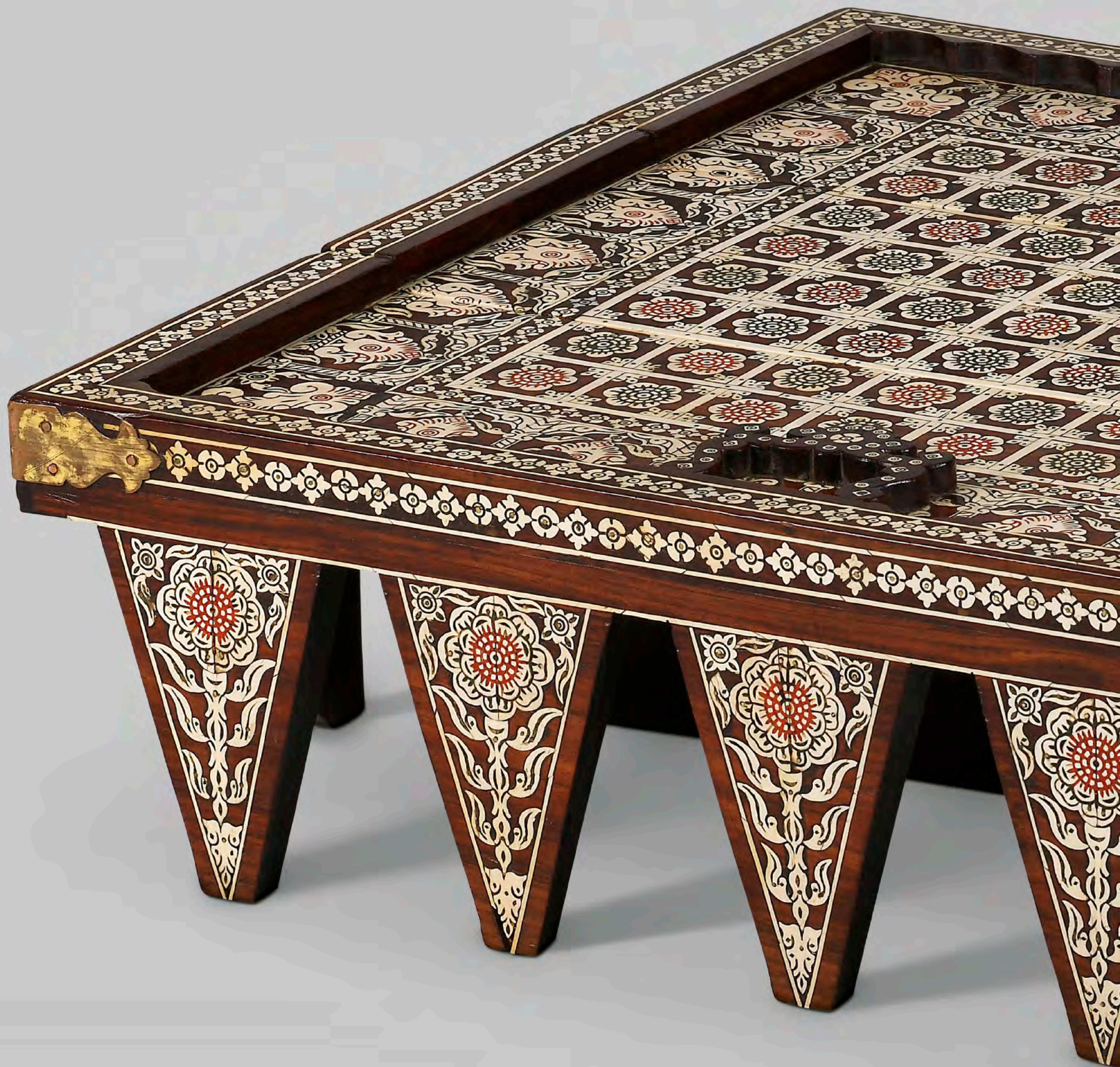
The RA Collection of

CROSS-CULTURAL WORKS OF ART

A Collector's Vision



Helder Carita
Alexandra Curvelo
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Fernando António Baptista Pereira
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THE STRANGE POWER OF OBJECTS.

ART AND THE EUROPEAN MARITIME EXPANSION (16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES)

Alexandra Curvelo

'The strange power of art is sometimes it can show that what people have in common is more urgent than what differentiates them'.

