiral motif’, a plant stem motif associated with the ‘universal germ’,

and its presence in this group of Adam and Eve cabinets would allude to the enrichment of nature brought about by the Creation of Man.³ Nevertheless, its presence in objects devoid of any religious meaning makes such interpretation pointless.

Little is known regarding the exact production origin of these pieces, yet it is safe to assume that such export objects were created in the vicinity of the settled European clientele that commissioned them, in major coastal trading centres in Ceylon such as Colombo, Galle or Matara.

Portable luxurious cabinets such as the one herewith described were destined for storing documents, currency, and precious items such as jewellery. Albeit quite straightforward in terms of their construction, their strong visual impact relied on the exuberance of their decoration and on the exotic nature of the raw materials, particularly the unusual and durable tropical timbers.

Manufactured in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), cabinets of this kind were often commissioned by Portuguese and Dutch officials and by wealthy merchants. While their format is clearly copied from a European prototype, the iconographic elements and the style of the refined ivory carvings are characteristic of Ceylonese sumptuary art. Extant pieces like the present cabinet, are very rare and only seldomly present in public and/or in private collections.⁴ *HMC*

¹ COOMARASWAMY, Ananda K., *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, New Delhi, MANOHARLAL, Munsharam, 1956, pp. 92–95; and TILAKASIRI, Jayadeva, ‘Ivory Carving of Sri Lanka’, in *Arts of Asia*, 4 (1974), pp. 42–46. A similar *horror vacui* in the vegetal decoration and its granular appearance can be found in carved ivory objects from the mid-seventeenth century, produced on the island according to local aesthetics. See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 222–231, cat. 20.

² JAFFER, Amin, *Luxury Goods from India. The Art of the Cabinet-Maker*, London, V&A Publications, 2002, pp. 54–55, cat. 20.

³ VEENENDAAL, Jan, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, Zwolle, The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, 2014, pp. 41–42.

⁴ DIAS, Pedro, *Portugal e Ceilão. Baluartes, Marfim e Pedraria*, Lisbon, Santander Totta, 2006; GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, BELTZ, Johannes (eds.), *Elfenbeine aus Ceylon. Luxusgüter für Katharina von Habsburg (1507–1578)* (cat.), Zürich, Museum Rietberg, 2010, pp. 77, 120–121, cats. 23, 51–52; and CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 202–231, cats. 18–20.



45

A CEYLONESE BETEL OR JEWELLERY BOX

Turtle shell; silver fittings

Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka); ca. 1796–1800

Dim.: 10.0 × 22.5 × 16.5 cm

F1355

Provenance: Sopana Tabtimsal, Thailand.

Lozenge shaped of undulating profile and protruding ribbed sides, this large turtle shell betel, or jewellery box, was made in Ceylon for exporting, in the late 18th century. Resting on silver ball shaped feet, it features a hinged flat cover.

Probably destined to the British market, it was mounted with sumptuous repoussé and finely chiselled silver fittings that include, on its outer surfaces, four feet, a top articulated handle with floral medallion plate, garland friezes to the cover and edges, linked by architectural pilasters alternating with exuberant flower vases, pierced double-headed eagle elements, a large hinge, and a key. The inner silver elements comprise of hinge and three floral pieces, two of which sustain silver chains for holding the box open. Also evident in the box interior are the screws and bolts that fix the external mounts.

Similarly to other examples of this export production, its decorative grammar combines local traditional motifs, namely the compacted and dense floral decorative elements, and the solar double headed eagle, the *bherunda paksiya*—heraldic emblem of the Sinhalese Three Korales flag—with European aspects, such as the garland friezes, the pilasters, or the floral vases. From the hinge's

typically Sinhalese floral ground, emerge a rampant lion confronting a rampant unicorn. These heraldic beasts have been portrayed as supporters of the United Kingdom Royal coat of arms since 1603, when the English lion was combined with the Scottish unicorn, for the accession of James VI of Scotland (r.1567–1625) to the throne of England, as James I, after the death of Queen Elizabeth I.

The box scalloped shape, its European neoclassical decoration and the presence of the heraldic lion and unicorn, suggest a manufacturing date towards the late 18th century, following Ceylon's 1795 invasion by the British. The island would subsequently remain a British Crown colony until its independence in 1948.

Large turtle shell boxes and caskets, such as the present betel box, were fashioned after European prototypes, of which the rectangular shaped of flat cover were the commonest, for most of the 18th century, first under Ceylon's Dutch control and then under British rule.

Produced in precious materials such as silver, turtle shell and exotic timbers, namely coromandel and tamarind, these betel boxes were used for storing and presenting house guests with the elements for betel chewing: tobacco, slaked lime, and Areca nut (*Areca catechu*), which would be wrapped in a betel leaf (*Piper betle*). The compound, of strong stimulating and narcotic effects, was offered as a prove of hospitality and respect, and betel boxes were commissioned and gifted as marks of gratitude, all over Asia.

In the classical work 'Asian Art and Dutch Taste', Jan Veenendaal published a turtle shell betel box of similar dating (length: 22.0 cm).¹ Cartouche shaped, it features pierced silver elements of typically Sinhalese floral decoration. A scalloped shaped jewellery box made in coromandel (*Diospyros quaesita*), a type of mottled ebony native to Sri Lanka and India, belongs to the Dutch Museum, Pettah, Colombo (inv. 29.168.430 dim.: 26.0 × 17.0 × 7.8 cm).² Of earlier date, it is characterized by carved decoration, clearly inspired by European rococo ornamental motifs. ✎ HMC

¹ See: VEENENDAAL, Jan, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, Zwolle–The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, 2014, pp. 120–121, figs. 185–186.

² See: SILVA, P. H. D. H. de, WICKRAMASINGHE, Senerath, *Ancient and Traditional Boxes, Caskets and Chests in Sri Lankan Museums. Volume I. 8th to 18th Century Boxes, Caskets and Chests*, Colombo, S. Godage & Brothers, 2015, pp. 164–165, fig. 96.



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

FIG.1
 'Map of the ancient Kingdom of Pegu', P. Bertius, 1616.

46

DUARTE DE MENEZES WRITING CHEST

Lacquered and gilt wood; wrought iron fittings

Kingdom of Pegu (Burma, present-day Myanmar); ca. 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.*)¹ 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.² 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

¹ 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.

² 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[omprou]?

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’.³ 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.⁴

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[omprou]?*’ (‘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.⁵ HMC

³ FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Mobiliário Português. Dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, Vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, p. 153.

⁴ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. 22.

⁵ 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.



Kingdom of Siam



FIG. 1
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. 🍌

A LUSO-SIAMESE BABY JESUS 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

Philippines



FIG. 1
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

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 LOTUS-FLOWER FILIGREE CASKET

Silver filigree

The Philippines(?), Goa(?); 17th century

Dim.: 10.0 × 17.0 × 10.0 cm

Weight: 505.0 g

B250

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

A 17th century silver filigree rectangular shaped casket, likely to have been manufactured by one of the major workshops, whose artistic and aesthetic significance is defined by the unusual three lobed lid and the sophisticated and elaborate decoration further enriched by the exuberant blossoming lotus flower locking mechanism.

The two size types of applied lotus flowers are outlined by flattened silver threads, the smaller type of hollowed petal design, and the larger by overlapping filigree filled petals, all crowned by plain silver pearls.

On the back elevation the large leaf design is outlined by a thicker and more robust silver thread. The 'C' shaped side handles are joined to the case frame by small flowers. The casket is supported on four flattened spheres each formed by two superimposed curved corollae. *TP*

49

A ST. AUGUSTINE INSIGNIA FILIGREE CASKET

Silver filigree

The Philippines(?), Goa(?); 17th century

Dim.: 7.0 × 16.5 × 14.0 cm

Weight: 514.0 g

B235

Exhibited: 'Jewels from the Indian Run', Museu do Oriente, Lisbon 2014 (cat. no. 172).



Seventeenth century, silver filigree octagonal casket decorated in a dense scrollwork pattern of unmistakable Eastern taste.

The lid is centred by a crowned monogram within a circular *cartouche* surrounded by phytomorphic elements and surmounted by a robust 'C' shaped handle of zigzag design decorated with three interspersed filigree *corollae*.

The casket's eight side panels are ornamented with crowned double-headed eagles within zigzag patterned framing strips, suggesting a royal or princely European commission. The crowned monogram and double-headed eagle badge referring possibly to the

Austro-Hungarian, Russian or Spanish Empires. A similar casket with the arms of William of Orange, dated 1672, can be seen in *Silver Wonders from the East*.

However, Hugo Crespo thinks that piece is most probably made in the Philippines by a Chinese craftman, and ordered by a St. Augustin Monastery. ✍ TP

50

A COCONUT AND FILIGREE CUP (CHALICE)

Coconut shell, silver filigree and gold

The Philippines; 17th century

Dim.: 19.8 × 8.0 × 8.0 cm

F1362

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

A coconut shell covered cup, or chalice, of delicately carved floral motifs, set with silver filigree mounts featuring wire rosettes and granules ornamentation. The container is defined by four large circular filigree medallions, each framed by minute, possibly gold, inlaid in the coconut shell. It rests on a circular, flattened domed foot of trumpet shaped stem with two comma-shaped handles. The lid is surmounted by a rosette finial crowned by a cross, whose presence attests to the object's liturgical purpose during the Eucharist, possibly in a private chapel context.

The cover ornamental frieze, a mixture of lotus flower petals and acanthus leaves, as well as the bowl decorative motifs, are similar in design, to the delicately embossed and chased silver vessels made in Batavia (present-day Jakarta, Indonesia) in the late 17th and early 18th centuries¹, for storing and displaying betel leaves and areca nuts. This type of floral decoration, derived in part from contemporary European botanical prints, is evident on decorative objects produced in the Coromandel coast, Ceylon

(present-day Sri Lanka), and Dutch ruled Batavia, for exporting to Europe. Illustrative of similar coconut carvings are a pair of Ceylon made bottles belonging to the Royal Collections, in The Hague (inv. MU4354/5), whose bodies feature profusely carved coconut shells of floral scrolls decoration.²

The cup's silver mounts, however, are characteristic of the filigree work made in the Philippines by Chinese, Filipino and mestizo craftsmen, in which the composition makes use of a thick square-sectioned silver wire for the main motifs, in contrast with the subtler twisted wires selected for the filigree filling.³

A pair of covered cups, similar to the present chalice albeit of smooth uncarved surface, featuring silver cover, handles and feet, alongside a single covered cup, both in Portuguese private collections, have recently been published.⁴

The term 'coconut' can refer to the whole coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera L.*), or to the seed, or the fruit, which botanically is a drupe, not a true nut. Seemingly, the name derives from the early Portuguese encounters with the coconut palm in the Malabar coast of India, when the latter, due to the fruit's resemblance to a face or head, with its three stoma, or germination pores, named it coco, a word that referred to any type of bogeyman called in to frighten children into good behaviour. Identically to other fruits coconuts have three layers: the exocarp, mesocarp, and endocarp, the former two making up the 'husk'. It is the endocarp, or shell, the fruit's hardest part, that is used for carving, once scraped of the coir and outer skin, to reveal the lustrous, porous outer shell surface, and removed the kernel meat, known as copra, when dried.

The coconut palm, known in the Philippines as 'Tree of Life', was, and does remain, fundamental in the shaping of the archipelago's culture and economy, a fact that may explain the local production of this type of coconut vessels. *HMC*

¹ VEENANDAAL, Jan, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, The Hague, Waanders Uitgewers Zwolle—Gemeentemuseum, 2014, p. 106, figs. 158–161.

² IDEM, p. 116, fig. 176.

³ On silver filigree produced in the Philippines for export, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, cat. 32, pp. 366–381. About the gold filigree also produced in the Philippines, recovered during underwater excavations on the site of ancient shipwrecks, see CHADOUR, A. Beatriz, 'The gold jewelry from the Nuestra Señora de la Concepción', in MATHERS, William M., PARKER, Henry S., COPUS, Kathleen (ed.), *Archaeological Report. The Recovery of the Manila Galleon Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion*, Sutton, Pacific Sea Resources, 1990, pp. 133–395.

⁴ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jóias da Carreira da Índia* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2014, pp. 127 et 129, cats. 180–181.



51

A PAIR OF GILT FILIGREE CRUETS

Silver and gilt silver
 The Philippines; 17th century
 Dim.: 13.9 × 11.0 × 6.6 cm
 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.¹ 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.² However, even considering the differences in liturgy, the possibility of a Dutch Batavian production, present day Jakarta, cannot be completely excluded.³ HMC

¹ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jóias da Carreira da Índia* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015, pp. 76–78, cat. 56.

² 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.

³ VEENANDAAL, Jan, *Asian Art and Dutch Taste*, A Haia, Waanders Uitgewers Zwolle—Gemeentemuseum, 2014, pp. 122–133.



52

A PHILIPPINO ARCHANGEL SAINT MICHAEL

Ivory, silver and wood

The Philippines; 17th century

Height: 48.5 cm

F1369

Provenance: Ybarra collection, Spain.

This rare statuette depicting Saint Michael defeating Evil, was delicately carved in Manila, in the Philippines, and is richly highlighted with elements in silver adding to its appearance and uniqueness. This and other similar statuettes were intended as visual aids for devotional practices as promoted by the Jesuits in Asia in their missionary work and as items for export, namely to Central and South America, and the Iberian Peninsula. Recent archaeological finds, namely from the shipwreck of a Manila galleon, the *Santa Margarita* (1601) off the Mariana islands (*Ladrones*), has yielded a wealth of information on the chronology and production of devotional ivories made by Chinese and Filipino master carvers in the early seventeenth-century Philippines.

Made for export and intended for a private oratory, in this Archangel Michael conquering Evil (sometimes depicted as a dragon, and others as a composite chimera), we see the figure of the archangel standing with a pair of pointed silver wings worked in repoussé and chased, trampling the figure of Evil with his feet while brandishing his sword. Based in contemporary Baroque

Iberian models, the archangel's clothes are reminiscent of Ancient Roman military attire, such as the *cingulum militare* with its *baltea* or hanging straps, and like the torso, highlighted with pigment and gold over the carved surface of the ivory. It's iconography is typical of the devotional ivories carved in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, as the portrayal of Saint Michael conquering Evil was seen as symbolic of the Christian conversion of the local Filipino population, and thus of Christianity's supremacy over all other local religious practices. ✎ HMC



53

ALTAR PLAQUE—THE PIERCING OF JESUS' SIDE

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.¹ 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.²

Remarkable for its carving and aesthetic quality, the present plaque was made from several ivory segments joined together as in a jigsaw.³ 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

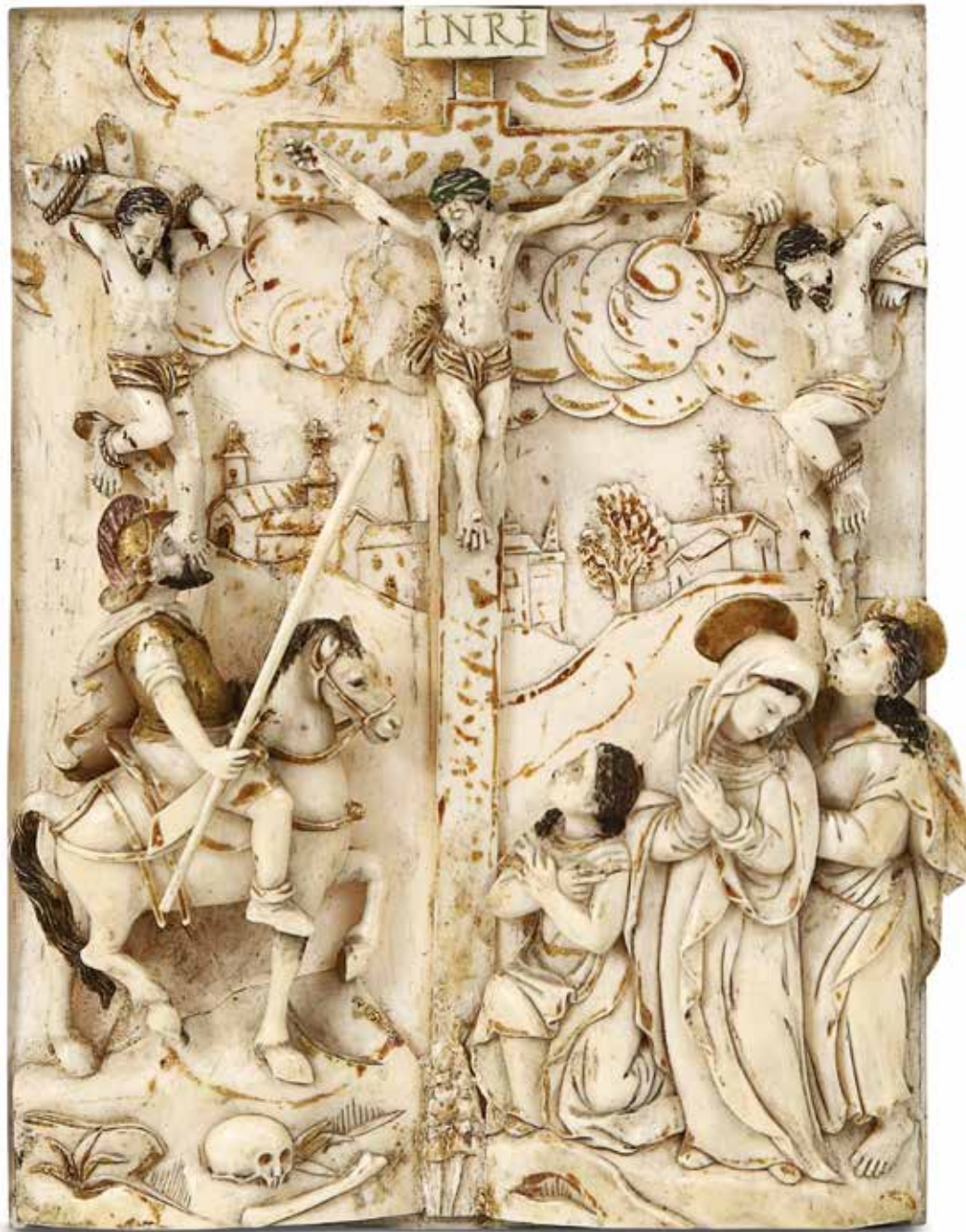
Longinus horse's legs. Albeit with some omissions, the composition replicates a contemporary engraving by Johan Sadeler I (1550–1600), after a drawing by Maarten de Vos (1532–1603), which amazingly survives in Frankfurt's Städels Museum (inv. 2744). Dated 1582, the print illustrates the Calvary scene 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.⁴ *HMC*

¹ 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.