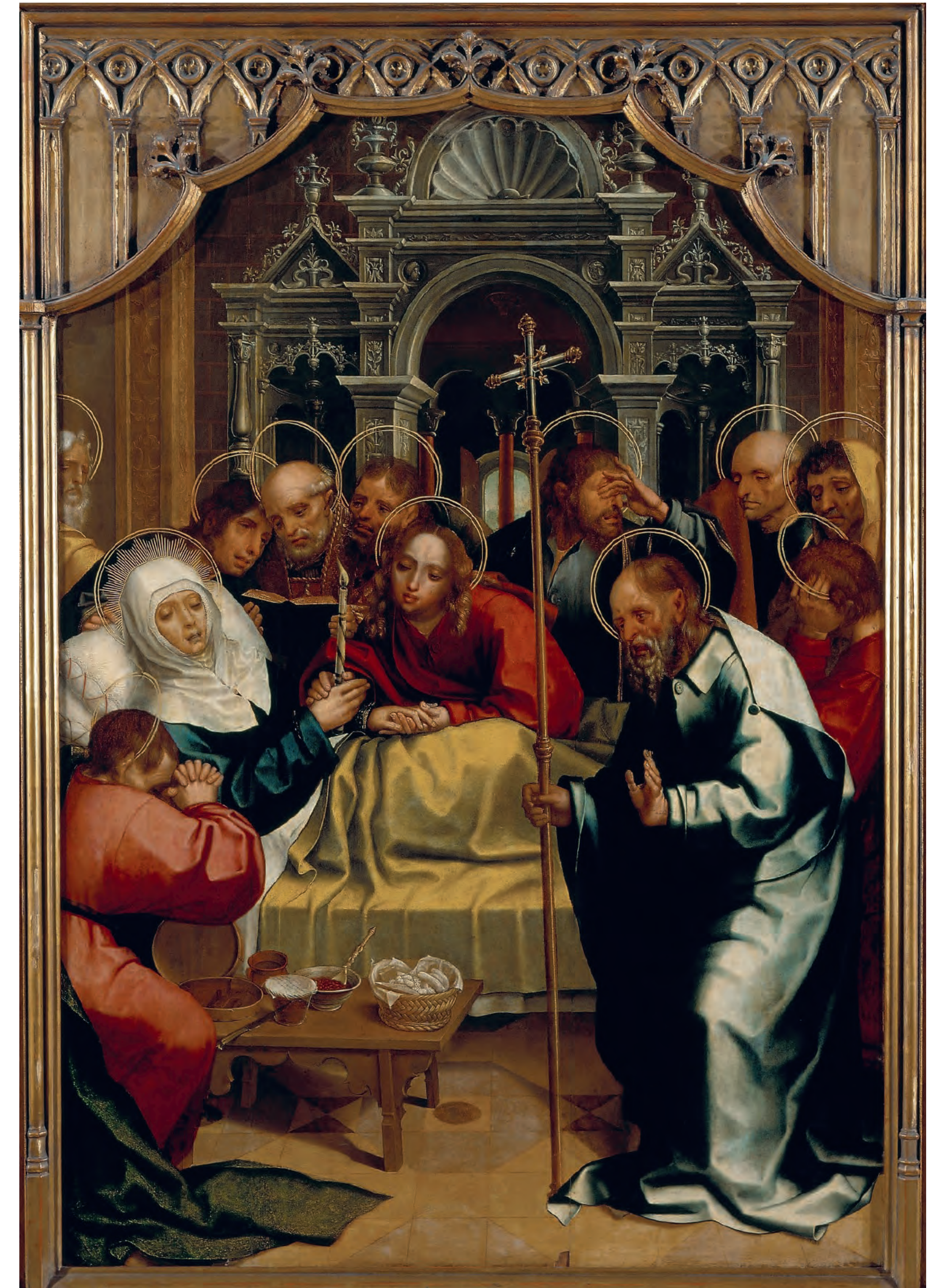
JOHN BERGER

Introduction

At the beginning of the Modern Age, a period lasting from the 15th to the 18th centuries, the stage for European maritime expansion stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific: from the American continent's eastern coasts to the coastlines of Africa, from the Arabian Sea through the Strait of Malacca and onto Japan, including the American Pacific coastline and, towards the end of the 1700s, to the territory known today as Australia. This area was immensely dynamic and had been so for several centuries, especially in the Asian seas. This dynamism was characterized by the diversity and contrasts of the human, religious and cultural conditions that prevailed in these regions (fig. 1).

In this world, objects played a fundamental role. As much as, if not more than, written documentation (chronicles, travel literature, epistolography, grammars and dictionaries), objects give us access to histories that the written or printed word sometimes silences, or presents only in fleeting glimpses.[1]

These objects would have been necessary in the everyday life of the period, primarily because of their utility, not only in day-to-day life but also in the context of social and diplomatic relations. A very interesting example of the uses given to these first objects resulting from a Portuguese commission overseas can be found in a detail in the painting *Death of the Virgin*, from the Paraíso convent polyptych, dated 1520–1530, now in the collections of the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (fig. 2). This work shows an ivory spoon with visual characteristics alluding to pieces made in the Sierra Leone region, which are registered in documents from the Casa da Guiné in Lisbon that survived the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 (fig. 3). On entries related to the years 1504 and 1505, there is reference to the arrival of spoons and salt cellars, which, together with oliphants, or hunter's horns, are also mentioned in King Manuel's (r. 1495–1521) Acquittance Letters from the same years.[2] Thus, a symbolic significance is added to these objects' and artefacts' utilitarian nature, by way of the messages and meanings contained in them, be it a modest ceramic object, a sumptuous textile, or a valuable piece of jewellery.



These objects therefore share a double meaning: the material meaning, that is, the material(s) of which they are made, the way in which these materials were assembled or combined, and the work's finishings; and a semantic one, pertaining to the significance with which these objects are imbued, which is determined culturally and changed according to context, space and time.[3]

The majority of the objects that have survived to the present day – surely, just a very small part of the original production – are now in public and private collections, which means that access to them is limited, primarily because it depends on the objects' display. In fact, this access is doubly constrained because, by being exhibited, especially in a museological context, these objects are not only out of context – removed from their original setting(s) – but also their status and meaning is changed through their association and/or intersection with other pieces.[4]

However, the fact that these objects are currently part of public and private collections corresponds, in most cases, to this material culture remaining the property of collectors (whether private or institutional), or to a perception of these artefacts as elements that belong to a collection, or to the contents of a house, church or convent.

FIG. 1
European routes in the Asian seas

©JORGE WELSH WORKS OF ART

FIG. 2
Death of the Virgin (detail)
Oil on oak wood, studio of Gregório Lopes (attrib.) / Portugal, 1527

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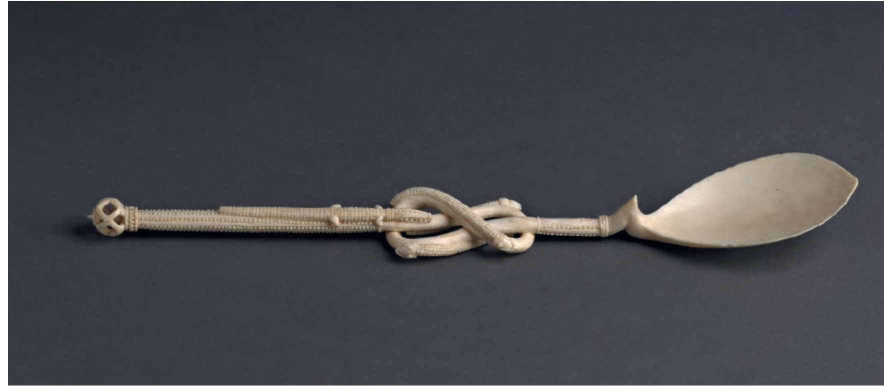

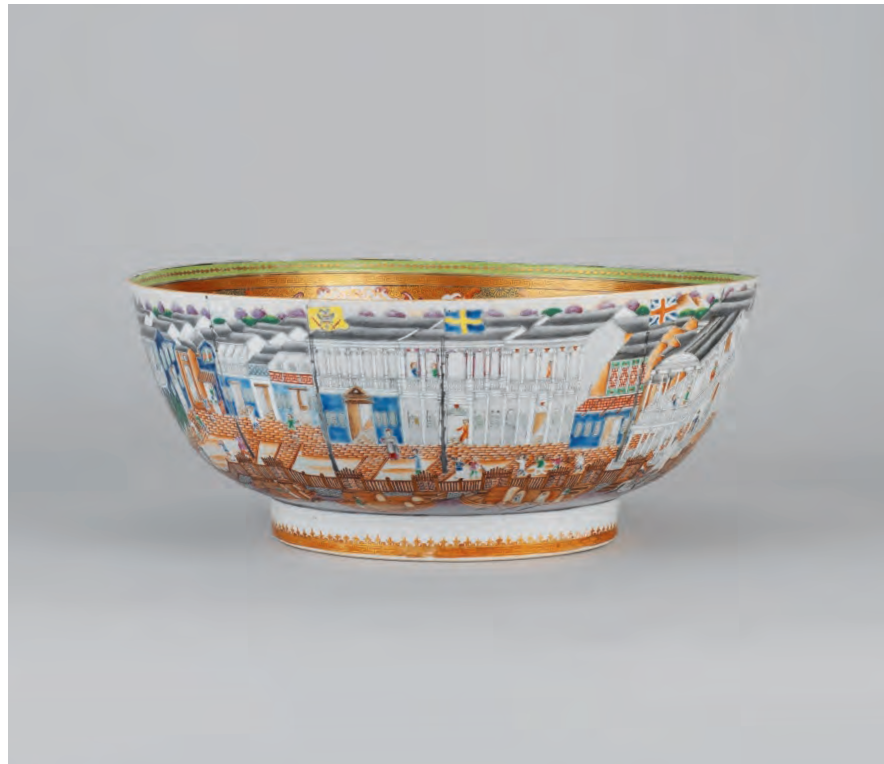

FIG. 3
Ivory spoon, carved in single piece.
Sierra Leone, 1490-1530. H. 24cm

AF1856,0623.163, © BRITISH MUSEUM
IMAGE ©THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

FIG. 4
Punch bowl. Porcelain decorated in famille rose enamels, en grisaille and gold Qing dynasty, Qianlong period (1736–1795), ca. 1780–1790. H. 15 cm Ø 36.2 cm

RA COLLECTION, INV. NO. 457

Whether they were the result of organized collecting activity, which presupposes selecting, cataloguing and, often, exhibiting the pieces, or of an accumulation of assets,[5] these objects therefore contain whole worlds as their background. They are associated with the place where they were produced, the commissioning, the process of acquisition, their reception, and the agents involved. These agents included both individuals acting on their own or someone else's behalf – such as the famous case of Ferdinand Cron (1559–1637), one of many foreigners of German origin established in Goa who worked as an agent in India for the Wegger and Fugger families[6] – or institutions such as the church and commercial companies, of which the most prominent during the early Modern Period were the Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (the VOC, or Dutch East India Company, founded in 1602) and the East India Company (EIC, the English company founded in 1600 and originally named The Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies). Portugal stands out in this respect, since unlike other great maritime powers such as The Netherlands, England, or France, it never had an organized trading company, always relying on the constitution of purely sporadic societies. However, it is important to emphasize that, regardless of their integration into the complex systems of the big trading companies that would become deeply implanted in Asia after the opening of the port of Canton to foreign powers in 1699, these material worlds are associated with, and inextricably linked to, social universes, and travel and contacts networks that express power relationships – political, economic, social and cultural (fig. 4).

Outlining these narratives becomes increasingly difficult the longer the object's life, as noted by Arjun Appadurai: to borrow this author's term, the longevity of an object, perceived as something with an economic value ('commodity'), is associated with a segmented history. This means that our knowledge of the object is fragmentary and subject to different interpretations.[7]

Taking a micro- as well as a macro-historical view, analysis of the arts and of Portuguese maritime expansion will therefore be examined through the prism of cultural transfer, taking into account the objects' own biography and the context in which it existed throughout its life. However, undertaking this analysis from a chronological distance has both advantages and risks. One of the challenges is that this colonial universe is being analysed in a postcolonial context and with a postcolonial conceptual frame, which raises important issues, such as these objects' original status and their functions throughout time and space.[8] Especially important is awareness that the past – any past – is a 'foreign country' or, in the words of Renata Araújo, 'in the past, there is no first person. The 'I' can never have been there, and the supposed collective 'we' is an anachronic and absurd mystification. In the past, everyone is an 'other', and this otherness is essential'.[9]

Cultural transfers and material culture

The study of cultural transfers in the fields of history and art history has given rise to significant methodological changes. One of these has been the awareness that issues of change and mobility are as important as those of continuity or permanence, if not more so.[10]

Concepts such as 'entanglement' and 'hybridity'[11] (which, for some authors, is an indispensable feature of the colonial condition),[12] have made it possible to analyse specific themes from the viewpoint of transnational adjustments and histories, enabling researchers to look beyond political borders or chronological limits. Likewise, interactions between centres (in this case, artistic centres) and peripheries, and especially the innovative and spontaneous nature of these 'peripheries', has lately been the object of increasing research and thought.[13]

By foregoing comparative studies based on contexts, and/or processes, transculturality has highlighted the notion of fluidity and contact zones, placing the emphasis on exchanges in a more global context. As expressed by the authors of *Transcultural History. Theories, methods, sources,* 'Transcultural history, therefore, is driven neither by progress nor by the idea of a linear flow of time, where the past predicts the present. Rather, this approach assumes that the pulse of historical development is sustained by the perturbing awareness of a world existing outside the respective mind maps, an awareness that gains visibility each time limits and borders are established or changed'.[14]

It is precisely in the idea of mobility (of words, images, people, goods, objects, and others) that we find the essence of the concept of cultural transference. On the other hand, aside from the fluidity and contacts that were established, there is also the matter of reception, understood here as *active* reception,[15] and of the transformations that occur, which give another dimension to this phenomenon, allowing us to distinguish a 'transfer' from an 'exchange' ('cultural exchange'). More than histories that touch upon each other, these are histories that interlink (and sometimes fuse together) through a biunique process that is subjected to complex spatial and temporal overlaps.[16]

In a text by David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, when referring to the concept of 'transnational history', the authors point to two possible approaches: 'A first would suggest that connections did exist and were known to past actors, but have for some reason been forgotten or laid aside. The task of the historian would then be to rediscover these lost traces. A second view would instead posit that historians might act as electricians, connecting circuits by acts of imaginative reconstitution rather than simple restitution'.[17]

If we transfer this methodological approach to the fields of art history and of visual and material culture, we understand how objects are the fundamental links that allow us to rediscover lost connections or, through them, allow us to imaginatively reconstitute those lost links. In order to do so, however, we must take objects as the source and

evidence of complex social relations and interactions, as elements imbued with the power to create and shape identities and connections. Objects are not merely reflexive; they have their own autonomy, which largely arises from the uses and functions they have been given throughout time, depending on the temporal, spatial and ritual context that shaped their nature, or rather, their multiple natures.[18] In this sense, it is important to underline that the term 'material culture' does not relate solely to an object's physical characteristics but also to the diversity of contexts in which it acquires, or has acquired, meaning.