² See: TRUSTED, Marjorie, 'Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601', in *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5, 2013, pp. 446–462.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.



54

ALTAR PLAQUE—THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Carved ivory

The Philippines, Manila; early 17th century

Dim.: 20.5 × 12.0 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.¹

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.²

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.³ *HMC*

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ TRUSTED, Marjorie, ‘Survivors of a Shipwreck: Ivories from a Manila Galleon of 1601’, in *Hispanic Research Journal*, 14.5, 2013, pp. 446–462.



55

ALTAR PLAQUE—THE CIRCUMCISION

Carved ivory

The Philippines, Manila; ca. 1610–1630

Dim.: 14.5 × 10.5 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.¹ 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.² 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.³

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

¹ 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.

² An example of this print belongs to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. RP-P-OB-54.903).

³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ HMC

⁴ 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 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.

⁵ 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 Macau 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. 🍷



FIG. 1
Map of the Ming Empire, c. 1389.

56

A MING DYNASTY VIRGIN AND CHILD

Ivory

China, Ming dynasty; late 16th–early 17th century

Height: 12.0 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*



57

A MING SLEEPING CHRIST CHILD

Ivory

South China, probably Zhangzhou; ca. 1600–1620

Dim.: 3.0 × 12.5 × 5.0 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.¹ 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.² 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*’.³ 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

¹ For this print by Francia, see CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 262–273, cat. 23, on p. 269, fig. 2.

² IDEM, *An Altar Tabernacle on the Life of the Child Jesus. Religious Ivories from Portuguese Ceylon*, Lisbon, São Roque, 2024, p. 89, fig. 51.

³ 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.⁴

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*.⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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.⁸ Among these is an important ivory figurine (19.5 cm in height) in the Hermitage, St Petersburg (inv. ЖН–939), depicting *Avalokiteśvara*, the *bodhisattva* of Compassion, locally known as *Guānyin* ('Perceiver of Sounds').⁹ 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

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ IDEM, *ibidem*, p. 93, cat. 228.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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 + 59

MING SEATED BABY 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 Loingtaines 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



A MING CRUCIFIED JESUS CHRIST

Ivory with traces of polychromy, ebony and iron
 South China, probably Zhangzhou; ca. 1590–1620
 Dim.: 28.0 × 27.5 cm (Christ); 64.5 × 37.5 cm (cross)
 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.¹ 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'.² 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.³ More

¹ 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.

² CLUNAS, Craig, *Chinese Carving*, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Sun Tree Publishing, 1996, pp. 18–19.

³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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).

⁶ See CHAIKLIN, Martha, *Ivory and the Aesthetics of Modernity in Meiji Japan*, Basingstoke–New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 5–7.

A MOP PLAQUE—ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI RECEIVING THE STIGMATA

Mother-of-pearl with remnants of polychrome decoration

South China, or The Philippines; ca. 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.¹ This engraving is one of Lucas van Leyden's most praised devotional images.² 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.³

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.

¹ Two such prints at the British Museum, London, invs. D,5.35, and Kk,6.124.

² JACOBOWITZ, E.S., STEPANEK, S.L., *The Prints of Lucas Van Leyden & His Contemporaries*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1993, p. 130.

³ 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.⁴ 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).⁵ 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).⁶ 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.⁷ 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.⁸ Religious carvings conveying Christian iconography, however, must have been rare. ➤ HMC

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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).

⁶ Print of this engraving at the British Museum, inv. 1859,0709.3232.

⁷ Print of this engraving at the British Museum, inv. 1859,0709.3222.

⁸ 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 Nanban¹, 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.² 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.³ 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’.⁴

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.⁵ 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:⁶ 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 gilding⁷ and clearly coated in rich, strong red and black lacquer. ✎

¹ 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.

² See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. no. 22.

³ See FERRÃO, Bernardo, *Mobiliário Português. Dos Primórdios ao Maneirismo*, Vol. 3, Oporto, Lello & Irmão Editores, 1990, pp. 153–172.

⁴ See IDEM, p. 153.

⁵ See CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 238–261, cat. no. 22.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

62

A SINO-PORTUGUESE SAINT PETER

Lacquered, painted, and gilt wood

Southern China; 17th century

Height: 62.0 cm

F1341



Rare, standing up Chinese sculptural depiction of Saint Peter. Wood carved, lacquered, and painted, the Saint is portrayed with the left foot resting on a raised rock outcrop, attired in a long-sleeved tunic and cloak, and holding the keys to heaven in his left hand, while blessing with the right.

Also referred to as Peter the Apostle, Saint Peter was one of Jesus Christ's twelve Apostles, and one of the earliest leaders of the primitive Christian Church. He is counted as the first bishop, or pope, of Rome, and is generally portrayed in the iconography as an aged and burly man, with a 'mildly bellicose' face, short beard, and grey hair.

In this sculpture, probably intended to be paired with a similar representation of Saint Paul, Peter is portrayed in a contemplative, yet hieratic manner, after the Chinese tradition of representing *bodhisattvas* and *arhats* for the adornment of Buddhist temples and monasteries. The Saint's gracious gaze and the beauty of the cloak's undulations and folds, contrasting in this instance, with the short curly beard and hair details. It's quintessential

Chinese characteristic, however, is the presence of pierced rocks, analogous to scholar's rocks, or *gongshi*, from lake Taihu, a porous limestone sourced from the foot of Dongting Mountain, in Suzhou, which was often used in making stands for Chinese religious imagery. The figure's highly appealing golden surface, a customary characteristic in contemporary Chinese wooden sculptures made to resemble more costly and precious gilt bronze alternatives, is further emphasized by the abraded tunic and cloak gilt surface exposing the dark reddish-brown hues of the underlying lacquer coating.

Although more stylized and of lesser naturalism and graciousness than our Saint Peter, a sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London (inv. A.7-1917), does also attempt at imitating a gilt bronze work. Made in carved, lacquered, and gilt wood (height: 120.0 cm) and dating from the second half of the 17th century, it represents Guan Di, or Lord Guan, one of the most popular Chinese deities that is worshipped as God of War.

Made in Southern China for a Christian community, our sculpture is a unique piece of carved art produced by Chinese ar-





FIG. 1
A gilt-lacquered wood figure of a
Luohan, 17th–18th century. Wou
Kiuan collection.

tisans, independently of whether they were Christian converts of otherwise. Most likely modelled after a European prototype, it is possible that a hollow square section raising from the rock outcrop forming the stand, might have supported a now missing element, perhaps a lost identifying attribute.

Lacking any information regarding its early origin, it is impossible to ascertain who, in the 17th century, commissioned such large and important artwork, or to where it was intended. Although it is fair to assume that it was carved under the patronage of Jesuit priests, other possibilities must not be excluded.

Even though no other similar sculpture of this type has, so far, been identified by us, it is evident that our Saint Peter shares stylistic characteristics with a late-Ming dynasty painting on paper portraying Saint Jerome, which has been associated to converted Chinese artists referred in correspondence by Jesuit priests. Now in the Manuel Castilho collection, in Lisbon, this rare vertical painting, measuring 133.0 cm in height, portrays the Saint in a more relaxed and sensual manner comparatively to our wooden sculpture, a fact probably explained by the European prototype on which it was based.¹ We must also refer a painted depiction of the Virgin and Child, albeit one more hieratic and sculptural, from the

Field Museum of Natural History, in Chicago (inv. 116027). In this instance a vertical silk scroll painting, based on both European (*Salus Populi Romani*) and Buddhist (Guanyin) prototypes, and dating to the late-Ming dynasty, which can be attributed to Qichang Dong or to his circle.² *HMC*

¹ See: BAILEY, Gauvin Alexander, *Art of the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773*, Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1999, p. 97; and ALVES, Jorge M. dos Santos, *Macau. O Primeiro Século de um Porto Internacional. Macau. The First Century of an International Port* (cat.), Lisbon, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2007, pp. 140–141, cat. 34 (catalogue entry by Maria Manuela d'Oliveira Martins).

² See: BAILEY, Gauvin Alexander, *Art of the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773*, Toronto, Toronto University Press, 1999, pp. 97–98; and HUIJUN, Li, 'When Guanyin Encounters Madonna: Rethinking on Chinese Madonna from the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago', *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 40 (2020), pp. 345–368.



63

A SINO-PORTUGUESE SAINT FRANCIS RECEIVING THE STIGMATA

Wood with evidence of polychrome decoration
 South China or The Philippines; early 17th century
 Height: 53.0 cm
 F1380

Provenance: António Miranda collection, Portugal.



This rare hardwood sculpture - probably teak, *Tectona grandis*—portraying Saint Francis of Assisi, preserves evidence of its original polychrome decoration. The beardless figure, standing on curled, spiralled clouds, with his arms raised, hands now missing, and slightly bent knees¹, is attired in the Franciscan Habit tied at the waist by its characteristic corded rope. Considering the posture, it is fair to assume that the Saint is portrayed in the moment of receiving the Stigmata, the five Holy Wounds of Christ that he was marked with in 1224, during a vision in which a crucified Seraph, a six wings angel, appeared to him, or while displaying them to his devotees for contemplation.

Founder of the Franciscan Order, Francis of Assisi (ca. 1181–1226) lived a life of charity and preaching that would encourage the 13th century renewal of Christian spirituality. Later, the missionary activity of the Franciscan friars in Asia, especially in southern China and The Philippines where this large altar figure was undoubtedly carved, would instil in the newly converted hearts and minds the Saint’s pious teachings.

Despite being a rare sculptural representation, the iconography of Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata is abundant in paintings and other two-dimensional imagery. A similar printed depiction with the kneeling Saint (ca. 1514), engraved by the Netherlandish artist Lucas van Leyden (ca. 1494–1533), can be seen in the British Museum in London (inv. Kk,6.124). Another such likeness, dating from the late 16th century and hence of similar date to our sculpture, produced by the Flemish engraver Jan Sadeler I (1559–1600) after an original by the Italian artist Bernardo Castello (1557–1629), is also kept in the same London based museum (inv. 1949,1008.74).

A large 17th century ivory carved figure of the standing Saint Francis (ca. 50 cm in height), probably produced in the Philippines from a high-quality Spanish Baroque prototype, is exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (inv. 16.32.251). This

particular sculpture, whose shape follows the natural curvature of the elephant tusk, is nonetheless defined by stronger European facial features than the present wooden depiction.

Belonging to the National Museum of the Philippines, Museum of Fine Arts, and probably dating from the 18th century, another three-dimensional figure portraying a standing and bearded Saint Francis exposing the Stigmata, equally missing his separately carved hands, is displayed at the Ablaza Hall. Produced under Franciscan patronage, a Missionary Order that settled in the Philippines in 1577 and soon established parishes throughout the territory, it was most likely carved by a local *mestizo* artist.

The pronounced Chinese characteristics of our sculpture, namely its almond-shaped eyes and small straight nose, the habit drapery folds and, most importantly, the quintessentially Chinese spiralled waves (sword pommel scrolls or *jianhuan*), point to its making by either a Filipino artist of Chinese or *mestizo* origin or, even more likely, by a Chinese carver working for catholic patrons in Southern China.² *HMC*

¹ The beardless face is more in line with the iconography of other Franciscan Saints, such as Saint Anthony of Padua (or Lisbon). However, our Saint’s pose, of bent knees and raised hands, enforces a Saint Francis labelling.

² On this decorative motif, present in certain Christian devotional ivory images and in other Catholic liturgical objects produced in South China or in the Philippines, see: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Jóias da Carreira da Índia*, Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2014, p. 172.



64 + 65

A SINO-PORTUGUESE TWO SAINTS (ST. LUKE? AND ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST?)

Polychrome wood with remnants of gilding

South China, possibly Macao; ca. 1600–1650

Dim.: 63.0 × 41.0 × 24.0 cm; 64.0 × 43.0 × 28.0 cm

F1433 + F1432

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.¹

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*).² The richly decorated building, carved in stone by local Chinese, and possibly Japanese sculptors and stonemasons, is

¹ 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.

² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Report under the call number CIRAM0924-OA-1467R-1, by Stéphanie Castandet and Olivier Bobin; Xylological analysis by Joey Montagut.



MACANESE DOMINICAN CONVENT ORATORY

Wood, lacquer, gold and oil on copper

Southern China; early 17th century

Dim.: 59.0 × 78.0 × 5.3 cm (opened)

F1112

Provenance: José Lico collection, Portugal.

Exhibited: 'Three European Embassies to China', Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, 2018 (cat. pp. 117–118).

Rare and important early-17th century carved, lacquered and gilt wood portable oratory, encasing an oil on copper painting of *Saint Dominic and Saint Catherine of Sienna receiving the Rosary from The Virgin and Child*.

The oratory is organized as a rectangular shaped triptych with two hinged side leaves protecting a central panel, their plain outer faces contrasting with the exuberantly decorated inner surfaces of carved flowers and foliage scrolls that emerge from classic urns, encircling two pairs of square cartouches; one filled by a delicately carved human faced flaming sun, the other with a painted angel standing on clouds and holding an incense burner.

The whole composition crowned by a carved five lobed cornice, centred by a mystic, arrow pierced heart framed by flower scrolls, in an obviously Chinese interpretation of the Jesuit commissioned Japanese Nanban oratories, suggesting a production date after the 1639 Portuguese eviction from Japan.¹

Considering the specific iconography of this oratory, it is possible to assume that it might have been commissioned for the Macanese Dominican Convent and its church of Our Lady of The Rosary, the only Southern China community of this Order of Preachers.

Its founders, António de Arcediano, Alonso Delgado e Bartolomeu Lopes, three Spanish Dominican friars from Mexico, boarded the ship 'São Martinho', captained by the Portuguese D. Lopes de Palácio, in the Philippines in April 1587 arriving in Macao in September of that year, starting soon after the building of the original wooden chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, known amongst the local Chinese population as the 'Pan Cheong Miu'—the wooden pagoda. It is only in the 17th century that this structure is replaced by a more permanent brick and stone building.

Circa 1588/1590 the Spanish founders are transferred to India on the orders of the Portuguese viceroy D. Duarte de Menezes and the church and convent are handed over to Portuguese friars of the same religious community.

In May 1834, following a long period of turmoil and civil war unrest, the victorious king D. Pedro IV, signs a decree abolishing all religious orders in Portugal, its colonies and any other Portuguese administered territories. Macao is no exception, and the church and convent are confiscated by the government and closed to cult, all their estates being secularized and nationalized, a situation that would only be reversed at the end of the 19th century with a softening of religious policies. This nationalization process was followed by the sale of many treasures, which remain in private ownership until today.

It is possible that our important oratory, together with many other valuables, left the Dominican Convent in Macao in that period of instability and anti-clerical sentiment.

Scientific analysis of other extant pieces of similar characteristics to the present oratory have confirmed the lacquer type as *Toxicodendron succedaneum*, commonly known as 'laccol', which has been identified in objects with Southern Chinese, Vietnamese and Japanese provenances. Additionally the typically Chinese technical details of these pieces, particularly the gold leaf decoration (*tie jin qi*), the fewer lacquer layers applied and the lower quality of lacquering materials, a characteristic normally found on pieces made for export, do indeed suggest the likelihood of such an origin.

Accordingly, on the basis of these various scientific and comparative studies, as well as on the decorative and iconographic character of the piece, it is possible to suggest a Southern China origin for the portable Oratory described herewith.

Only a small number of these oratories has been recorded in the literature—some larger in size and combining carved sections in temple like structures designed to house devotional figures—such as one with an oil on copper depicting the Lamentation over the Dead Christ, also by a Chinese artist, a fragment from one other of which only the side panels survive, and also a larger one only recently published.² *HMC*

¹ For Nanban examples see: PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, *Lacas Nanban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990, pp. 64–67.

² See: JOHNSON, Trina [et al.], Amir Mohtashemi, London, Amir Mohtashemi Ltd., 2018, pp. 30–33, cat. no. 14 (catalogue entry by CRESPO, Hugo Miguel).



**TWO CHINESE
MASTERPIECES OF
CHRISTIAN ART—THE
BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN, AND
THE ADORATION OF THE
SHEPHERDS**

These two artworks belong to a rare group of devotional paintings with Christian iconography produced in China during the eighteenth century.