Amid the myriad examples that could be given, let us focus on ivory objects that have been classified as 'Afro-Portuguese' or, in Peter Mark's categorization, 'Luso-African'. Again, terminology matters because the term 'Afro-Portuguese' was suggested in 1959 by William Fagg, who would become the first scholar to group a series of hybrid objects into a new stylistic category that referred to two different geographies: Africa and Portugal.[19] Fagg (1914–1992) started his career working in the Department of Anthropology at the British Museum in 1938, where he went on to become curator between 1955 and 1969. He then became curator of the Department of Ethnography, in 1969, two years before it was named Museum of Mankind, where he remained until 1974. It was at the British Museum that Fagg identified a set of ivories which, in his view, made up a coherent corpus of objects of different typologies: spoons, chalices (later identified as salt cellars), oliphants and small boxes. From that moment onwards, and as a specialist in African art – namely art from Benin, a territory that had belonged to the British Empire from the end of 19th century until 1960 – Fagg wrote numerous works and essays, and produced a ground-breaking study that has been regularly reviewed throughout the last three decades.[20]

The issue of the origin of these ivory pieces is still a theme of debate today. In this respect, already in the 16th century, in 1520 to be exact, the painter Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who was friends with the Portuguese humanist Damião de Góis (1502–1574), noted in his journal the acquisition of two salt cellars from Calicut, which he purchased for three florins at the important Portuguese trading post in Antwerp.[21] This suggests that Dürer appreciated the technical quality and exotic character of these objects, and hence, of their origin outside Europe. The possibility that they could come from sub-Saharan Africa would not even have been contemplated, despite men like Valentim Fernandes, who was close to the Portuguese court and sensitive to material and visual culture, writing texts affirming his admiration for the technical skill and beauty of the ivories from this African region.[22] Nevertheless, this part of the world was still seen from Europe as uncharted territory, onto which Europeans had long been projecting their own fears, as well as some of their hopes – of which the Prester John myth is an eloquent example. In fact, in spite of the progressive exploration of Africa's west coast by the Portuguese in the 15th century, such works as *Liber Chronicarum*, written by Hartmann Schedel (first published in 1493) and, especially, *Cosmographia Universalis*, by Sebastien Münster (1488–1552) – first published in Basel in 1544 and subsequently re-published 46 times throughout one century and translated into six languages, becoming one of Europe's most read geography books of the Modern Age – continued to propagate old myths and beliefs, such as those relating to fabulous African races, thus enduring even in the face of new knowledge.

It was during the reign of Afonso V (r.1438–1481), in 1460, the year Prince Henry the Navigator died, that the Portuguese reached the Sierra Leone region and then, two years later, Cape Mount (present-day Liberia). From this moment, two different territorial concepts of Sierra Leone began to emerge: a smaller region, known as 'Sierra', which encompassed the peninsula and the region's mountainous inland area; and another, larger territory, known as 'Sierra Leone', a term employed first and foremost in a trading context, and which encompassed the coastal area stretching from the northern side of the Los Idolos islands (currently known as Los Islands), or the contiguous Verga cape (both to the south of present-day Guinea-Conakry) down to Cape Mount, including the Sherbro Islands. The people living in this region belonged to the Kingdom of the Sapes and were grouped in culturally similar tribes, each with their own leaders as they occupied contiguous areas, they also shared common trading partners.[23]

FIG. 5
Hunting-horn, oliphant.
Sierra Leone, ivory, silver and metal, 1490-1530 (circa).
H. 44cm

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IMAGE ©THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Along the coastline, as early as the 1450s, the Portuguese built trading posts, such as the one in Arguin, built in 1482 and located on the coast of present-day Mauritania, and the Castle of Elmina, in present-day Ghana. The latter was one of Portugal's most successful fortresses, but it fell into Dutch hands in 1637. Portuguese traders were also active along the coast then known as 'Guiné do Cabo Verde' (Cape Verdean Guinea), administered from the Cape Verde islands. The Portuguese crown, supported by the papacy, claimed a monopoly on this commerce, which stretched from western to southern Africa, and maintained this dominion until territorial interference by other European empires in the 17th century. With Sierra Leone, the Lower Niger Delta, Benin and the Kingdom of Kongo as the preferred points of contact, these regions were the base from which the first African-made objects reached Europe, among which were the ivories brought to Portugal in the last years of the 15th century. Aside from the missionaries and the Portuguese who settled in Cape Verde, about 2000 Portuguese people, mainly traders and intermediaries, came to settle in the African mainland. Known as *lançados* or *tangos mãos*, these men entered into local communities and several married African women, sometimes the daughters of local chieftains.[24] Their descendants continued to be known among their immediate neighbours as 'Portuguese' or 'white men', regardless of their skin tone, according to the models of identity used in this vast area of Africa. Socially and culturally, these Euro-Africans acted as intermediaries between European and African cultures: they spoke Portuguese (or creole) and considered themselves Christians, though many of them also practised African rituals and were of Jewish origin.[25] Thus, these ivory pieces not only resulted from the Portuguese settling in this West-African coastal area, with their mostly commercial motivations, they also bear witness to the interactions that occurred and to the *confronto do olhar* [confrontation of gazes] between different cultures.[26]

There is evidence that the first and largest group of ivories produced in Africa and exported to Portugal came from Sierra Leone. Valentim Fernandes is one of the authors who mentions the arrival, in Lisbon, of Sierra Leone ivories, which began being exported in 1504–1505, according to the registries in Casa da Guiné, where dozens of spoons and salt cellars are listed, a production that continued throughout the 17th century, according to Mark.[27] From a formal and a decorative viewpoint, these are hybrid products, as they incorporate both African and European references.