They were likely created under European patronage, either for local use by recently converted Chinese Catholics or, more plausibly, as visual aids for missionary work undertaken in China and later brought to Europe by returning missionaries, given the particularly challenging context faced by the Jesuits.

Such paintings are unique in bridging millennia-old Chinese aesthetics, painting styles, techniques, and materials with European iconography, representational methods, linear perspective, and chiaroscuro modelling.

Despite earlier religious paintings created in similar contexts and closely tied to the Jesuits' presence in coastal South China and at the imperial court, these more mature works were probably made by Chinese painters trained in Western techniques at the height of their artistic influence during the reigns of the Kangxi (r. 1661–1722), Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735), and Qianlong (r. 1735–1796) emperors. As with earlier paintings that combined Western and Chinese artistic traditions, these works sought to adapt Catholic art to the sensibilities and iconographies of their host communities.

At the Qing court, European professional painters, such as the Jesuit lay brother Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1768), known by his Chinese name Lang Shining, trained many local Chinese artists in Western painting techniques. Although Castiglione and other Jesuits were prohibited from painting Christian works at court, both they, and some converted local artists, likely produced religious paintings under their artistic tutelage in Jesuit colleges. This occurred despite the persecutions by Chinese authorities, the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1759, and its abolition in 1773, during which the Jesuits persisted in carrying out their mission through underground operations in China.

The nearly square format of these two paintings closely aligns with the devotional character of similar small paintings on copper produced in Europe, intended for private viewing in intimate settings. The format differs significantly from traditional Chinese painting formats, such as the vertical hanging scroll (*guàzhóu*, or *lìzhóu*), designed to hang on walls, and the horizontal hand scroll (*shoujuàn*, or *chángjuàn*), which consists of long, continuous paintings meant to be viewed one section at the time.

Unlike most of Western paintings, such scrolls are not intended to be continuously displayed. Instead, they are brought out, unrolled for viewing, and then rolled up and stored, typically protected by silk wrappings and kept in labelled boxes. In addition to the scrolls, other common formats of traditional Chinese painting include screens, fans and album leaves (*càyè*). Album leaves, typically square or nearly square, like these two paintings, form part of an album—a series of folding leaves presenting individual works. The album is one of the most intimate Chinese painting formats, with each page turn offering the artist an opportunity to surprise the viewer with variations in perspective or subject matter. As with many Chinese album paintings and Western small-scale works, these two paintings have a miniature-like quality, inviting close, detailed examination and appreciation.

Distinct from the more elevated and calligraphic style of painting preferred by the Chinese literati—known as *xiěyì*, or 'sketching [one's] thoughts', an interpretive and freely expressive style—these religious paintings were created in the more realistic *gōngbì* style, which literally means 'meticulous brush craftsmanship'. This style, often used in colourful figurative compositions, is characterised by well-defined linear contours and the gradual build-up of colour through precise brushwork, using washes of ink and finely ground mineral pigments mixed with water and glue.

The paintings are executed on a buff or pale yellowish-brown, open plain-weave silk—a fine, gauze-like silk taffeta prepared with a mixture of glue and alum. This preparation enables ink and pigments to adhere more effectively to the surface. Departing from traditional Chinese aesthetics, where the painting surface is often left partially exposed, these works cover much of the ground. In *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, nearly the entire surface is painted, while in *The Birth of the Virgin*, areas of the buff-coloured



ground, particularly the upper section with clouds surrounding the cherubs and some skin-tones, remain partially uncovered. After a meticulous preparatory drawing—visible as underdrawing in both paintings—some figures may have been painted on the reverse side of the silk, enhancing their brightness and contrast against the darker ground.

As in contemporary European paintings on copper, colour is built up gradually through successive layers of washes, varying in pigment saturation and thickness. This process incorporates *chiaroscuro* modelling, introduced by Jesuit painters and by their Chinese disciples. The final layers include more opaque pigments, particularly white highlights, which are notably prone to flaking. The result is vibrant, colourful compositions.

The paintings are mounted on a wooden grid-like structure, with the underside covered in thick *xuānzhi*, a paper made from the bast fibre of the than tree (*Pteroceltis tatarinowii*) mixed with rice straw. Protected by a clear glass pane and framed in wood, they are fitted with *rúyì*-shaped brass hangers, allowing them to be hung on walls for contemplation in intimate devotion. 🍂

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THE BIRTH OF THE VIRGIN

Ink and colour on silk; ebony wooden frame with the original glass pane

China, probably Beijing; ca. 1740–1770

Dim.: 26.3 × 23.6 cm

D1925

Provenance: Private collection, France.

This small devotional painting depicts The Birth of the Virgin, an episode also known as *The Nativity of the Virgin Mary*, illustrating the birth of Mary, the future mother of Jesus, to the aged Joachim and Anne.

As with its pendant painting, *The Adoration of the Shepherds* (D1926), it is painted on silk using brightly coloured, vibrant pigments mixed with a liquid medium, masterfully combining two distinct—if seemingly antagonistic—modes of painting: one of local Chinese origin and the other derived from European traditions.

The iconography similarly embodies elements from both traditions. In the context of eighteenth-century missionary work in China, this scene emphasises Mary's divine purity, predestination, and maternal compassion, aligning with Confucian ideals of moral virtue, filial piety, and cosmic harmony. Moral virtue, or *dé*, is the cornerstone of Confucian ethics, signifying an inner moral force cultivated through self-discipline, education, and righteous actions. Filial piety, or *xiào*, perhaps the most significant Confucian value, reflects the duty of children to respect, obey, and care for their parents and ancestors. Rooted in the belief that the family serves as a microcosm of society where harmony begins, it mirrors cosmic harmony, or *tiān rén héyì*, which reflects the Confucian vision of unity between humanity and Heaven. By incorporating Sinicised artistic styles and familiar imagery, missionaries made Christian narratives accessible, positioning the Virgin as a relatable figure while introducing key doctrines such as Marian devotion and the universal significance of Salvation history. This approach exemplifies the Jesuit effort to harmonise Christianity with Chinese traditions, fostering acceptance and understanding.

Set on a raised wooden platform or dais, occupying centre stage, is a carved daybed upholstered in bright blue. On top of the daybed, lying on rich red and green fabrics, is the recently born Virgin, wearing a pink tunic and wrapped in a similarly coloured blanket with a folded blue top edge. With her arms outstretched, the baby Virgin wears a blue head cap and rests her head on a red bolster pillow. Her position is being carefully adjusted by her mother, Anne, who is seated on a *fauteuil*—an armchair carved *en suite* with the daybed and upholstered in red—on the left of the painting. Behind St Anne stands St Joachim, his arms outstretched as if witnessing a miracle. The miraculous figures occupy the right side of the composition. Approaching from the right and kneeling over the dais is an angel wearing a long pink tunic and holding a stem of white lilies—the Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*), symbolising the Virgin's future role. Behind this angel stands another, clad in a more martial blue and green attire, holding a lance, high in

his right hand, while his left hand proudly holds a fan-like shield bearing the emblem of the Jesuits: the 'IHS' Christogram crowned by a cross, with three nails of the cross below (not depicted). Next to the baby Virgin, an infant angel or cherub, naked yet partially drape in salmon-coloured fabric, carries a dish filled with stacked flaming hearts, as if presenting them to the future mother of Christ. A narrow beam of light, emanating from the white dove of the Holy Spirit hovering above, shines on the baby's face. This mystical, miraculous event is witnessed by cherubs peering from the surrounding clouds.

In contrast with its companion painting, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, the domestic setting of this depiction of *The Birth of the Virgin* is emphasised through its opulent and fashionable furnishings, aligning with later traditions concerning the family's wealth as described by the *Protoevangelium of James*.

No iconographic source has been identified that could have served as a visual model for the Chinese painter. It may represent an entirely original composition, though this is unlikely, or it could be based on an unknown, less-circulated print, possibly from a printed book. This is suggested by its unusual iconographic details, which appear to convey a very specific religious symbolism. Far from the more typical depictions of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, the central motif of this painting is the bestowing of flaming hearts to the Child Virgin, depicted here as pure and compassionate (symbolised by the angel carrying white lilies) and as a fearsome defender of the faith (represented by the military angel holding the Jesuit shield). These elements are associated with the Sacred Heart devotion (*Cor Jesu Sacratissimum*), embodied by the Virgin, which conveys Mary's purity, her future role in salvation, and the burning love of God. This devotion is deeply linked to the Jesuits. In 1699, the Jesuit missionary Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti (1632–1703) wrote a short work on the Holy Heart of Mary in Italian. Later, in 1726, the French Jesuit Joseph Gallifet (1663–1749) published *De Cultu Sacrosancti Cordis Dei ac Domini Nostri Jesu Christi* in Rome, advocating for the establishment of a feast and official recognition of the Sacred Heart devotion, which was only granted in 1765. The engravings by Charles Joseph Natoire (1700–1777), published in Gallifet's book, included some of the earliest depictions of the motif, notably featuring an anatomically correct portrayal of the human heart.¹ *HMC*

¹ See EDMUNDS, Martha Mel, 'French sources for Pompeo Batoni's "Sacred Heart of Jesus" in the Jesuit Church in Rome', *The Burlington Magazine*, 149 (2007), pp. 785–789.



THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

Ink and colour on silk; ebonised wooden frame with the original glass pane

China, probably Beijing; ca. 1740–1770

Dim.: 26.3 × 23.6 cm

D1926

Provenance: Private collection, France.

This small devotional painting depicts *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. As with its pendant painting, *The Birth of the Virgin* (D1925), it is painted on silk using brightly coloured, vibrant pigments mixed with a liquid medium, masterfully combining two distinct—indeed, seemingly antagonistic—modes of painting: one of local Chinese origin and the other derived from European traditions. The iconography similarly embodies elements of both traditions. A depiction of *The Adoration of the Shepherds* by a Chinese artist would emphasize the humility of Christ's birth, resonating with the Confucian virtue of *qiān*, or 'humility', and the Daoist ideal of simplicity or *pu*, literally 'unworked wood'.¹ The shepherds' humble reverence could parallel the Confucian respect for moral purity over material wealth. This portrayal underscores the universal accessibility of salvation, aligning with Jesuit efforts to frame Christianity as a faith for all, regardless of social status, thereby appealing to both the Confucian elite and the broader populace in China.

On the left, we see the Nativity, with the brightly haloed figure of the Child Jesus wrapped in swathes of cloth over a wooden manger. The kneeling Virgin (with a green scarf over her head and the usual blue mantle) watches over him, her hands raised in prayer. The standing St Joseph extends his arms with palms open—in an *orans*, or 'praying' posture—in open submission to divine will while receiving grace. Next to the Holy Family, the customary ox and donkey gaze at the Infant Jesus with peaceful, reverent demeanour. While the inclusion of these animals is symbolic, traditionally representing the fulfilment of prophecy from Isaiah and symbolising humility, patience, and the union of the Jewish (ox) and Gentile (donkey) peoples, the depiction of three small children, all in typical Chinese attire, stands out as a unique addition. Probably all male, the children wear loose-fitting, knee-length, sleeveless tunics (*shān*) with side slits and a central front opening with buttons, similarly loose-fitting trousers (*kù*), and simple cloth shoes. Since long garments were typically worn only by the elite, exempt from manual labour, these three children—wearing sleeveless tunics to allow for physical activity—perfectly embody the lower strata of Chinese society, particularly rural peasants.² The inclusion of rural children as a sign of cultural integration and a symbol of purity, innocence, and potential, reflects Daoist and Buddhist teachings on new beginnings, and the importance of humility and simplicity. Tightly packed on the right are the shepherds who have come to pay homage to the miraculous birth

of the Child Christ. These include kneeling and standing figures, one carrying a basket over her head. Hovering above the scene, amid unusually coloured brownish clouds, are two playful cherubs wrapped in brightly coloured drapery and banners (likely to receive a missing inscription), along five cherub heads.

The group of shepherds on the right faithfully copies an important 1620 engraving by Lucas Vorsterman the Elder (1595–1675), based on a composition by the famous Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (inv. 1803.6).³ From this depiction of *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, one of many on this subject by Rubens, the Chinese painter adapted some of the figures, likely without fully understanding their actions, altering their poses and attributes. For instance, the kneeling woman in the foreground, with her outstretched right hand, originally held an egg taken from her wicker basket, which she was about to present as a gift to the Christ Child. In the painting, her braided hair is covered by a brown headscarf, her voluptuous bosom by a pink tunic, while her right hand is now empty, and the basket—its handle originally resting on her left wrist as seen from the engraving—is missing. The standing long-haired man with clasped hands holding his hat pressed to the chest was transformed into two figures with the same praying gesture: one kneeling behind the woman in the foreground and the other standing, as in Rubens's original composition. The other four figures standing just behind are copied with little deviation from the model, except for the clasped hands of an older woman, which proved more challenging to interpret. These were transformed into a bright green scarf wrapped around her neck, with the elderly woman's coif rendered as hair. The Nativity group may have been based on a different contemporary European print or, more likely, adapted and transformed by the Chinese painter to better fulfil his patron's expectations. Joseph's *orans* posture and even his physical traits remain the same, as does the exact depiction of his open palms, though the figure is presented in frontal view.

The Virgin, however, has changed her pose. Unlike Rubens's composition, where she is depicted standing and rearranging her child's blanket, she is shown kneeling, absorbed in blissful prayer. The floating cherubs, with their colourful flying banners, clearly derive from European printed models, yet they differ considerably from those engraved by Vosterman and must have been inspired by another contemporary print. ✎ HMC

¹ See KIM, Doil, 'Qian qian in Early Chinese history', *Early China*, 43 (2020), pp. 1–27.

² For Chinese garments during the Qing dynasty, see SILBERSTEIN, Rachel, 'Fashion in Ming and Qing China', in BREWARD, Christopher, LEMIRE, Beberly, RIELLO, Giorgio (eds.), *The Cambridge Global History of Fashion. From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 533–570.

³ An example of Vorsterman's engraving belongs to the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (inv. RP-P-OB-70.342); another example is in the British Museum, London (inv. R.3.39).



SAINT ANTHONY OF LISBON—OR OF PADUA

Watercolour on silk; mounted on canvas

China; ca. 1770–1780

Dim.: 84.3 × 53.3 cm

D1363

Provenance: Nuno Silva collection, Portugal.



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.

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 Shíning* 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 1773.¹ That painting, depicting the main altar at Beijing's Saint

¹ 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 *Dōng Táng* 東堂, literally the 'Eastern church'), was completed in 1777 as a gift for Father Giuseppe Solari (master of novices in Genoa).² 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.³ HMC

² 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.

³ 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.

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD (OUR LADY OF GRACE)

Reverse painting on glass

China, Guangzhou; ca. 1770–1800

Dim.: 30.0 × 23.0 cm; 35.0 × 28.0 cm (framed)

D1977

Provenance: M. Conceição Ferrão and Aníbal 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.¹

Unlike common painting techniques, this depiction of the Virgin and Child was painted on the reverse of a glass plate possibly imported from Europe.² 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

¹ VALENTE, Maria Regina, *Churches of Macau*, 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.

² 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.

³ The painting (42.0 × 35.0 cm) belongs to the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (inv. D.107–1898).

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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'.





FIG. 1
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 Christ 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.⁶ 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)⁷ [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.⁸

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 1800.⁹ HMC

⁶ 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).

⁷ Print of this engraving in the British Museum, London (inv. 1891,0414.1167).

⁸ Print of this engraving in the British Museum, London (inv. 1866,1114.256).

⁹ 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', GIESE, Francine, et al. (eds.), *China and the West. Reconsidering Chinese Reverse Glass Painting*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023, pp. 157–174.

THE HOLY FAMILY

Ink and colour on paper, silk

China, probably Beijing; ca. 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.¹ 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

¹ 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.

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.² 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 Christ, along with his sword and tricorn—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 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

² 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.





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.

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).³ Known at the imperial court as Lang Shining, Castiglione served three emperors and 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 1771.⁴ HMC

³ 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 Shìníng*. 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 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.

⁴ 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 VERT, Veronika, 'Jean-Denis Attiret, Ein Jesuitenmaler am Hofe Qianlongs', in *Europa und die Kaiser von China 1240–1816* (cat.), Frankfurt am Main, Inslé, 1985, pp. 144–155. And on Sichelbarth, see OLIVOVÁ, Lucie, 'Ignaz Sichelbarth (1708–1780), a Jesuit painter in China', in CEMUS, Petronilla (ed.), *Bohemia Jesuitica, 1556–2006*, vol. 2, Prague–Würzburg, Karolinum, Echter Verlag, 2010, pp. 1431–1450.

ST. MARY MAGDALENE

Ink, watercolour and gold on paper
 China, possibly Shanghai; ca. 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 *lìzhóu* or *guàzhóu*. Known today as *hanji*, Korean paper—referred to as *Gāolízhi* by the Chinese during the Goryeo dynasty (935–1392)—was renowned for its high quality and was regularly sent as tribute to China.¹ 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'.² The first reading emphasizes 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.³ Flatz created several versions of this composition, including an altar painting in 1837 for the Parish Church of St Margaret in Flauring near Innsbruck, and a smaller version painted in Rome in 1847, now in the Vorarlberg Museum, Bregenz. A replica of the Berlin

¹ 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.

² I wish to thank Clement Onn, director of the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore, for reading the seal.

³ 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).



FIG. 1
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, 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.⁴

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.⁵ 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.⁶ 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 prov-

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

inces for the first time, aimed to establish congregations along with orphanages, hospitals, and schools.⁷ 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.⁸

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.⁹ 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

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.



73

KING D. JOÃO V CHINESE GAMES BOARD

Ebony and ivory

China; first half of the 18th century

Dim.: 29.0 × 33.0 × 1.5 cm

F1115

Provenance: José Lico collection, Portugal.

Superb 18th century Sino-Portuguese ebony backgammon, chess and draughts board, ornamented in delicately engraved ivory inlays.

On the backgammon face, the four quadrants of six half-moon points are divided by an elegantly waved ebony on ivory receptacle, of engraved scrolls decoration, marking the bar. In the true centre, the crossing point for the diagonal lines joining opposite vertices of the rectangle, and exuberantly defining the whole composition, the Portuguese Royal Arms sided by two herald angels. In the corners, flaming torches in-between wing shaped elements densely decorated in arabesque scrolls, resembling butterflies, in an interpretation clearly not understood by the Chinese craftsman.

On the reverse, the chess and draughts checkered surface is framed by four asymmetric plant scroll motifs, emerging from each corner, interspersed with four eight-petalled flowers.

It is in the reign of king João V (1689–1750), *The Magnanimous*, that Portugal reaches its maximum splendour. In this period of political, economic and artistic affirmation, the Royal Arms spread out worldwide on the faces of the large gold 'Dobras' designed by the

artist Vieira Lusitano (1689–1773), the heaviest coins ever minted in Portugal. Simultaneously the fashion for table and board games was growing amongst European kings and queens, soon becoming a major leisure pastime for monarchs, clergy and aristocracy alike. Fond of extravagant parties and board games, the King's consort, Maria Anna of Austria (r. 1708–1750), was known for organising parties in her private apartments in which 'távola'¹, backgammon, was played.

The Portuguese had established formal relations with China in the early 16th century, stimulated by the commercial exchange with local traders in such strategic outposts as Malacca, Canton or Fujian. Eventually, the permanent settlement in Macao (1554) facilitated the access to continental China, and it was through this port city that a characteristically Sino-Portuguese art production emerged. This artistic production, defined by a specific syncretism that blended techniques, styles and themes, resulted from the successful symbiosis between the two cultures.

In the context of D. João V mercantilist economy, suitable commercial and diplomatic relations were based on exchanges and contracts promoted by the King's ambassadors. The great embassy sent in 1725 to the Chinese Emperor Yongzheng (1722–1735), it's a good example of the prevalent international politics of ostentation and magnificence. In a letter to the King's Secretary of State, the Ambassador Alexandre de Metelo de Sousa e Menezes refers: 'I made my entry into the court in such a spectacular way that had never been seen in the whole of Asia'.² In return the Chinese emperor offered the Portuguese king '40 chests full of the most valuable things from that empire'.³

The iconography of this games board sustains the projection of the empire and its monarch, through the representation of the King's Arms. The craftsman evokes a European ornamental language, adopting a minimalist yet formal style, reflecting the inability to correctly interpret the model, atypical to his own culture.

The Armorial shield depicted follows the usual pattern for D. João V's reign, with a curvilinear arched lower border, five bezant escutcheons and a full band with seven castles. The whole composition, framed by a baroque scroll cartouche and surmounted by the four arch crown (replicating the fleurons but abdicating from the original stalks), is supported by two kneeling winged figures blowing the horn of fame.

In the development of this symbiosis between Portuguese and Chinese art, it is important to highlight the major role of engraving

¹ Cf. SILVA, Maria Beatriz Nizza da, *D. João V*, Lisbon, Circulo de Leitores e Centro de Estudos dos Povos e Culturas de Expressão Portuguesa, 2006, pp. 30 e 126—This historian suggests that the game 'távola' must refer to 'gamão', or backgammon in England, 'tric-trac' in France, 'tablas reales' in Spain and 'tavola reale' in Italy.

² IDEM, p. 281.

³ IDEM, *ibidem*.



ings and print sets, major tools in the dissemination the Baroque style in the East, which would become the matrix for the international visual recognition of the 'Magnanimous King', as is evidenced by this games board produced by a Chinese artist.

The composition, most certainly copied from an engraving supplied by the client, is similar to that in Royal Band trumpet standards and drum aprons belonging to the Museu Nacional dos Coches collection (inv. IM40 and IM53), which are well identified and thoroughly researched. The Music Historian Garhard Doderer suggests that they were produced for the Royal Band, commissioned by king D. João V in 1721–1723, even though they are inscribed with the date 1761.

Ebony and ivory, the precious exotic raw materials selected for the making of this games board, originate from those faraway lands and it is possible to recognise in the chiselled incisions, similar to that of the engravers burin, distinctive local decorative elements, such as the black ink filled dots and lines⁴ which, like and energetic brushstroke, are characteristic of Chinese painting.

On accounts of its quality and originality this games board is a most relevant example of successful artistic miscegenation in this 'Glorious' reign. ✓ TP

⁴ In Portugal these incisions were filled in darkened paste—bees wax coloured with iron gall ink—Cf: FREIRE, Fernanda Castro, *Mobiliário II*, F.R.E.S.S., 2002, p. 43.

74

A MING VENTÓ WITH EUROPEAN FIGURES

Lacquered exotic wood, lacquer and iron

Southern China, Guangdong Province(?); first half of the 17th century

Dim.: 17.5 × 22.7 × 16.1 cm

F880

Provenance: José Lico collection, Portugal.

Important South China made lacquered wood *ventó* of European figures decoration. Of parallelepiped format, its interior was designed to contain a large, and a now missing, shallow drawer. The box, the drawer and the door joinery features are characteristic of Ming dynasty furniture: the edges are rounded, and the panels present half-lap joints of cylindrical wooden pegs; the door comprises of a central panel assembled by mortice and tenon joints, while the frame has four mitre, and mortice and tenon joints typical of Chinese tabletops. Identically to *namban ventós*, the case rests on a raised frame, resulting from the lowermost extension of its side panels.

The *ventó* decoration consists of a thin, semi-transparent layer of brown coloured *urushi* lacquer, possibly its natural colour, and pigments dyed (*iro-urushi*) polychrome and textured lacquer (*urushi-e*), enhanced with *maki-e* and sprinkled silver dust on *urushi*. From the four elevations emerge vibrantly coloured male and female figures painted over the splendid wood grain.

On the door front, a youth of wide brimmed black hat, perhaps a shepherd or a pilgrim with his staff, glancing bucolically at two simple flowers; the figure is attired in doublet and green trousers (a 'road' colour, used in the countryside or while travelling), tied with a red coloured ribbon of identical shade to the turned top boots and long, sleeveless cassock.

On the right-hand side panel two figures, apparently of lower status and attired in 'road costume'. The male, seemingly greeting the female, wears identical costume to the first youth, although with short trousers, red socks and shoes, and holds a bag in his right hand; the red hair, similarly to the other characters, may

perhaps identify a new Christian. The woman, almost fully covered as per the demands of contemporary decorum, wears a striped green skirt, long black cloak over the shoulders and white headscarf.

By contrast, the left-hand side elevation portrays a pair dressed in analogous 'road costume', but the courtly variation from ca. 1600; the male sporting a sword and dagger and wearing red doublet, trousers and socks, green shoes and identically coloured and gold trimmed cassock, ruff collar and hat; the female wearing green doublet and skirt, yellow sleeved gold trimmed blouse, broad collar and black veil.

On the rear surface a knight in black hat, red doublet, gold trimmed cassock with buttons, green trousers and socks, tied with red ribbon, and long black gold trimmed *ferreruolo* cape.

Given the accuracy of the portrayal and of the costume, it is likely that, contrary to the customary depictions of Europeans in *namban art*, the artist was handed over, by the patron, the printed sources that informed the decorative composition.

Contrasting with most furniture typologies produced in Asia for exporting to Europe, in whose origin, manufacturing, and subsequent regional and international trade via the India Run, the role of the Portuguese was determinant, the *ventó* emerges from a pre-existent eastern model. It is well known that on the arrival of the first Portuguese to western India, the Konkani and Malabar coasts, furniture was virtually non-existent, being restricted to boxes, trays and the very rich thrones used by the Hindu and Islamic courts. Contrary to India, in eastern Asia, specifically in China and Japan, furniture was widely used, and manufactured in a plethora of typologies, some analogous to the European.

Effectively, types of storage furniture with drawers, like western writing boxes and cabinets, were already common in the Ming dynasty homes of bureaucrats and scholars. One such typology, unknown to the Portuguese cabinet makers, was the *ventó*, characterised for its small size, easily portable parallelepiped shape, inner drawers, door hinged to the right with lock to the left, and top handle. An intriguing term that, present in contemporary records to refer to Chinese pieces—emerging in such written variations



as *vento*, *ventô*, *bentó* or—had its origin, according to Sebastião Dalgado, the author of the *Luso-Asiático Glossary*, in the Malay word *bentoq*, meaning ‘small oriental cabinet’.

The historical importance, and the major documental relevance of the herein described *ventó*, does not simply derive from the rare depictions of Europeans on its surfaces, but also for presenting us with a rare Chinese made object, of which, despite the abundant documental references to such lacquers—some of the earliest far eastern products to reach Europe via Lisbon—there are so very few extant examples.

Although a rather modest object for its small dimensions, perhaps a marriage *objet de vertu*—produced in the scope of a commission for celebrating a matrimonial union, as it can be deduced from its iconography—evidencing wear and a somehow troubled life, both traits that endow it with added testimonial relevance, this *ventó* is also a major document to the cultural and artistic exchanges initiated by the Portuguese, during the ‘globalization’ period fostered by the Discoveries. ✎ HMC

75

A MING WRITING OR JEWELLERY BOX

Ebony, exotic ebonised timber, bone and gilt copper hardware

Southern China; early-17th century

Dim.: 16.8 × 27.5 × 17.0 cm

F1275



This small sized and rare rectangular fall front writing cabinet or jewellery box is characterised by its ebony striated edge friezes, turned feet, ebonised exotic timbers, perhaps camphor wood, and carved ebony veneers—the much desirable *zitan*¹, enriched by gilt copper hardware, from which stands out the double-headed eagle lock escutcheon as well as the side loop and drawers pull handles.

The cabinet outer surfaces decorative compositions are defined by central fields—square shaped to the side panels and rectangular to the remaining elevations, framed by narrow bone friezes and finely carved mitre joined trapezoidal borders.

On the central frontal field a pair of face to face *chilóng*, immature and hornless Chinese dragons, amongst a lattice pattern of *lingzhi*—the sacred immortality mushroom *Ganoderma lucidum*—and *ruyi* heads—literally ‘as it was desired’. It is viable to suggest that the iconographic choice of *chilóng* was indeed more adequate for the decorating of an export object, considering their symbolic relevance and meaning in Chinese culture, as well as their association to the emperor and the mandarin elite. On the upper front border section, Japanese damask tree flowers (*Prunus mume*), symbols of perseverance and purity. On the left and right side elements, flowering Narcissus, known in China as ‘immortal aquatic flower’, alluding to purity and prosperity, and to the lower section, flying horses, symbolic of speed, strength and perseverance.

With minor variations, the back elevation repeats the frontal iconography while the box top panel portrays, centrally placed, a pair of phoenix amongst peonies. The combination of these two

elements reinforces the suspected trousseau nature of this box, as the association between phoenix, king of birds and symbol of virtue, and the peony—*fùguìhuā*, ‘wealth and honour flower’, embodies a clear reference to prosperity and justice, both expressions of marital harmony. The border sections are decorated with flying cranes amongst auspicious *ruyi* shaped clouds. This bird, known in Chinese as *hè*, stands for social hierarchy and longevity and, in the present decorative context, expresses vows of long-lasting union and eternal marriage.

The box side elevations feature identical decorative compositions. However, while the trapezoid border sections repeat previously described decorative motifs, the central panels feature back facing *qilin* on rocky grounds and surrounded by auspicious clouds. Portrayed in deer bodies, dragon’s heads and thick bear tails *qilin* embody benevolence, virtue, longevity, happiness and wisdom, their presence in this setting related to fertility, for their role as delivery vehicles of new-born babies (*qilinsongzi*) to happy parents.

The box interior is organised in two overlapping rows of carved ebony veneered drawers, with peonies on the upper tier and jumping carps (*li*), which by homophony are linked to profit and wealth (*li*), power, strength and ability (*li*), on the two lower fronts.

This elegant, small sized piece of furniture belongs to a rare extant group of export pieces of identical construction, materials and decorative characteristics, of which three have been recently published.² This unusual production, copying contemporary European prototypes, is most certainly connected to commissions by Portuguese officials based in Asia, namely in the southern Chinese coastal regions of Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces.

Although the shape and decoration of these typologies is recognisably different from the more sober, and better known Ming furniture admired by Chinese scholars, of which some extant examples are known, they correspond perfectly to what might have been the earliest Chinese made furniture for the European market, which were referred in contemporary documentation.

In addition to Guangzhou, also known as Canton, Guangdong province capital city, one other possible production centre for this furniture is Chaozhou, a city to the east of Guangdong that famed by its high quality cabinet making of intricate carved and pierced decoration. A third alternative would be Ningbo, in neighbouring Zhejiang province, where the Portuguese settled as early as 1522, naming it Liampó. ✍ HMC

¹ About *zitan*, see SHIXIANG, Wang, *Connoisseurship of Chinese Furniture. Ming and early Qing Dynasties*, Vol. 1, Hong Kong, Art Media Resources, 1990, pp. 148–149.

² See: CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *Choices* (cat.), Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2016, pp. 304–339, cats. 26–27; e CRESPO, Hugo Miguel (ed.), *Comprar o Mundo. Consumo e Comércio na Lisboa do Renascimento*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2020, pp. 144–149, cat. 24.



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 remarka-

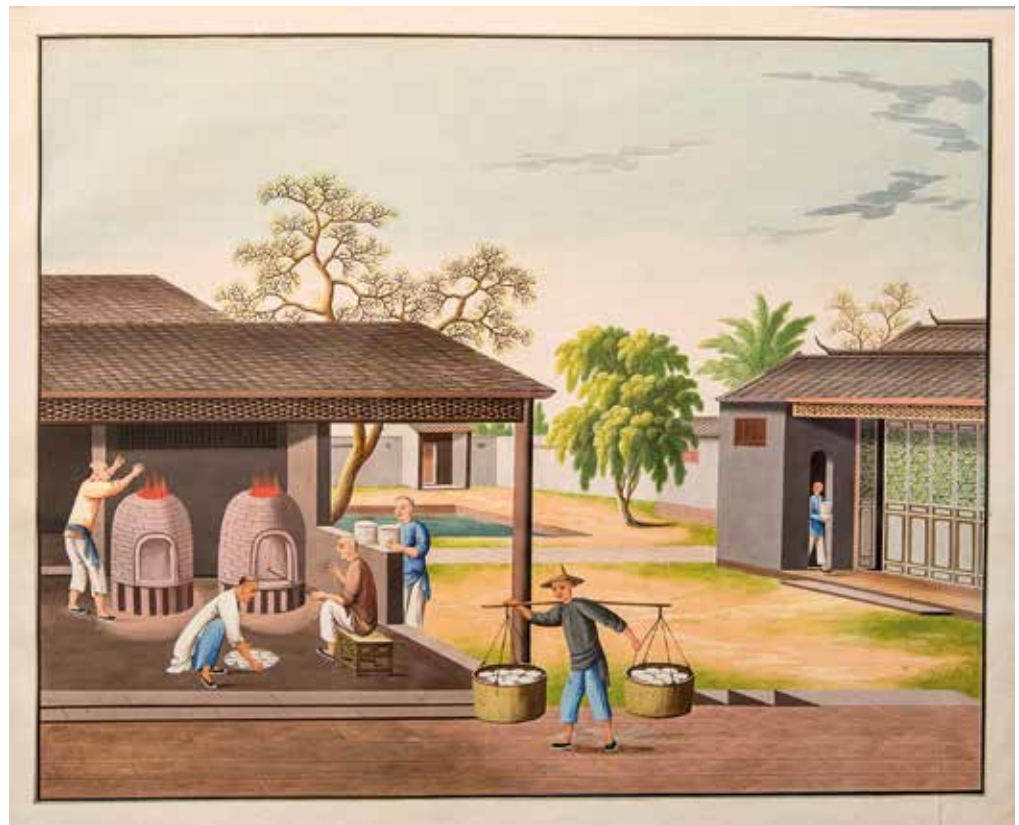


FIG. 1
Using Muffle Stoves for the Firing of Porcelain in a Cantonese Workshop, Chinese School, ca. 1830, watercolor on paper. The MET Museum (inv. no. 55.139.1).

ble 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. 🍷

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'MANDARIN' FOLDING FAN WITH A VIEW OF THE PEARL RIVER DELTA

Brass, silver, gold, enamel, paper and gouache

China (Macau?, Henan?); 1842–47

Diam.: 53.0 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.¹ 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

¹ 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*², 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 Whampoa³—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.⁴ 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 (*Wān*) 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

² *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).

³ 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.

⁴ 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)⁵, 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 School⁶—exemplified by the 14000 paintings found at Beijing's⁷ Summer Palace (*Yihe yuan*) Long Corridor, and the Mandarin style adopted for export pieces.