This is especially apparent in the transposition of images from European engravings. However, following Mark's work, it must not be forgotten that even if these pieces were commissioned by Portuguese people, they are African sculptures that belong to the context of Sierra Leone culture.[28] Incorporated into these objects are not only Christian themes – such as depictions of the Holy Family and scenes from the New Testament, which can be seen in certain pyxes or host boxes (see fig. 36, entry no. 1) – but also hunting scenes, an activity which, in several cultures, is associated with the elite and is a ritual stand-in for war and heraldry. These are especially present in oliphants, or hunter's horns, objects that could also be used in a war context and which embody qualities, virtues and values from European cavalry, but also from sub-Saharan warrior aristocracy – though in some cases, these scenes can also be associated with images of life in a royal court (fig. 5).[29]

The sources for many of these representations have already been identified. Chief among them is *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis*, a book of hours published in Paris in 1498 by Simon Vostre, with typographical work by Philippe Pigouchet (active between 1488 and 1518), whose images were later reused in a book produced by Thielman Kerver in 1499.[30] That these same sources were also used in Sinhalese ivories is both significant and indicative of how widespread and important European images were in works of art that stemmed from the Portuguese presence in non-European territories[31]. Careful study of these pieces allows us to understand how African artists transposed European images: first and foremost, this was about transferring a two-dimensional picture to a three-dimensional object, and sometimes even a whole sequence of images, as in the case of pyxes. Authors who have studied these ivories have pointed out that these engravings are not mere copies but adaptations: some elements are assimilated, others changed. Furthermore, geometrical decorations, which are to be found in many of the oliphants, and zoomorphic ones, such as in spoons, attest to the introduction of a local visual grammar (fig. 5). Moreover, Europeans are represented through the construal of some of their attributes (hats, weapons, adornments, accompanying animals), which identifies these elements with those of the native culture, especially when associated with power. Indeed, this representation stems from the local practice of sculpting small human figures in wood or stone, locally known as *nomoli* and *pomdo*, which explains the depictions of Europeans in ivory salt cellars.[32]

These objects therefore fit into and constitute a practice of cultural translation,[33] and implies an active attitude from the people involved in commissioning and making the objects – and we could add, in consuming them, though we still know very little about this aspect of their history. Mário Pereira, in his PhD dissertation on African art and the Portuguese court ca. 1450–1521, highlights this issue, stating that 'this project is based on the idea that a certain degree of cultural translation or compatibility existed between the Portuguese and the various African groups they encountered in Senegambia, Sierra Leone and the Kongo during the second half of the fifteenth century'.[34]

The emergence of these pieces, all of which are utilitarian in nature, in either a religious context (such as the pyxes or host boxes) or a civilian one, as evidenced by the aforementioned spoon in the *Death of the Virgin* from the Paraíso convent polyptych (1520–1530), is obviously due to commercial reasons (and stems from them), but also to motivations that arise from a symbolic discourse of power. In this sense, the objects serve both the people who commissioned them and the artists who made them.

Artistic consumption and demographics

Demographic issues are often excluded from art history, including studies on the production and circulation of works and objects in the context of so-called 'Portuguese colonial art' – a term that is not without its problems and ultimately points to a material and artistic culture resulting from the connection between the metropole and the colonies (or territories marked by Portuguese presence, such as Japan), as well as among colonies.

But to what extent is it worthwhile to bring to the study of this topic the issue of worldwide demographic density and distribution at the beginning of the Modern Age? The answer lies, to a large extent, in the need to include some vectors of analysis, namely the production, circulation and consumption of objects and goods, borrowing terms and approaches from economic history and bringing them into the field of art history – a methodology that, though not new, since it has been increasingly used, especially in the study of collecting,[35] is still uncommon.

Taking demographic information into account and thus also the areas of production, exchange, distribution and commerce, is an important part of any discourse on the arts of the Portuguese expansion at the beginning of the Modern Age. Firstly, because this allows us to understand that these objects had a commercial value and were traded on the basis of their material qualities, to which a technical and aesthetic value is also attached. Secondly, because it allows us to observe them from the point of view of consumption, which, for the more valuable pieces, means they must be interpreted within the context of societies with political, economic, and intellectual elites, who sought to obtain rare and/or refined items. Many of these were perceived as artistic works according to a definition of art that still valued, at least in western Europe, the technical skill of their creator, in an approximation to the word *techne*, which highlights the creation and material handling of the object. In this respect, the aforementioned ivory pieces from the Western African coast are very revealing.

In the case of Portugal, Rafael Moreira places in the 16th century the beginning of a perception of external wealth as a symbol of high status and well-being, elevated to an almost civic duty – so much so that a set of laws (known as the pragmatic laws) was adopted during the reign of King João III (r. 1521–1557) in an attempt to limit excess consumption. As well as being the result of an economic shift, this phenomenon points to a profound cultural transformation in the relationship between the person who commissions and enjoys the objects and the objects themselves. At the same time, the objects also generate a different dynamic of consumption: they are often rare, sophisticated products, which are difficult to find and purchase, and are often expensive. These items not only have a function, but also an added social and aesthetic value, and their quality, or the technical skill employed in their making, is indistinguishable from the aesthetic enjoyment they awaken.[36] From the viewpoint of discourses on luxury, and continuing the work of Christopher Berry, we should ask whether this was a process of 'de-moralising' and secularising luxury: '*The decisive break is not the political focus, for the moralistic language of luxury had always had that focus, but the understanding of this 'well-being' in terms of economic prosperity*'.[37]

Choosing an approach that includes demography as an element of analysis allows us to direct our gaze to specific realities, such as the relationship between consumption of art and the existence of large urban centres. Indeed, the production and/or consumption of cultural products is an essential component of large population centres. In the case