The frame repeats, in a synthesized 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 passage⁸ 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.⁹

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

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.int-arch-photogramm-remote-sens-spatial-inf-sci.net/XLII-2-W5/737/2017/isprs-archives-XLII-2-W5-737-2017.pdf>

⁸ Napier Island formed a bifurcation in the Pearl River that gave access to Canton.

⁹ 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.

'MANDARIN' FOLDING FAN WITH A VIEW OF CANTON (GUANGZHOU)

Wood, lacquer, gold, paper and gouache

China, Daoguang reign; 1848–49

Diam.: 53.0 cm

F1226

Provenance: Viscount of Soveral 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 paintings¹—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-

¹ 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



78

A MOORING WITH ANCESTORS HALL, 1832

Oil on canvas

Chinese School, Guangdong Province

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. ↪ BMS¹

¹ A special thanks to Martyn Gregory: 3 Bury Street, St James's, London. SW1Y 6AB, and to Terri Cheung (Hong Kong Museum of Art), for the precious input regarding this painting.



Japan

LACQUERWARE AND NANBAN ART

The Portuguese or *nanban-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. Nanban 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 Nanban 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 *nanban-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. 🍡



FIG. 1
Map of Japan and Korea, L. Teixeira,
1595.

79

A NANBAN RELIQUARY CROSS

Copper alloy, lacquer and gold
 Japan; late 16th–early 17th century
 Dim.: 15.0 × 10.0 × 2.5 cm
 F1281

Provenance: José Lico collection, Portugal.

Exhibited: 'Uma História de Assombro, Portugal—Japão, Séculos XVI–XX', Palácio Nacional da Ajuda, Lisbon 2019 (cat. p. 65).



A rare Momoyama period Nanban Sawasa reliquary cross, most certainly commissioned under the patronage of Japan's Jesuit Community.

*Sawasa*¹ are formed by *shakudō*—copper alloy with gold, silver and arsenic—subsequently lacquered in black *urushi* and mercury gilt.

The latin cross shaped reliquary is composed of two hinged plaques that close, on opposite sides, the identically shaped container that hides in its interior eleven compartments with relics of saints fixed in wax. The two hinged sections are locked into place, in three of the cross's arms, by finely turned spiralled-head screws, while the top section is fitted with a ring for suspension.

On one face a delicate low-relief depiction of the Crucified Christ crowned by a star-shaped radiant halo and surmounted by a label inscribed 'INRI', acronym for *Iesus Nasareus Rex Iudaeorum* (Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews). The Christ's facial features are defined by elegantly designed eyes, nose and mouth, as well as by a moustache, beard and long hair strand falling over the right shoulder. It bears a crown of thorns and a loincloth tied on the right, the wounds blood realistically dripping from hands and feet.

At His feet a skull over two cross bones alluding to the 'place of the skulls', the Mount Golgotha where Christ was crucified, in an allegory to Resurrection—the Victory of life over death.

On the opposite face, at the intersection of the two cross bars, a low-relief Eucharistic Chalice surmounted by the Holy Communion Wafer with the image of the Crucified Christ.² It is flanked by angels in adoration, suspended amongst stylised clouds of clear Japanese artistic character.

Above the chalice a depiction of the Holy Spirit Dove and below the inscription 'LOVVADO SEJA O SANCTISSIMO SACRAMENTUM' (Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament) of the Eucharist, through which Jesus words were spread: 'My flesh is real food and my blood real drink (JO. 6, 55)—a most relevant inscription that certifies that Nanban reliquary crosses were produced at the time of the Portuguese presence in Japan, rather than, as some historians suggest, the later Dutch period. The decorative composition is completed at the lower section by a palm from which emerge flowers and fruits, in a metaphor of renewal and joy.

The lateral cross faces, forming the relic's case, are filled by a continuous peripheral frieze of entwined foliage and floral motifs.

Such reliquaries, of clear Japanese artistic production and for exclusive use of Christians (*Kirishitan*), were destined to both the Japanese converts and the 'Southern Barbarians' (the *Nanbanjin*), particularly the Portuguese, that wore them hanging from the neck as a repository of rare and precious minute relics from Saints. The cult of relics was strongly reinforced in a postulate issued by

¹ *Sawasa* is the Japanese name given to objects made by Asian artists and craftsmen who adopted European models and associated them with Japanese materials. They feature decorative patterns in gold relief on a glossy lacquered surface.

² During the Eucharist, we proceed to the sacrament of bread and wine: bread symbolises the body of Christ and wine his blood. Le Concile de Trente (1543–1563) a donné le nom de 'transsubstantiation' à ce miracle eucharistique. Cf. Congregation of Trent, Session XIII, Chap. IV, no. 877.





the Council of Trent (1543–1563), that imposed on the faithful the respecting and honouring of martyrs, and other holy bodies relics, as they were living arms of Christ, through which God operates His extraordinary grace and which must, one day, resuscitate for eternal life.³

These reliquary-crosses reflect *devotio moderna*⁴ practices directly related to the Society of Jesus. The Eucharistic piety and the devotion to the Cross of Christ, symbols reflected in this cult object, are two important aspects that dominate Jesuit spirituality,⁵ hence suggesting the Society as the most likely client for this reliquary.

Examples such as this are extremely rare, two being recorded at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London,⁶ one at the Tokyo National Museum and one at the Singapore Museum, the latter formerly at the São Roque collection, all closely similar, suggesting a common production workshop.

The cross herewith described is unquestionably a Nanban production masterpiece, a rare example from a small and precious group that has so far been recorded. For its obvious quality, defined by the preciousness of the materials and the rare and expensive relics it encases, this reliquary cross was most certainly commissioned by a high Catholic hierarchy dignitary in Japan, perhaps as a diplomatic gift by the Company of Jesus to a convert Japanese

regional *Daimyō*—local warlord and landowner—court member. Its manufacture is possibly still dated to the late 1500s, or to the very early-17th century, considering that the edit prohibiting the practice of Christianity was issued in 1614.

Contrary to past assumptions, it is now evident that the earliest production of *Sawasa* pieces for exporting predates the Dutch arrival in Japan, as it is confirmed by these Jesuit reliquaries, particularly this specific example featuring a Portuguese inscription, a detail that endows it with a most valuable element in dating and classifying similar objects.

It was in Japan, where Saint Francis Xavier arrived in 1549, that the Jesuits recorded their greatest successes as missionaries by skilfully focusing their converting strategy on the social elites. The main assumption was that by persuading the *Daimyō* to conversion, their subjects would follow suit under the threat of severe reprisals. As such it was essential for the masses to display their alignment with power and to become identified with the new religion by displaying the symbols of the new faith. This new market niche was identified by the local artisans that, almost immediately, embraced a continuous production of crosses, rosaries, reliquaries and all other paraphernalia related to Christian iconography. *HMC*

³ GUIMARÃES, Francisco Portugal, 'Proprium Sanctorum: o culto, as suas relíquias e os seus relicários', in *População e Sociedade*, CEPESE, Oporto, vol. 20, 2012, pp. 53–67. p. 57.

⁴ The *Devotio Moderna* focuses on prayer and the development of the personal inner life.

⁵ MARTINS, Fausto Sanches, 'Culto e devções das igrejas dos Jesuítas em Portugal', Oporto, University of Oporto. Faculdade de Letras in *Colóquio Internacional A Companhia de Jesus na Península Ibérica no séc. XVI e XVII*, 2004, p. 99. Cf. <https://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/handle/10216/8707>.

⁶ BRUJIN, Max de, BASTIAAN, Johannes, *Sawasa—Japanese Export Art in Black and Gold, 1650–1800* (cat.) Amsterdam–Zwolle, Rijksmuseum–Uitgeverij Waanders, 1998, p. 24, no. 29.

A NANBAN BIBLE STAND—*SHOKENDAI*

Wood, lacquer, mother-of-pearl, gold and gilt copper

Japan; Momoyama to Edo period, ca. 1580–1620

Dim.: 35.0 × 31.0 × 29.0 cm (opened); 50.0 × 31.0 × 3.0 cm (closed)

F1268

Provenance: Private collection, Spain.



The bible stand is formed by two lacquered articulated wooden sections and decorated with a golden composition of floral and foliage elements combined with an exuberant insignia of the Society of Jesus—a new religious order founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534 and officially recognized by the Pope Paul III in 1540.

The Jesuits were the first Christian missionaries in Japan, concentrating their action firstly on the Japanese elite and later on lower social classes, having converted, by end of the sixteenth century, more than 300,000 Japanese to Christianity. With the

Portuguese arrival in the East and the intense missionary program that followed, a necessity to erect churches and produce locally objects used on the European context arose.

Furniture and other liturgical objects in lacquer with mother-of-pearl inlay, such as this lectern, were made by the hands of local artisans oriented by Portuguese masters following European prototypes yet using regional materials and techniques. These lecterns (*shokendai*) were commissioned by Jesuits missionaries to be used on devotional services to hold the sacred text. This specific



type of portable folding lectern is related to Baroque carved wooden prototypes produced in Goa, albeit its articulated mechanism, formed by two crossed boards, follows well-known Islamic models. With a slight modification to the original Islamic lectern model, this adapted prototype allowed the bible to rest on an almost vertical position, as the Western book-rest form, in opposition to the horizontal position used for the reading of the Koran.

Made of Japanese cypress wood (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*) and coated with black lacquer (*urushi-e*), the lectern is richly decorated with gold and silver motifs (*maki-e*), as well with mother-of-pearl inlaid work (*raden*) a decoration very common in Momoyama (1568–1600) and also in the following Edo period.¹

The large central medallion, composed of two rings, bears the 'IHS', the Jesuits' monogram, and the symbols of Christ's crucifixion. The outer ring is fully decorated with a marvelous mother-of-pearl inlaid work combined with golden and silver strips in a beautifully composition of sunrays, shining light to the Jesuits insignia.

This pattern consisted of inlaid work in the form of radiant beams can also be found on small *namban* boxes, resembling an open fan.

On the ground of the front panels, a profuse floral decoration takes place consisting of a Japanese cherry tree blossoms (*sakura*)

on the superior panel, and a leaf pattern with orange-fruit on the lower panel. A decoration of scrolling wine with grapes, and a Japanese camellia (*tsubaki*) tree adorn the on the upper and lower back panel, accordingly.

The front panels are framed with an ornamental border of a scrolling and interlacing tendrils. Protecting the lectern, iron mountings with cherry trees engravings were added to the superior corners and feet.

Lecterns, such as the present example, were common to most Jesuit churches. As a result of the persecution of Christians under the leadership of Tokugawa Iemitsu (1623–1651), these objects are today extremely rare. This one of few example of the *namban* liturgical lacquers that have survived to the present day, illustrating the cross-cultural interaction between the East and the West in Japan during the Momoyama Period (1573–1615).²

Similar examples can be seen at the Nanban Bunkanan Museum in Osaka, the Arte Antiga National Museum in Lisbon, the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales in Madrid, and the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts. *HMC*

¹ 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, 'Nanban 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.

² See PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes (éd.), *Arte Nanban. Os Portugueses no Japão* (cat.), Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, 1990, pp. 48–49, cats. 35–39; and *idem*, *Lacas Nanban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990, pp. 60–63.

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

81

A NANBAN INRŌ

Japanese cedar, lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold

Japan; Momoyama period (1573–1603)

Height: 10.0 cm

F965

Exhibited: 'Venans de Loingtaines Voyages, Rencontres Artistiques sur la Route des Indes au Temps de Montaigne', Bordeaux, France, 2019 (cat. p. 54).

Rare Nanban *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 Nanban 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 *nanban-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



82

A NANBAN KAGAMIBUTA

Cryptomeria japonica(?), lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold

Japan; 17th century(?)

Diam.: 4.0 cm

F983

*Provenance: Elianor Nordskog collection; USA, Sydney Moss, England.**Exhibited: 'Des Samourais aux Mangas, Missions Etrangères 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 *Nanban 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 Nanban 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

A NANBAN BOX WITH THREE PORTUGUESE FIGURES

Lacquer, polychromy, and gold

Japan; Edo period, c. 1860(?)

Dim.: 7.5 × 7.0 × 7.0 cm

F1328



A rare, lacquered, polychrome, and gilt cylindrical shaped Nanban 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*,¹ 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*,² 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

¹ Cf. BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs in art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2001, p. 49.

² 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.

84

A RAKU SAKE BOTTLE DISPLAYING TWO DRUNK PORTUGUESE

Red raku ware, glazed stoneware

Japan, Kyoto; Edo period (1615–1868)

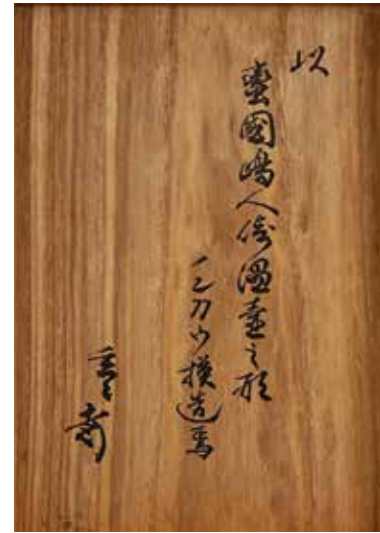
Dim.: 17.0 × 20.0 × 20.0 cm

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.¹

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

¹ 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.²

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-

² 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 Nanban 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.³ 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*

³ 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).

85

A NANBAN FOLDING LACQUERED DAIS TABLE

Lacquered wood, mother-of-pearl and gold; gilt copper

Japan; Momoyama period, late 16th century

Dim.: 36.2 × 56.5 × 43.5 cm

F1220

*Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.**Exhibited: 'Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan', McMullen Museum of Art, Boston (cat. no. 42); 'Nanban Commissions, The Portuguese in Modern Age Japan', Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, 2010 (cat. pp. 146–50).**Published: IMPEY, Oliver, JÖRG, Christiaan J. A., 'Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850', Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005, p. 196; IMPEY, Oliver, 'After The Barbarians', Lisbon, 2003, pp. 78–83.*

This small, low rectangular folding table, to be set on a raised platform or dais, is made from wood lacquered in black (*urushi*), decorated in gold (*maki-e*) and inlaid with mother-of-pearl (*raden*).¹ Featuring bow-shaped folding trestle legs, ideal for easy transportation, it is set with gilt copper fittings (*kazarikanagu*), finely chased with floral motifs over a punched ground known as 'fish roe' (*nanakoji*). These comprise the highly elaborate corner fittings decorated with tree peonies and a chequered pattern that emulates the inlay pattern of the bevelled edges of the rectangular top, the lock plate (*aimeta*) in the shape of a chrysanthemum flower with large leaves of the drawer, and the chrysanthemum-shaped hooks that secure the trestle to the frieze when the table is erected. The carpet-like decoration of the top consists of a broad border with the typical 'endless pearl' pattern called *shippotsunagi*, a narrow border with a triangular pattern, and a centre filed with is partitioned in four by a large stepped cross in a chequered pattern. The resulting four

stepped medallions, radially oriented, are decorated with flowering trees with birds and animals, namely a pair of hares which points, not surprisingly, to the marital, female nature of this object, used in a feminine context in Iberian households. The flowering trees and plants include Chinese bellflower or *kikyo* (*Platycodon grandiflorum*), Japanese maple or *momiji* (*Acer palmatum*), Japanese camellia, *tsubaki* or *wabisuke* (*Camellia japonica*), and Mandarin orange tree or *tachibana* (*Citrus tachibana*). The bow-shaped feet and stretchers are decorated with crushed mother-of-pearl and reserves depicting Chinese bellflower on the exterior sides and typical *Nanban* stylised vine scrolls on the inside. The front drawer is decorated with Mandarin orange tree, while the back and sides depict Japanese arrowroot or *kuzu* (*Pueraria lobata*).

The shape of the table copies a contemporary Iberian prototype, while its small size points to its use as a dais table for the use of Portuguese aristocratic women who spent much of their time

¹ Published in IMPEY, Oliver, et al., *After the Barbarians. An exceptional group of Nanban works of art* (cat.), London and Lisbon, WELSH, Jorge, *Porcelana Oriental e Obras de Arte*, 2003, pp. 78–83, cat. 11; and IMPEY, Oliver; JÖRG, Christiaan J. A., *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005, p. 196.





sitting on large cushions over a dais covered in precious carpets and other luxury textiles. Simple or more elaborate and decorated similar tables would be used for serving small meals between the women of the household or for displaying precious objects and even as a writing surface. The first references to Japanese tables likely made for export may be found in the 1616 list drafted by the Jesuit priest Manuel Bento of his belongings which records, alongside seven lacquered trunks, 130 tables.² That same year four large and one smaller table are listed in the Dutch East India Company records. It has been suggested by Oliver Impey and Christiaan J. A Jörg in their seminal work on *Japanese Export Lacquer* that such tables would possibly be used by Jesuit priests as portable altars. Although plausible, it should be noted that these authors were unaware of this specific type of low table for the dais and its use in a female context in contemporary Portugal. Contemporary tables and table tops made in Asia for export to the Portuguese market include rare wooden pieces covered in mother-of-pearl made in Gujarat, India; in carved wood made in Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka), usually, a folding tabletop to be set on trestles; and in lacquered, gilded wood made in the Kingdom of Pegu; and also in China.³ One other *Nanban* table of this shape and decoration (without the cross-motif on the top partitioning the central field) features straight rectangular legs that may have been fixed at a later stage. It was sold at auction at Christie's London, 20th June 1994, lot 273.⁴ A handful of later imitations of these rare folding tables exist, probably made in the same workshop in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The sole known example of a full-size *Nanban* table (80.0 × 125.0 × 82.0 cm), which dismantles into sections, belonged to the collection of the Wilanów Castle in Poland and is now in the National Museum, Warsaw (inv. 986 Wil).⁵

The refined gold decoration applied to this rare dais table called *maki-e*, literally 'sprinkled picture', was common in Momoyama Period (1568–1600) and early Edo Japan. During this period, a special lacquerware made for export, which mixed mother-of-pearl inlay with *hiramaki-e*, was called *nanban makie* or *nanban shitsugei*. *Nanban* or *Nanban-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. *Nanban* has also become synonymous with the types of lacquerware and other products that were commissioned in Japan for the home market or export and reflected Western taste and were modelled after European prototypes, such as the present folding table, or included European iconography, namely depictions of Portuguese merchants, officials and missionaries. *Nanban*-style products thus combine Japanese techniques, materials and motifs with European styles and shapes. ✍ HMC

² PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, *Lacas Nanban em Portugal. Presença portuguesa no Japão*, Lisbon, Edições Inapa, 1990, p. 32, no. 65.