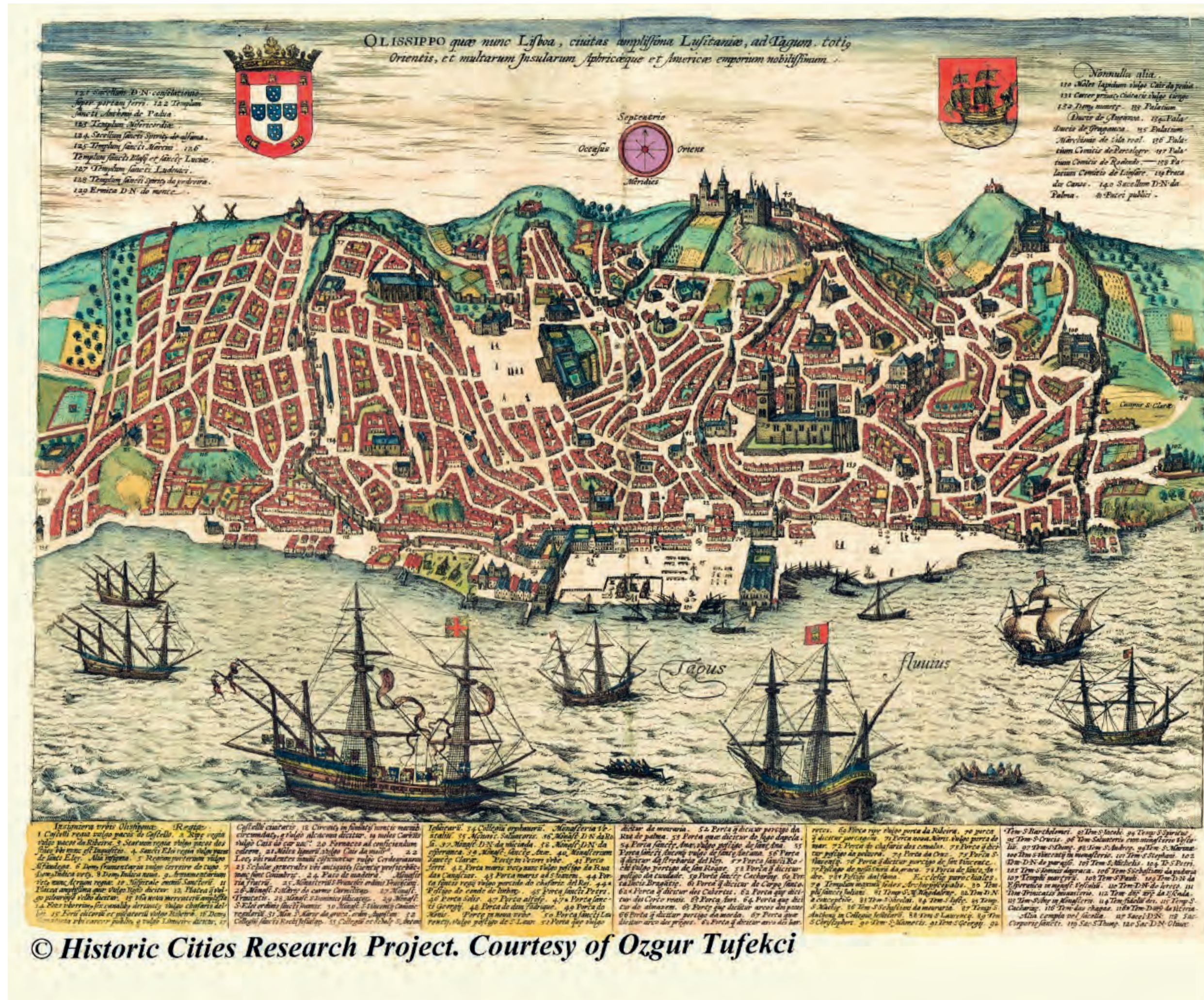

FIG. 6
Map of Lisbon. Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg
Civitates Orbis Terrarum (V2), 1st edition 1598

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of Europe at the beginning of the Modern Age – that is, in the 16th century – Lisbon was unquestionably one of its great cities, significant both from a demographic viewpoint and in terms of commercial transactions. But how great was Lisbon, in terms of population, in the mid-16th century (fig. 6)?

When compared to other European cities of the age, it is safe to say that Lisbon was one of the biggest. But it also needs to be understood in the specific context of the kingdom. It has been calculated that in the second half of the 16th century the Portuguese population numbered around 1,400.000 people. By 1636–1638, this figure had increased to 2 million. Around roughly the same period – between 1527 and 1619–1629 – the population of Lisbon more than doubled, amounting to 165,000 people. This made it not just the biggest city in the Iberian Peninsula, but, along with Naples, one of the biggest in Europe.[38]

However, comparing Europe with Asia forces us to put these population numbers into perspective, even if information on population in this era, both on a global and a regional scale, is purely speculative. Nevertheless, the information available gives us a relatively reliable idea of the true numbers.

It is estimated that, in the 16th century, the Asian continent had between 200 and 225 million inhabitants, including 60 million in China and 20 million in Japan. By the beginning of the 17th century, cities like Peking and Nanking had 1 million inhabitants. There were six Chinese cities with more than 500,000 people and twenty others with an approximate population of 100,000. After China, Mughal India was the most urbanised region in the world, boasting three cities with 400,000 inhabitants and nine cities with 100,000. Aside from these, only Mexico City, and Potosí in present-day Bolivia, in the American continent, Cairo in Africa, and Istanbul at the border between Europe and Asia, had more than 100,000 people.[39] These were cities with an impressive