³ CRESPO, Hugo Miguel, *India in Portugal. A Time of Artistic Confluence* (cat.), Oporto, Bluebook, 2021, p. 42, cat. 21, on a Gujarati example.

⁴ IMPEY, Oliver, JÖRG, Christiaan J. A., *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005, p. 196. The authors seem to misidentify as two different examples the same piece (ills. 468 and 469), which is the table here discussed and which remains the sole example of a folding dais table with bow-shaped legs.

⁵ IDEM, p. 195.

A NANBAN WRITING CHEST

Cryptomeria japonica (?), lacquer, mother-of-pearl and gold; brass fittings

Japan; Momoyama period (1573–1615)

Dim.: 45.0 × 32.0 × 25.0 cm

F1333



Exceptional, rectangular shaped Nanban 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 jewels¹—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

¹ *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).²

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 as the 'seven jewels pattern', associated to these gods.

An exceptional example of Nanban 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*).³ ✎ BMS

² *Op. cit.*, BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 2001, p. 112.

³ Cf. BAIRD, Merrily, *Symbols of Japan: thematic motifs art and design*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 2001, p. 198.



87

A NANBAN CHEST

Black lacquered and gilt wood and mother-of-pearl; gilt copper fittings

Japan; Momoyama to Edo period, ca. 1580–1620

Dim.: 46.5 × 69.5 × 37.5 cm

F1248

Provenance: Private collection, Portugal.

This Japanese made, black lacquered (*urushi*) chest is characterised by dense gilt decoration (*maki-e*) with delicate mother-of-pearl inlaid ornamental motifs (*raden*). Its gilt copper fittings (*kazari-kanagu*), finely chiselled with floral motifs on a punctured ground, known as ‘fish roe’ (*nanakoji*), include a scalloped lock escutcheon (*aimeita*) and its latch, of peonies, or *botan* (*Paeonia suffruticosa*) and zoomorphic heads decoration, corner pieces of Japanese arrowroot, or *kudzu* (*Pueraria lobata*), with its characteristic foliage and tendrils, hinges of Japanese cherry blossom or *sakura* (*Prunus sp.*) and two side handles. Similarly to earlier lacquered Nanban furniture, its features large decorative panels framed by narrow borders of Nanban tendril motifs (*karacusa*).

On the frontal elevation a dense foliage composition of Empress Trees or *kiri* (*Paulownia tomentosa*) from which stands out a pair of Japanese Green Pheasant or *kiji* (*Phasianus versicolor*). On the cover, a similar arrangement with two birds, most likely alluding to a marital union, a symbolic reference common to many export chests, flying amongst flowers and Empress Trees.

The back panel features a composition of Bottle Gourd or *hisago* (*Lagenaria siceraria*), and the lateral elevations depictions of flowering trees including Japanese maple or *momizi* (*Acer palmatum*) and shrubby bush clove or *hagi* (*Lespedeza bicolor*). Once raised, the inner cover displays a delicately ornamented surface of golden Bottle Gourds, with their distinctive fruits that clearly contrasts with the plain black lacquered chest interior.

This sophisticated gilt decoration applied to the whole chest surface, known as *maki-e*, literally ‘sprinkled paint’, was common

in Japan during the Momoyama Period (1568–1600) as well as in the early Edo Period that ensued.¹

It is in this period, and in its mutual acculturation context, that a specific type of export lacquer emerges, combining mother-of-pearl inlays with decorative motifs known as *hiramaki-e*, referred to as *nanban makie* or *nanban shitsugei*. Nanban, or *Nanban-jin* (literally ‘Southern Barbarian’), is a Japanese expression, derived from Chinese, that described the Portuguese and Spanish merchants, missionaries and sailors that landed in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries. The expression became synonymous of the lacquers, and other goods commissioned in Japan, both for the internal market or for exporting, that reflected Western taste by copying European prototypes such as the present chest.

Lacquered Nanban objects, produced exclusively for exporting, combine Japanese techniques, materials and decorative motifs with European styles and shapes. Introduced in Japan by the Portuguese, these widely replicated domed chests were produced in a variety of sizes.² Often composed of smaller decorative panels separated by broad geometric borders, the rarest amongst them feature large single decorative compositions, such as is the case with the chest herewith described.

Similar examples can be found at Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda (inv. DAS M91), at Národní Muzeum, Prague (inv. 20611), whose collection includes a closely related casket (37.0 × 70.2 × 46.5 cm), and, albeit a smaller example (29.0 × 43.0 × 25.0 cm) with silver fittings, at the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, in Lisbon (inv. 98 Cx).³ *HMC*

¹ 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; Alexandra CURVELO, ‘Nanban 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.

² See: IMPEY, Oliver, JÖRG, Christiaan J. A., *Japanese Export Lacquer, 1580–1850*, Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2005, pp. 147–158.

³ See: PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes, (ed.), *Arte Nanban. 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.

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; ca. 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 Gonzáles 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.¹ In his adaptation of the Flemish print, Gonzáles 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.² 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.³ 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,⁴ 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

¹ 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.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ IDEM, pp. 123–129.



90

GIOVANNI COLA (ATTR.)**THE VIRGIN AND CHILD**

Oil on copper and ebony

Painting: Jesuit Painting Seminary; ca. 1590–1625; Frame: India, Goa; ca. 1650

Dim.: 36.0 × 27.5 cm

D1957

Provenance: R. Quintela collection, Portugal.

The composition of this oil painting on copper is reminiscent of a widely circulated engraving by Hieronymus Wierix (1553–1619).¹ Hieronymus's print, published before 1600, in turn, copies one of the most celebrated and venerated images of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as *Salus Populi Romani*, or 'Protectress of the Roman People', an ancient Roman Republic phrase used as a Marian title. This Byzantine icon, which, according to tradition, arrived in Rome in 590 and is now heavily overpainted, is kept in the Pauline (or Borghese) Chapel of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.² For centuries, this Late Antique icon was placed above the door of the baptistery chapel of the church, considered the third of the Roman patriarchal basilicas. Since 1240, it has been called *Regina Caeli*, or 'Queen of Heaven', and has occupied its present location since 1613. The image has been considered miraculous since the fifteenth century and was later used by the Jesuit Order to foster devotion to the Virgin, particularly through the Sodality of Our Lady movement. Also known as the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this Roman Catholic Marian society was founded in 1563 at the Roman College of the Jesuits and was composed especially of younger boys from the college. The choice of Mary as patron reflected a strong Marian devotion suited to the members' young age. Many sodalities of the Blessed Virgin were established at several Jesuit colleges, including those in Portuguese-ruled Asia.

The Byzantine icon at Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the most widely disseminated Christian images and among the so-called 'Luke images', is believed to have been painted from real life by St. Luke himself as a true likeness of the Virgin. Shown in three-quarter length, the standing figure of Mary is depicted as the 'Mother of God' or *Theotokos* (Θεοτόκος) in Greek, a title bestowed on her by the Council of Ephesus in 431. In the original Byzantine composition, the Virgin's right-hand crosses over the left, firmly securing the Child Jesus, who in turn blesses the viewer with his right hand while tucking a hefty volume (a Gospel Book) under his

left arm. Hieronymus's print closely follows the original, preserving the poses while slightly softening the figures' faces, particularly that of the Child Jesus, and arranging the drapery folds in a more naturalistic way. A painting of the *Salus Madonna* was brought from Rome in 1569 and gifted to Queen Catarina of Austria (1507–1578) by St. Francis Borgia, third Superior General of the Society of Jesus (r. 1565–1572).³ It was displayed in the royal chapel until the queen's death, when it was transferred to the Jesuit Church of S. Roque in accordance with her will.⁴ This and other copies were among the first made in Rome after Pope Pius V (r. 1566–1572) granted Borgia permission to paint from the original, prompting the global circulation of this iconography.

Only in the depiction of the Virgin's hieratic face does our painting on copper follow the Byzantine original. As in the icon, Mary is covered with a blue mantle over her head, marked by a Greek cross in gold on the forehead, with identical folds in her white wimple or veil—symbolising modesty and humility—worn underneath and covering her hair and most of the neck. The viewer drawn closer, with a more intimate composition that invites piety and serene contemplation. The naked Child Jesus, held closely by the Virgin, grasps an apple with his left hand while reaching his right hand towards his mother's shoulder. The apple symbolises Jesus as the 'New Adam', who will redeem humanity from sin, while the Virgin assumes the role of the 'New Eve', playing a pivotal role as the mother of Salvation. The face of Child Jesus, who looks lovingly up at his mother, seeking maternal consolation, is much softer than that of the Virgin. In contrast to the gilded background of the Byzantine icon, ours is painted pitch black, highlighting the golden, flaming halo of the Child and the simple, thick aureole of the Virgin. Except for the frontal view of the Virgin, the pose of the Child Jesus and that of his mother seems to derive from another sacred image, the so-called *Madonna del Pilone*, a fifteenth-century fresco also known as *Regina Montis Regalis*, in

¹ An example of the print belongs to the British Museum, London (1859,0709.3193). See MAUQUOUY-HENDRICKX, Marie, *Les Estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier. Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, 1978, pp. 151–142 (cat. 797, pl. 113).

² WOLF, Gerhard, 'Icons and Sites: Cult Images of the Virgin in mediaeval Rome', in VASSILAKI, Maria (ed.), *Images of the Mother of God. Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, Aldershot, England–Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 23–49.

³ The Museu de São Roque in Lisbon holds four versions of the *Salus Madonna*, including an oil painting on wood (145.0 × 109.0 cm), seemingly made in Portugal in the first half of the seventeenth century (inv. Pin. 32). It seems to be closer from Hieronymus's print, from which it likely derives. See MORNÁ, Teresa Freitas (ed.), *Museu de São Roque. Catálogo*, Lisbon, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, 2020, pp. 66–67 (catalogue entry by Teresa Freitas Morna). A painting on canvas (inv. Pin. 127), and also one on copper and set on a reliquary (inv. RI. 1214) have been identified, without certainty, with the one gifted by Borgia. While the canvas seems to have been modelled by a ca. 1598 engraving of the *Salus Madonna* by Giovanni Orlandi (fl. 1590–1640), the painting on copper seems to derive from Hieronymus's print.

⁴ GSCHWEND, Annemarie Jordan, 'Reliquias de los Habsburgo y conventos portugueses. El patronazgo religioso de Catalina de Austria', in RODRIGUÉZ, Miguel Ángel Zalama (ed.), *Juana I en Tordesillas. Su Mundo, Su Entorno*, Tordesillas, Ayuntamiento de Tordesillas, 2010, pp. 215–138, ref. p. 221.



the Sanctuary-Basilica in Mondovì near Vicoforte, a monumental church in Piedmont, northern Italy. In the late sixteenth century, the miraculous fresco attracted many pilgrims, prompting the basilica's construction, which began in 1596. A print copying the fresco, showing the Child dressed in a tunic and holding his hands together in prayer at the Virgin's lap, was published by an anonymous Flemish engraver ca. 1590–1640.⁵ As for the naked figure of the Child in maternal embrace with the Virgin, as well as certain hand placements, these may have been borrowed from an anonymous seventeenth-century print after a design by the Lombard painter Giulio Cesare Procaccini (1574–1625).⁶

The Goan origin of the superbly carved ebony frame—testament to the importance placed on the painting, enshrined in such costly and exotic hardwood—may be discerned through its vegetal scrolls, lotus-shaped rosettes, and intricate mouldings. Although less refined in carving quality, a close comparison may be made with two surviving carved wooden frames in polychrome teak, highlighted by gold leaf, housed in the Museum of Christian Art, Old Goa (invs. 02.1.12 and 02.1.13).⁷ Made to frame two seventeenth-century religious paintings once housed in the sixteenth-century Church of the Saviour of the World in Loutulim, Goa, these frames similarly feature vegetal decoration and large rosettes. Unlike softer teak, ebony, with its finer grain, allows for much more precise carving. The origin of the painting is more challenging to determine. Painted on a thick and perfectly smooth sheet of copper, its brushwork is of remarkable quality and could only have been executed by a well-trained European painter, probably Italian. The painting's softness and delicacy are reminiscent of the style of Luis de Morales (1510/1511–1584), a Spanish painter who eventually settled in Badajoz, close to the Portuguese border. Morales was deeply influenced by Raphael (1483–1520) and the Lombard school of Leonardo (1452–1519).⁸ Catering to the demand

for smaller religious paintings intended for private, intimate devotion, Morales painted *tablillas* ('small panels') in the 1560s and 1570s, depicting *The Virgin and Child* in compositions similar to ours.

Likely made at the turn of the seventeenth century, our painting may have been created in Europe and brought to Asia in the luggage of a Jesuit missionary, or alternatively, executed in Asia by an Italian or Italianate painter. In Portugal, the Jesuits engaged talented painters such as André Reinoso (fl. 1610–1650), who around 1619 produced a series on the life of St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) for the sacristy of the Church of St. Roch in Lisbon.⁹ In the context of the Asian missions, particularly in Japan, the order could rely on the skills of the Italian Jesuit painter Giovanni Cola (1560–1626), who established a Painting Seminary in 1590.¹⁰ Settled in various places in Kyushu, the southernmost Japanese island, the seminary was eventually transferred to Macao in 1614 due to the escalating Christian persecutions and the expulsion of the missionaries. Several surviving loose paintings, mostly on copper and sometimes framed in lacquered portable oratories, are attributed to Cola his Asian disciples. One such work, comparable in quality to ours, depicts the Virgin and Child in a close maternal embrace, with the Child Jesus tenderly caressing his mother's chin with his left hand. Broken in two and exhibiting many abrasions to the painted surface (24.2 × 19.4 cm, with frame), it is housed in the Tokyo National Museum (inv. C-699). Another devotional painting (24.2 × 22.7 cm) in the same museum (inv. C-700) bears an even closer resemblance in its finer brushwork, particularly in the modelling of the Child Jesus's face and the highlights on the skin tones. It is plausible that this painting in Tokyo, despite its sadly damaged condition, and ours were executed by the same artist.

These Christian paintings, preserved in Japan almost as relics, likely arrived in Asia from Europe in significant numbers, though some may have been produced in Japan and Macao, either

⁵ An example of this print in the collection of the British Museum (1868,0612.390).

⁶ An example of this print in the collection of the British Museum (1837,0408.575).

⁷ PINTO, Maria Helena Mendes et al., *Museum of Christian Art. Convent of Santa Monica, Goa, India*. Museu de Arte Cristã. Convento de Santa Mónica, Goa, Índia, Lisbon, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2011, pp. 135–137, and pp. 226–227.

⁸ GÓMEZ, Leticia Ruiz (ed.), *The Divine Morales* (cat.), Madrid, Museo Nacional de Prado, 2015.

⁹ SERRÃO, Vítor, 'André Reinoso (c. 1590–pós 1650), um pintor de fama para a fama de São Francisco Xavier', in MORNA, Teresa Freitas, TRIGUEIROS, António Júlio, COUTINHO, Maria João Pereira (eds.), *Missão, Espiritualidade e Arte em São Francisco Xavier*, Lisbon, Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, 2020, pp. 50–91.