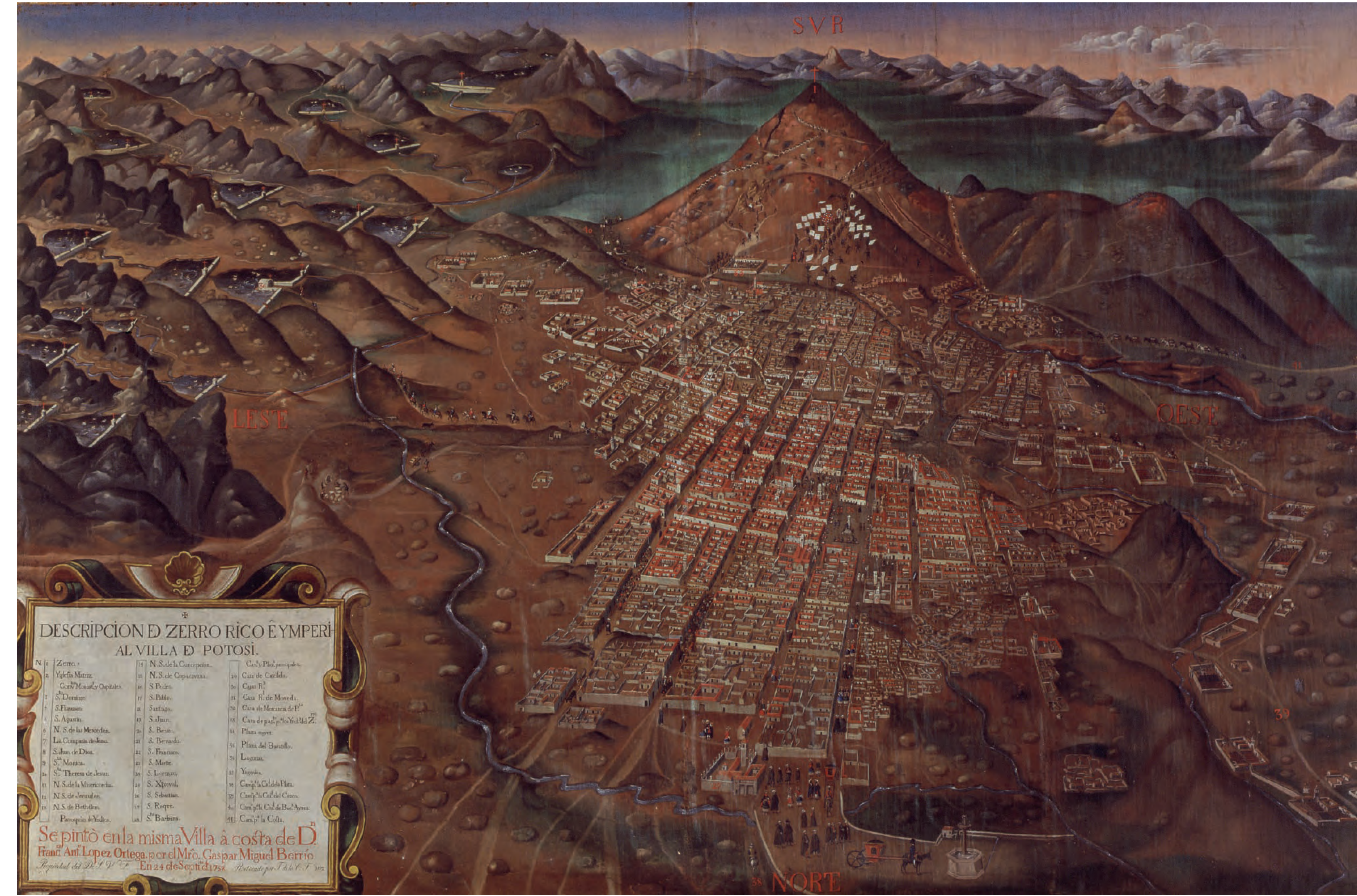

FIG. 7
Description of Cerro Rico and the Imperial Municipality of Potosi, 1758 by Gaspar Miguel de Berrio (1706-62)

MUSEO CHARCAS, SUCRE, BOLIVIA
©PAUL MAEYAERT/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

consumption of art, which attracted products from all over the world. In Potosí, which had around 160,000 inhabitants in 1600, one could buy silk from China, a first edition of *Don Quixote*, linen from Portugal, paper from Genoa, diamonds from Ceylon, carpets from Persia and Turkey, paintings and engravings from Rome, crystal from Venice, pearls from Panama, precious stones from India, lace from Brussels, and weapons from Germany: 'Potosí, in other words, as one of the wealthiest cities in the world, began to consume the finest things the new global market had to offer'(fig. 7).[40]

These figures are impressive for the scale they provide when we compare different realities – in this case, Europe and Asia. Furthermore, they attest to long term trends in population growth throughout the centuries.

Between 1500 and 1700, in Europe, Asia and Africa, population grew rapidly, sometimes exponentially: during these years, Europe went from around 68 million to 106 million inhabitants, and Asia grew even more, from around 231 million people in 1500 to 420 million in 1700. Africa saw a much slower population growth, from 85 million people in 1500 to 100 million in 1700. In the Americas, the opposite trend is apparent: around

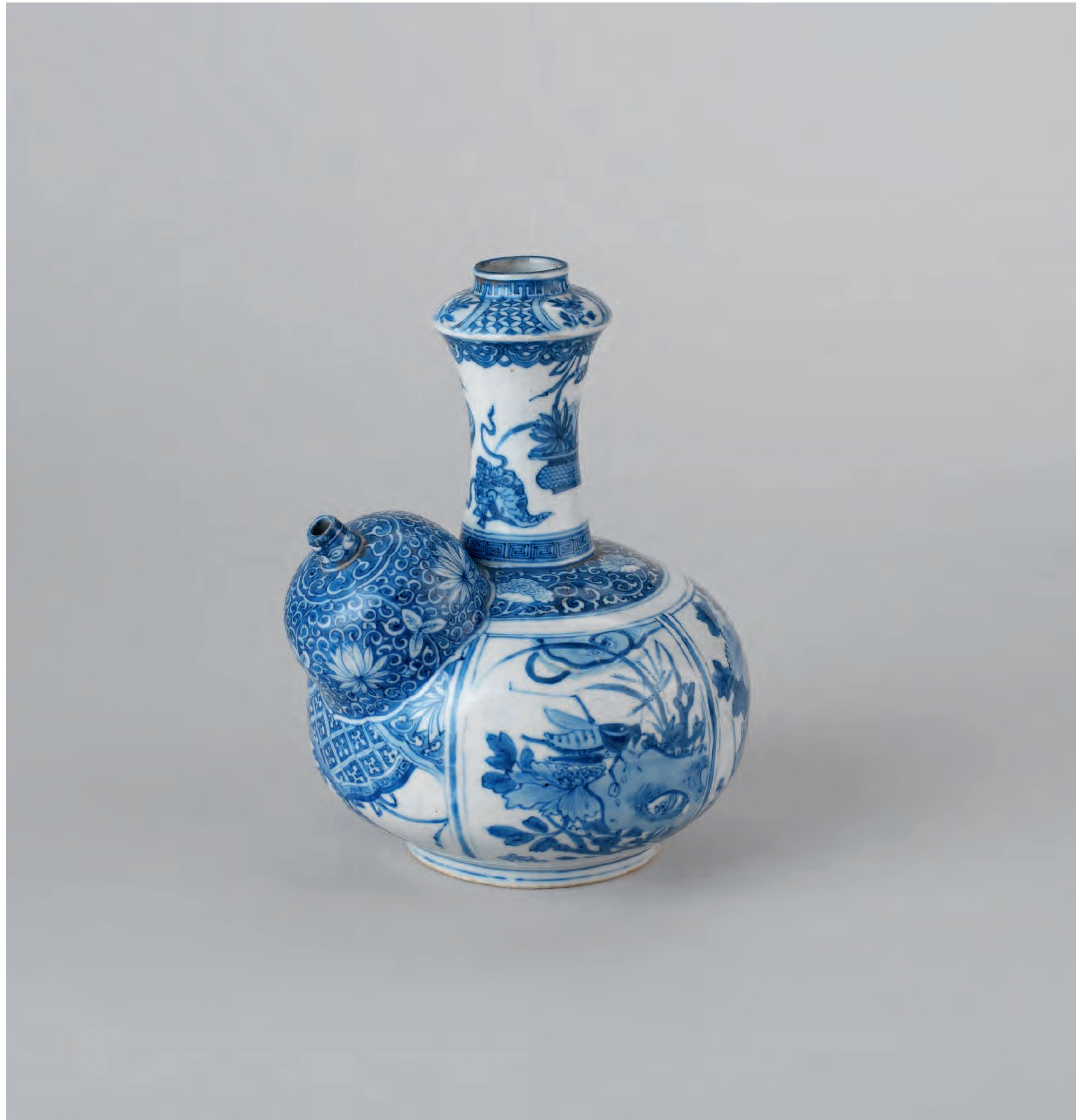

FIG. 8
Kendi. white porcelain decorated in underglaze blue, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), late 16th–early 17th century. H. 20 cm

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the year 1500, the American continent had around 41 million people. In 1600, this figure had gone down to 15 million, and in 1700 to 13 million.[41] Why? Mainly because of the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas and the resulting annihilation of native populations through war and devastation, as well as through the introduction of illnesses, especially smallpox, which quickly became fatal to native Americans.