¹⁰ For Cola's biography, see Diego Pacheco, 'Giovanni Cola, S.J. (Nicolao), el hombre que hizo florecer las piedras', in *Temas de Estética y Arte*, 17 (2003), pp. 104–116; and GUTIÉRREZ, Fernando García, 'Giovanni Cola (Joao Nicolao). Un hombre del renacimiento italiano trasplantado a Japón', in *Mirai. Estudios Japoneses*, 2 (2018), pp. 3–19. The first and classic publication on Cola's Painting Seminary is by SCHURHAMMER, Georg, 'Die Jesuitenmissionare des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts und ihr Einfluß auf die japanische Malerei', in *Jubiläumsband Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, 1 (1933), pp. 116–126. More recent contributions include: VLAM, Grace Alida Hermine, *Western-style Secular Painting in Momoyama Japan*, PhD dissertation in History of Art, University of Michigan, 1976; BAILEY, Gauvin Alexander, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999, pp. 66–72; CURVELO, Alexandra, 'Nagasaki. An European artistic city in early modern Japan', in *Bulletin of Portuguese-Japanese Studies*, 2 (2001), pp. 23–35; CURVELO, Alexandra, 'A Culture In-Between: Materiality and Visuality in the Christian Mission in Japan in the Early Modern Age', in CURVELO, Alexandra, CATTANEO, Angelo (eds.), *Interactions Between Rivals. The Christian Mission and Buddhist Sects in Japan (c. 1549–1647)*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021, pp. 239–273; and MONTANARI, Riccardo, 'The Art of the Jesuit Mission in 16th-Century Japan: The Italian Painter Giovanni Cola and the Technological Transfer at the Painting Seminario in Arie', in *Eikón Imago*, 11 (2022), pp. 119–127.

by Giovanni Cola himself or by his most proficient Japanese and Chinese pupils. His students' work, on one hand, often copied the European models provided by Cola quite mechanically, while on the other, displayed a local Asian aesthetic—a dual influence evident in the surviving works attributed to them. It is plausible that our painting was created by Cola, either before his arrival in Asia, during his brief stay in Goa before departing to Macao in 1582, in Japan where he arrived the following year, or after his return to Macao in 1614, where he remained until his death in 1626. Such an attribution would account not only for the painting's high-quality brushwork but also for its original composition, even if partly inspired by contemporary engravings. The dependence of the Painting Seminary on engravings by the Wierix brothers is well established. When the Jesuit bishop of Japan, Pedro Martins (1591–1598), visited the seminary in 1596, then located in Arie, a painting of *The Virgin and Child* captured the attention of the visiting party. It was described as following the model brought from Italy, referred to as the 'Virgin of St. Luke', a clear allusion to the *Salus Madonna*.¹¹

Determining this attribution definitively is challenging due to the complete absence of securely attributed works by Giovanni Cola. The best candidate is a small painting on copper decorating the door of the tabernacle at the high altar of the Jesuit College in Marchena near Seville, Spain.¹² The college, known as *Colegio de la Encarnación*, was closely connected with the Japanese mission and received relics of the twenty-six martyrs of Japan, killed in 1597. Known as *La Virgen del Amparo*, this painting closely follows an engraving by Hieronymus Wierix depicting *The Virgin and the Sleeping Child Jesus* (or *The Sleep of Jesus*).¹³ This touching composition, published by Wierix in five variations, was particularly appreciated in Japan, judging by the numerous surviving paintings on copper—often within their original lacquered portable oratory—that were likely produced in the Painting Seminary.¹⁴ In contrast to these works, the painting in Marchena stands out for its more delicate brushwork, higher quality, and slight variations introduced by the artist, such as the positioning of the Child Jesus's arms and the folds of drapery. A close comparison between the

painting in Marchena and ours suggests that both could plausibly have been painted by the same talented artist. Despite the marked differences in size, with the miniature-like painting in Marchena being considerably smaller, the brushwork on the flesh tones, the highlights modelling anatomical details, the lips of both figures, and the golden curls of the Child Jesus are identical, as is the unique, personal way of depicting the fingers with their whiter, highlighted tips. Decorative aspects, such as the engraving-like overdrawing in gold on the brightly coloured folds of drapery in the smaller painting, are absent from ours.

The Jesuits, as key agents of the Catholic Reformation, played a central role in globally disseminating the iconography of the *Salus Populi Romani*.¹⁵ Although Hieronymus Wierix's small, highly portable engraving significantly aided its spread, earlier prints had already paved the way. In 1589, a decade prior, an anonymous engraver's print was published by Marcello Clodio, featuring a central depiction of the icon surrounded by nine scenes illustrating the history of Santa Maria Maggiore from its founding to the pontificate of Sixtus V (r. 1585–1590).¹⁶ The global circulation of such printed sources inspired numerous depictions of the *Salus Madonna* in various media by local artists across Asia, from India to Japan. A notable example, preserved in Japan yet considered of European origin, is an oil painting on copper in poor condition (17.3 × 13.9 cm, with frame), also housed in the Tokyo National Museum (inv. C-695). Despite surface damage, it is apparent that it faithfully reproduces Hieronymus's engraving, though its painting style and brushwork are less refined than ours. Blending the miraculous *Salus Madonna* imagery from Rome with elements of the *Madonna del Pilone* from the Piedmont, our appears to convey a unique, original composition. This work, possibly attributable to the Jesuit painter Giovanni Cola, stands as a testament to the brilliance of Jesuit art in Portuguese-influenced Asia. ✎ HMC

¹¹ The event is described in the yearly letter (*Carta Annua*) of 1596. See McCALL, John E., 'Early Jesuit Art in the Far East. I: Pioneers', in *Artibus Asiae* 10.2 (1947), pp. 121–137, ref. p. 133.

¹² For this plausible attribution, see GUTIÉRREZ, Fernando García, 'Giovanni Cola (Joao Nicolao). Un hombre del renacimiento italiano trasplantado a Japón', in *Mirai. Estudios Japoneses*, 2 (2018), pp. 10–13.

¹³ An example of this print belongs to the British Museum (inv. 1859,0709.3030). See MAUQUOUY-HENDRICKX, Marie, *Les Estampes des Wierix conservées au Cabinet des Estampes de la Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier. Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert Ier, 1978, pp. 82–83 (cats. 459–46, and 464, pl. 60).

¹⁴ A fine example now belongs to the Kyushu National Museum in Dazaifu (inv. H5). See BAILEY, Gavin Alexander, *Art on the Jesuit Missions in Asia and Latin America, 1542–1773*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999, fig. 31.

¹⁵ MOCHIZUKI, Mia M., 'Sacred Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction: The Salus Populi Romani Madonna in the World', in KAYO, Hirakawa (ed.), *Sacred and Profane in Early Modern Art*, Kyoto, Kyoto University, 2016, pp. 129–144.

¹⁶ An example of this print belongs to the British Museum (inv. 1947,0319.26.78).

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. ↗

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.¹

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.² 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.



¹ 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.

² See: 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.

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 chiselled 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.³ 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.⁴ In Oporto, between 1694 and 1769, Municipal 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.⁵

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,⁶ 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).⁷ 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,⁸ 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

³ 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).

⁴ 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.

⁵ SANTOS, Reynaldo dos, QUILHÓ, Maria Irene, *Os primeiros punções de Lisboa e Porto*, Belas-Artes, 6, 1953, pp. 11–22.

⁶ SILVA, Nuno Vassallo e, *Salsarium. Uma obra única em cristal de rocha*, Lisbon, AR-PAB, 2012, pp. 29–32.

⁷ D'OREY, Leonor, *Ourivesaria*, Lisbon, Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva, 1998, pp. 60–62.

⁸ IDEM, pp. 42–43.



KING D. FERNANDO II SILVER DISH

Silver

Iberian Colonial; 17th century

Dim.: 37.8 × 38.0 × 4.0 cm; Weight: 1115.0 g

B300

*Inscriptions: crowned Gothic 'F' on the centre front; '19' on the centre back.**Provenance: King D. Fernando II collection.**Published: XAVIER, Hugo, "Propriedade Minha", ourivesaria, marfins e esmaltes da colecção de D. Fernando II, p. 324.*

While the 19th and 20th century provenance of this dish, described in the past as a salver or presentation dish, is well known, its geographical origin is more difficult to ascertain. In the recently published 1866 handwritten inventory of his silver, ivory and enamel collections, King Fernando II of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (1816–1885), consort to the Portuguese Queen Maria II (r. 1826–1828 and 1834–1853), records it as 'a silver salver [heavily decorated] in openwork. Probably a late sixteenth-century Spanish work. Nicely crafted and pleasing piece. Acquired from R. Pinto.— my property'.¹ The king's private property rather than the Crown's, the dish is deemed by the king to be Spanish and dating from the sixteenth century. As a mark of ownership it was centrally burin engraved with Fernando II personal cypher, a crowned Gothic script capital 'F', as well as marked to the back with the inventory number '19'.

The dish had been bought from Raimundo José Pinto (1807–1859) a renowned Lisbon based goldsmith who, as a close friend to the monarch, acted often as his artistic agent.² Although Fernando II collected a wide range of objects and typologies, it is clear that antique silver, namely 16th century Portuguese, was dear to his heart and took centre stage in his collecting pursuits.³ While the fruit dish was most certainly acquired before Pinto's death in 1859, nothing is known of its previous ownership. Raimundo José Pinto, who mainly dealt in antique silver and gold jewellery, had

undoubtedly benefited from the suppression of religious orders and from the dissolution of the monasteries that had been decreed in 1834 following the Portuguese Civil War. Additionally, the many Portuguese aristocratic families in dire need of revenue after the war, did also provide a steady, ready to buy supply of desirable objects, many of which would eventually find their way abroad during the troublesome period that ensued.

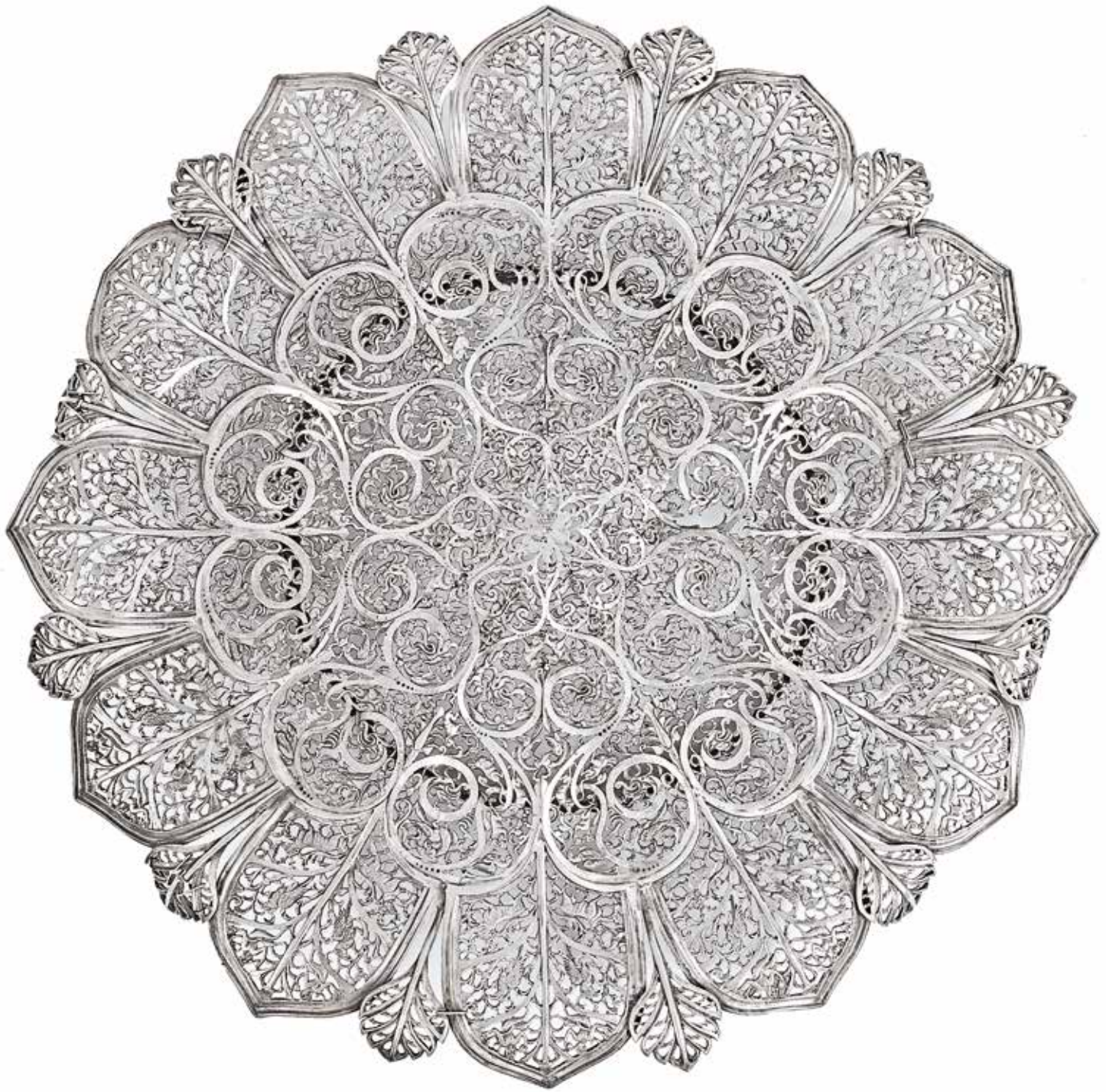
Alongside many other of his possessions, the fruit dish was photographed in 1866 by Charles Thurston Thompson (1816–1868) at the King's Palace of Necessidades home, in Lisbon (fig. 1). Promoted by the South Kensington Museum, founded in 1852 and predecessor of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, these series of photographs are now the most complete and ambitious photographic records of art objects that were undertaken in 19th century Portugal. Collated and published as an album, they provide a thorough visual record of Fernando II private collection, as well as of other Crown silver and gold pieces, which were displayed or safe kept at the Royal Palaces of Necessidades and of Ajuda.⁴ A photographic print of the dish can be seen at the above mentioned London Museum (inv. 58563). Its description reads: 'Salver, or fruit-tray, perforated with arabesque ornament, honeysuckle-points in the margin; silver. Probably Indian work of the 16th or 17th century. In the Royal Palace of the Necessidades at Lisbon'. Although identified by the king as probably

¹ See XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Colecção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, p. 324.

² On Raimundo Pinto, see XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Colecção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, pp. 141–158.

³ On King Fernando II's collecting, see XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Colecção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, pp. 25–92.

⁴ On this photographic campaign, see XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Colecção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, pp. 93–114.



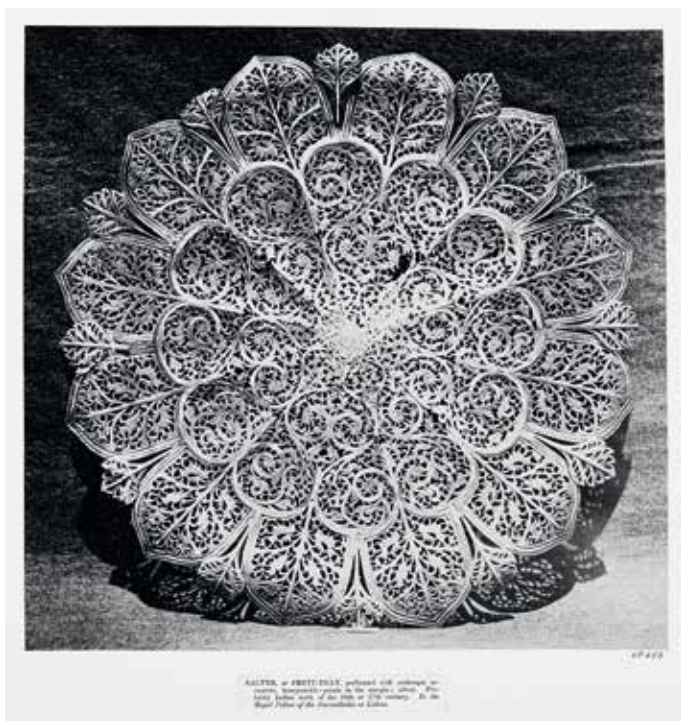


FIG. 1
Charles Thurston Thompson, Fruit
dish, Palace of *Necessidades*, Lisbon,
1866; albumen print with printed
label (55.0 × 47.0 cm). Victoria and
Albert Museum, London, inv. 58563.

Spanish, this other attribution admits the possibility of it being Indian and dated more broadly as to encompass the seventeenth century. The English labelling was likely prepared beforehand by the museum curator, John Charles Robinson (1824–1913), during his preparatory trip through Portugal.⁵ It is curious to note that the king's engraved cypher is not visible in the photograph, and may have been a later addition. Against the dark background it is however possible to see a large square label applied to the dish's back. The ring foot, on the contrary, is not identifiable.

It is also possible that the dish herewith described is the one referred in the king's *postmortem* inventory (*Inventário Orfanológico*) compiled in 1886 which, in the section regarding the King's Private Office, the *Gabinete d'El Rey*, records under number 2439 a 'filigree salver from the eighteenth century, thirty-eight centimetres in diameter

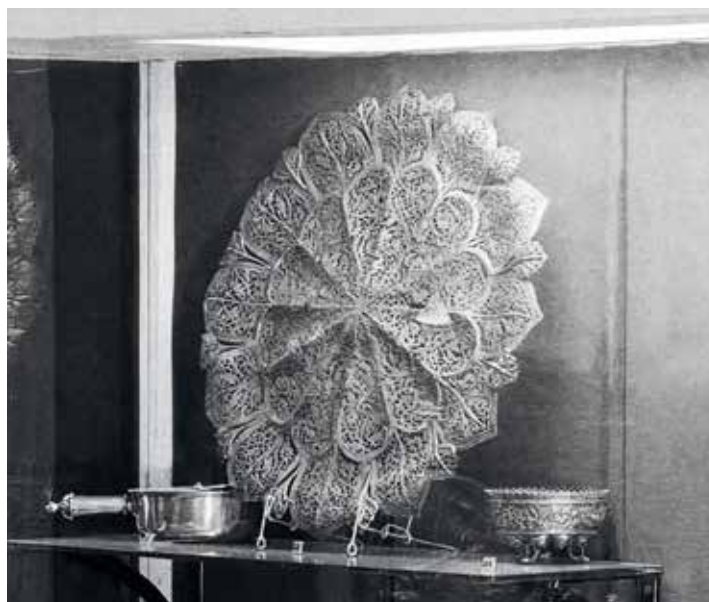
marked with the number two thousand and two hundred and seventy one. Valued at one hundred and eighty thousand reis'.⁶ This 'salver' was auctioned in 1893 under that same number and recorded in the 1892 published sale catalogue.⁷ Its whereabouts unknown until 1949, it was shown in that same year at the *Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa*, an exhibition of antique and contemporary Portuguese silver promoted at Oporto by the *Grémio dos Industriais de Ourivesaria do Norte*.⁸ From the exhibition catalogue we know that it belonged to Arthur de Sandão, a renowned Decorative Arts expert, collector and director of the *Museu Municipal de Viana do Castelo*, who published various works on Portuguese faience and furniture. In a photograph (figs. 2–3) from the archives of Fotografia Alvão Lda., an Oporto based photographic studio founded in 1901 by Domingos Alvão, now kept at the Centro Português de Fotografia,

⁵ See XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Coleção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, p. 114.

⁶ *Arquivo Distrital de Lisboa, Tribunal Judicial da Comarca de Lisboa, Caixa 1, Inventário Orfanológico de D. Fernando II, 2.º Volume, f. 859r*. It is not unusual for openwork objects to be misidentified as filigree work, most notably because of the unfamiliarity with the techniques of the people usually charged with the appraisal and inventory of these objects. Note how the measurements coincide perfectly with those of the present fruit dish.

⁷ *Catálogo dos bens mobiliários existentes no Real Palacio das Necessidades pertencentes á herança de Sua Magestade El-Rei o Sr. D. Fernando e que hão de ser vendidos em leilão*, Lisbon, Typ. e Lith. Papelaria Progresso, 1892. On this auction, see XAVIER, Hugo, 'Propriedade Minha'. *Ourivesaria, Marfins e Esmaltes da Coleção de D. Fernando II*, Sintra, Parques de Sintra-Monte da Lua, 2022, pp. 305–307.

⁸ *Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa*, Oporto, Grémio dos Industriais de Ourivesaria do Norte, 1949.



FIGS. 2 AND 3
Fotografia Alvão, Photo of the
Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa,
 Oporto, 1949; glass negative
 (13.0 × 18.0 cm). Centro Português
 de Fotografia, Lisbon, inv. PT/CPF/
 ALV/018199.

it is possible to identify the present dish amongst other, mostly 17th and 18th century, Portuguese silver objects.⁹ Until recently the dish belonged to the *Ateneu Comercial do Porto* alongside other Arthur de Sandão artworks, namely his Portuguese faience collection, and subsequently to an Oporto private collection.

Careful analysis of the object provides a better understanding of its manufacture techniques. The dish is made from various cast sections soldered together and set on a similarly made openwork ring foot. Considering the rugged appearance, the individual sections may have been sand cast or, albeit more unlikely, cast by lost wax. This may be assessed from the various casting issues detected, such as porosity, defects like fins and burrs, unevenness or excessive silver flow filling the inside of the openwork, etc.

The central rosette is composed of twelve panels following a mirrored design, while the rim is adorned by twelve large leaf-shaped sections soldered to the central rosette, with twelve smaller leaf-shaped motifs alternating with the larger sections. The central rosette and the rim feature a repeating mirrored pattern of scrolling vines, real and imaginary animals and figures (birds, dogs and snails, fruit eating squirrels, dragon heads and fruit eating human figures perched on branches). This ‘arabesque’ design,

albeit reminiscent of more exotic patterns, is however European in style and in execution.

The minuteness of the workmanship may explain some fractures in the silver panels, resulting from the casting process, which were resolved with ancient restorations using metal wire that we can see in the 1866 photograph. The style of the casting panels resembles similar elements also produced in this way, mainly wings of chimerical form that we see in objects with 17th century mounts (precious ceramics and hardstone vessels), these are invariably cast en ronde bosse.

The present fruit dish is a significant testimony of the collecting pursuits of one of the finest 19th century art connoisseurs, King Fernando II of Portugal, who amassed an important collection of 16th century Portuguese silver that rivalled that belonging to the Crown. *HMC*

⁹ Centro Português de Fotografia, Lisbon, *Fotografia Alvão*, Depósito Geral, 18199 (glass negative).

GADROONED SALVERS

Coinciding with most decorative arts subjects, Portuguese seventeenth century goldsmithing, particularly after 1650, reprises its national identity. However, following from the country's isolation on account of the 1580 dynastic union under the Spanish Crown, and the subsequent 1640 restoration of independence, economic decline, and the inherent sumptuary restrictions, led to an art production of austere and restrained aesthetic qualities.

Nevertheless, given that the three sequential 'Spanish reigns' do not correspond to a homogeneous block nor to a financial hardship period, patrons' tastes, and the purposes for which the objects were created, should be better studied to develop a better understanding of contemporary Portuguese goldsmithing typologies and ornamental grammars.¹


In Portugal's turbulent 17th century, the exaltation of religious fervour did contribute to an increase in silverwork commissions, but the various national vicissitudes, allied to the obedient acceptance of Tridentine doctrine, had an evident impact on the production of precious metal daily use objects.² Thereby, 1600s metropolitan art evolved between two, apparently opposed, stylistic tendencies.

Oscillating between the sobriety of plain surfaces and the unrestrained baroque exuberance, both aesthetic concepts do endow this historic period with its specific singularity and momentum, while simultaneously evidencing the coexistence of two distinctive tastes.³ The former trend, favouring an almost total lack of decoration, in order to allow the objects to simply shine by themselves without resorting to superfluous ornamentation,⁴ illustrates a preference that was rare in contemporary overseas goldsmithing production.⁵

But, then as now, plainness was directly correlated to cost reduction, in a production whose specialised labour demands had considerable impact on the final price, thus becoming a determining factor in understanding the preference for such undecorated items. These objects were, nonetheless, produced for current use in noble and wealthy homes, and contrasted with those destined for celebratory events and grand occasions, evermore opulent and ornamented.⁶

It is amongst this plainly decorated production that it is possible to fit the extant group of gadrooned salvers. These large dishes existed in considerable quantities and must be appraised for their simplicity and for their intense decorative impact, related to the continuous repetition of the broad and deep gadroons.⁷ In sum, they embody the 'triumph of shape'.⁸

Manufactured from the early 1600s, perhaps even earlier, the production of these sophisticated salvers extends throughout the early decades of the 18th century, in parallel with the reigns of Kings Pedro II (r. 1683–1706) and João V (r. 1706–1750), as a reminiscence of ancient 2nd century Roman prototypes.⁹ The number of featured gadroons is variable, although it often falls between eight and sixteen, exceptionally thirty and, although some salvers are unmarked, many feature hallmarks from the late 17th or early 18th centuries.¹⁰

The discreet beauty of these large dishes is enhanced by their solid, restrained, and smooth shape, as well as by their proportions, combined with the light reflections projected from their deep gadroons and undulating scalloped outlines, which confer them an exceptional aesthetic quality that the presence of ornamentation would diminish and suppress. 

¹ BRANCO, Pedro Aguiar, *Prataria do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal*, Lisbon: VOC, 2009, p. 46.

² COUTO, João; GONÇALVES, António M., *A Ourivesaria em Portugal*, Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1960, pp.139–140.

³ *Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa e Francesa*, Lisbon: Fundação Ricardo do Espírito Santo Silva, 1955, pp. 14–15.

⁴ SOUSA, Gonçalo Vasconcelos e, *Pratas Portuguesas em Coleções Particulares Séc. XVI ao Séc. XX*, 1998, pp. 13–15.

⁵ SANTOS, Reynaldo dos; QUILHÓ, Irene, *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleções Particulares*, Lisbon: 1974, pp. 20–25, p. 172.

⁶ BRANCO, Pedro Aguiar, *Prataria do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal*, p. 46.

⁷ SOUSA, Gonçalo Vasconcelos e, *Pratas Portuguesas em Coleções Particulares Séc. XVI ao Séc. XX*, pp. 13–15.

⁸ *Exposição de Ourivesaria Portuguesa e Francesa*, pp. 14–15.

⁹ SANTOS, Reynaldo dos; QUILHÓ, Irene, *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleções Particulares*, pp. 20–25, p. 172.

¹⁰ BRANCO, Pedro Aguiar, *Prataria do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal*, p. 46.

A GADROONED SANTARÉM CITY MARK SALVER

Portuguese silver

Santarém; 17th–early 18th century

Makers mark AM

Diam.: 27.5 cm; Weight: 337.0 g

B201

*Identical examples: ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, 'Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)', IN-CM, 1995, S1, S26.**Certificate of Authenticity: Sofia Ruival and Henrique Braga.*

Round, beaten silver sheet salver. Undecorated and of raised and scalloped edge, it is defined by fourteen concave and grooved centripetal sections encircling a plain reeded frame. The SVR^º ownership mark is engraved to the plain central roundel.

To the dish underside, the stamped goldsmith mark MA (S30.0)¹ and an assay-mark, datable to the late 17th or early 18th century, attributable to the cities of Santarém or Setúbal (S1.0).² In addition to this salver, only six other objects have so far been recorded with identical maker's mark, thus turning it into a rare

example of silverware produced by a goldsmith's from one of two possible Portuguese cities. The Museum of Evora, in the Southern Alentejo region, keeps in its collection a salver with identical assay mark.³

Referring an equally shaped dish from the Ricardo Espírito Santo Silva Foundation, the Art Historian Leonor d'Orey stated: 'a superb type of salver common in our 1600s silver production, made in plain beaten silver sheet, with no decoration, and raised and scalloped edge (...)'.⁴

¹ ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon, IN-CM, 2018, S30.0, p. 344.

² IDEM, S1.0, p. 339.

³ *Inventário do museu de Évora, Coleção de Ourivesaria*, Évora: I. P. de Museus, 1993, pp. 266–267.

⁴ D'OREY, Leonor, *Ourivesaria*, Lisbon, Fundação Ricardo Espírito Santo Silva, 1998, p. 37.

**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.¹

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.²

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 1937.³

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.⁴

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

¹ ÁGUAS, Neves, ‘Introdução’, in CASTANHOSO, Miguel de, *História das cousas que o mui esforçado (...)*, Lisbon: Europa-América, pp. 9–12.

² MARCUS, Harold G., *A History of Ethiopia*, Los Angeles: U. California Press, pp.130–153.

³ *Puttick & Simpson*, Londres: Museu Britânico, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG42825>.

⁴ *Haile Selassie lets silver go at auction*, New York: The New York Times, December 22nd, 1936.

A 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

Diam.: 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),¹ 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 1750.² 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 1718.³ *MSP*

¹ ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, P12.0, p. 219.

² SOUSA, Gonçalo de Vasconcelos e, *Dicionário de Ourives e Lavrantes da Prata do Porto*, Lisbon: Civilização Editora, 2005, p.44–45.

³ ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, P487.0, p. 314.

95

A 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

Diam.: 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,¹ 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.² 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.³

Attributable to Gabriel de Figueiredo, the goldsmith's mark F (A11.0),⁴ 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

¹ 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.

² BRANCO, Pedro Aguiar, *Prataria do Século XVI ao Século XIX em Portugal*, Oporto: V.O.C. Antiguidades, 2009, p. 50.

³ SANTOS, Reynaldo dos; QUILHÓ, Irene, *Ourivesaria Portuguesa nas Coleções Particulares*, Lisbon: 1974, p. 139, no. 171.

⁴ ALMEIDA, Fernando Moitinho de, *Marcas de Pratas Portuguesas e Brasileiras (Século XV a 1887)*, Lisbon: IN-CM, 2018, A11.0, p. 26.



A PAIR OF PORTUGUESE BOARS HEADS TUREENS

Moulded faience

Portugal, 'Real Fábrica do Rato'; Tomás Brunetto period (1767–1771)

Dim.: 26.0 × 36.0 × 27.0 cm

Stamped: F.R. TB.

C735



A pair of boar head shaped faience tureens, decorated in cobalt blue and manganese oxide pigments on a tin white enamelled surface (A). The tureens cover corresponds to the upper section of the boars' heads and feature the semi-perked up ears, and oval shaped milky white coloured eyes of manganese brown irises, surrounded by a watery shade of blue (A).

From the base container stands out the animal's blue shaded snout (A), as well as the mouth of visible teeth, from which emerge a pair of large, white enamelled, protruding tusks. The deep nostrils, closed and circular, are white.

The monogrammed marks 'F.R. TB', corresponding to the *Fábrica do Rato* production under the directorship of Tomás Brunetto, are clearly visible on the underside of the cover in (A) and in the container interior in (B).

Following from the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck Lisbon in 1755, the city's reconstruction had become a practical exercise in the implementation of the Enlightenment ideals, which were evidenced by the extensive reforms imposed by the Kingdom's chief minister, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquess of Pombal (1699–1782). It was also Pombal's decision to establish this ceramic manufacture in Lisbon, with the purpose of 'competing with the best European productions' and, therefore, to restrain the importing of luxury goods from abroad.

Tomás Brunetto, the Italian master whose name features in these tureens, presided over the creation of this royal enterprise in 1767, leading its artistic development for a period of approximately 5 years. The *Fábrica do Rato* would play a major role in Portuguese ceramic production, becoming a milestone for the artistic tendencies it embraced and developed, as well as for the number of craftsmen that it trained and employed. It was the first manufacture established under State patronage, joining the existing Silk Factory¹ acquired by the crown in 1750.

Brunetto imprinted a very personal character to the creations that he supervised, his 'factory' project resulting in the development of modern processes that reflected the earliest attempts at industrialization in its field.² As such, his leadership embodied one of the highest and brightest moments in Portuguese ceramic production. In technological terms, the decision of increasing the use of plaster moulds³ enabled the manufacturing of a wider variety of three-dimensional objects, as well as securing a serial production. However, despite the undeniable higher quality of the clays, glazes and pigments used, the ornamentation remained close to the traditional faience techniques of high fired colours fixed in a second firing.

The various typologies of both utilitarian and luxury objects produced under Brunetto demonstrate an evident creative exper-

¹ QUEIRÓS, José, *Cerâmica Portuguesa e Outros Estudos*, Editorial Presença, Barcarena, 2002 (4th ed.), p. 66.

² IDEM.

³ MADUREIRA, Nuno Luís, 'Informação e Gestão na Real Fábrica de Louça', in PAIS, Alexandre Nobre, MONTEIRO, João Pedro, HENRIQUES, *Real Fábrica de Louça ao Rato* (Cat.), M.N.A. and M.N.S.R., Lisbon and Oporto, 2003, p. 113.





imentation of formats and decorations, which followed those of the major contemporary European faience and porcelain productions, and of the eastern porcelain exporters, such as China and Japan. From these diverse influences emerged a variety of objects characterised by modern international tastes. Nonetheless, the adoption of such foreign prototypes did not corrupt the factory's production, from which consistently stands out the Portuguese matrix, imbued of emotive strength and creative interpretation.

From the various innovations introduced by Tomás Brunetto the 'Louça de Fantasia'—the fancy wares of naturalistic iconography representing animals and vegetables to which belong our boar head tureens, is probably the most striking. They reflect a model introduced between 1748 and 1753 by Paul Antoine Hanning at the Strasburg Faience Factory, which became widespread throughout Europe and eventually copied in porcelain by the Chinese potters,⁴ the latter being perhaps the prototype that was replicated in Portugal.

The Marquess of Pombal was possibly the first patron to acquire Rato produced objects, taking onto himself to become an example for the whole Portuguese court. According to the manufactory's inventories, a total of twelve boar heads, then referred as 'pig heads', were acquired from the Royal Ceramic Wares Factory

between 1769–1770, amongst which is mentioned one purchased by the Marquess of Marialva⁵ and others by the Viscounts of Asseca.⁶

Throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance Period the remains of hunted animals were used to adorn ceremonial tables. In the 18th century, due to changing dietary and ceremonial banqueting practices within the Portuguese aristocracy and wealthy bourgeoisie, this practice does eventually come to an end. Stews and pâtés prepared with meats and vegetables would then become fashionable, being served in exceptional faience sets that comprised of splendid zoomorphic tureens and other equally exuberant serving paraphernalia.

From amongst the most iconic examples of this period stand out the renowned and singular 'pigs heads', or boar tureens, by Tomás Brunetto. The displaying of such exuberant and theatrical objects on a dinner table conferred a joyful and unexpected visual impact that surely invited to the enjoyment of the delicacies held within. ✎ TP

⁴ In 1763, VOC, the Dutch United East India Company, commissioned in China a total of 25 boar head tureens and, in the following year, another 19. Cf.: PINTO DE MATOS, Maria Antónia, *Cerâmica da China. Coleção RA*, Jorge Welsh Books–Publishers and Booksellers, London, 2011, p. 117.

⁵ A.N.T.T. 1769—*Livro 938 (19 de Setembro) Apud PAIS*, Alexandre Nobre; MONTEIRO, João Pedro; HENRIQUES, Paulo, *Real Fabrica de Louça ao Rato* (Cat.), M.N.A. and M.N.S.R., Lisbon and Oporto, 2003, p. 117.

⁶ QUEIRÓS, José, *Cerâmica Portuguesa e Outros Estudos*, Editorial Presença, Barcarena, 2002 (4th ed.), p. 66.



(A)



(B)



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