The regional distribution of the world's population between 1500 and 1700 is particularly relevant for the analysis undertaken here. While Asia was clearly prevalent on a global scale, within this continent there are regions that stand out in terms of population and of economic growth – namely, China, India and Japan.

The impact of Europeans on these Asian markets was apparent in Europe itself – first and foremost, the number of items and goods arriving, and the corresponding volume of transactions, particularly involving luxury goods, which seems to have been more significant than previously thought: 'new evidence, involving strata of the population usually too humble to leave documentary traces, suggests that, contrary to the position previously staked out by the field of economic history broadly conceived, the intercontinental luxury trades of the early modern period were in fact transformative of the European economy'.[42]

When it comes to Lisbon, reliable accounts include (as well as so-called official documentation) those provided, from 1580, by the Venetian ambassadors Vincenzo Tron (1533–?) and Girolamo Lippomani (1538–1591), who mention the existence of six fine porcelain shops at Rua Nova dos Mercadores.[43] Forty years later, in 1620, in his *Livro das Grandezas de Lisboa*, father Nicolau de Oliveira (ca. 1566–1634) refers to seventeen shops or, to be more precise, 'porcelain merchants and other Indian things, seventeen'.[44] Porcelain made in China was one of the most sought-after products in European markets, but this growth in the number of merchants is nonetheless significant (fig. 8). On the other hand, the existence of seventeen porcelain shops in Lisbon in 1620 highlights something that observation of many of these pieces also reveals: these are products of heterogeneous quality, available for purchase by clienteles with differing purchasing powers.

Was all Chinese porcelain, then, a luxury product? If we take 'luxury' in this period to mean access to a product made across the world, then the answer is, yes. But if we expand that concept of luxury to encompass an object's commercial value and quality, then not every piece of porcelain from China was a luxury product.[45] In fact, if we compare the aforementioned figures with the available data on transactions, and on the large-scale dissemination of Chinese porcelain in Europe from the time when the VOC entered the Asian markets – subsequently buying and selling around 3 million pieces between 1602 and 1636 – we can see how, during the first decades of the 17th century, Europe's access to a variety of products, especially Asian ones, changed radically, with consequent impacts within its borders. The emergence of the great European commercial companies, particularly the VOC, can also be associated with the beginnings of the Modern Age of capitalism.[46]

While the economic figures on Chinese porcelain are relevant for the Portuguese and, more broadly, European context, they are less significant when compared to other realities in Asia. It is in this sense that historians such as André Gunder Frank state that, in a macro-historical perspective, 'for the centuries between 1400 and at least 1700 as well as earlier, there was nothing 'exceptional' about Europe, unless it was Europe's exceptionally marginal, far-off peninsular position on the map and its correspondingly minor role in the world economy'.[47] In the same way, Elizabeth Mancke mentions that the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, the English and the French, controlled many commercial ports in Asia (some conquered by force, others, like Calcutta, founded by Europeans), but whereas these were important for European trade and economies, their general impact on Asian economies remained limited for the greater part of 300 years: 'Not until the conquest of Bengal by the British East India Company (EIC) in the 1750s and 1760s did Europeans make their first major territorial acquisition in Asia, an event that scholars of early modern Asia increasingly use to date the onset of European imperialism there'.[48]

This means that Europe's impact on the Asian economy – which constituted the world economic stage until around 1700, when Europe's industrialization process began – was absolutely negligible until the 18th century. The economic pulse of the time was in Asia and, within Asia, in regions such as the Indian subcontinent, China and Japan – that is, the more populated territories.

Trade networks and circulation of goods and objects

The emergence of objects resulting from artistic interactions between different cultures and civilizations was only made possible through trade networks that grew progressively wider.

In the Indian Ocean, unlike what happened in the Atlantic, the Portuguese came across structured and dynamic trading networks that stretched east of the Strait of Malacca. If we follow the routes travelled by these products before the Portuguese arrived, we see not only that several pre-existing trading networks were reused, but also that a range of goods and products were distributed on a large scale, especially spices, drugs, precious woods, and other plant essences, such as cloves from the Moluccas, nutmeg from Banda Island, and pepper from Samatra and Sunda. The diversity of traded goods was matched by the multiplicity of trading routes along which these goods travelled. These were maritime routes that blended together, and in which short and medium-range journeys – the journeys of cabotage with multiple stops – intersected with long routes, which were the most profitable ones, because the Portuguese were involved in all of these, following in the footsteps of the Muslim and Hindu traders who had come before them.[49] In this context, the Portuguese State of India – a term that became widespread in the mid-16th century to designate all the territories, people, trading posts and goods, under Portuguese authority, jurisdiction or administration, from the Cape of Good Hope to Japan – became the first permanently institutionalized European presence. According to Luís Filipe Thomaz, the State of India was a network, that is, a communication system between different spaces, which, in turn, encompassed a multiplicity of other networks: 'In any case, the State of India is essentially a network and not a space: it is not interested in the production of goods, but in their circulation; it is less concerned with men than with relations between men, and therefore aspires more to dominating the seas than to dominating the land'.[50]

The Portuguese official presence in the vast expanse of the State of India – with a distance from Lisbon, at its most eastern point, to Japan, equivalent to about two and a half years' travel distance – was, from the outset, mainly urban. However, even in the biggest cities where the Portuguese established their presence, such as Goa and Macao, the Portuguese and Luso-Asian population was but a minority of the overall population (figs 9 and 10). Not only were many of the essential financial instruments owned by Asian merchant groups, with their vast trading networks, but it was also rare to find a city where the dominant cultural landscape was Portuguese; in fact, it is the cultural hybridity of most of these places that should be highlighted.[51]

Again, the figures, in this case the number of Portuguese people living in the territory of the State of India, are revealing. In the 1570s, the Portuguese population was made up of around 16, 000 people.[52] Of the several categories into which this population was subdivided – *casados* or residents, soldiers, clergymen, military officials, single people – the more numerous was that of the *casados*, meaning residents who lived under the

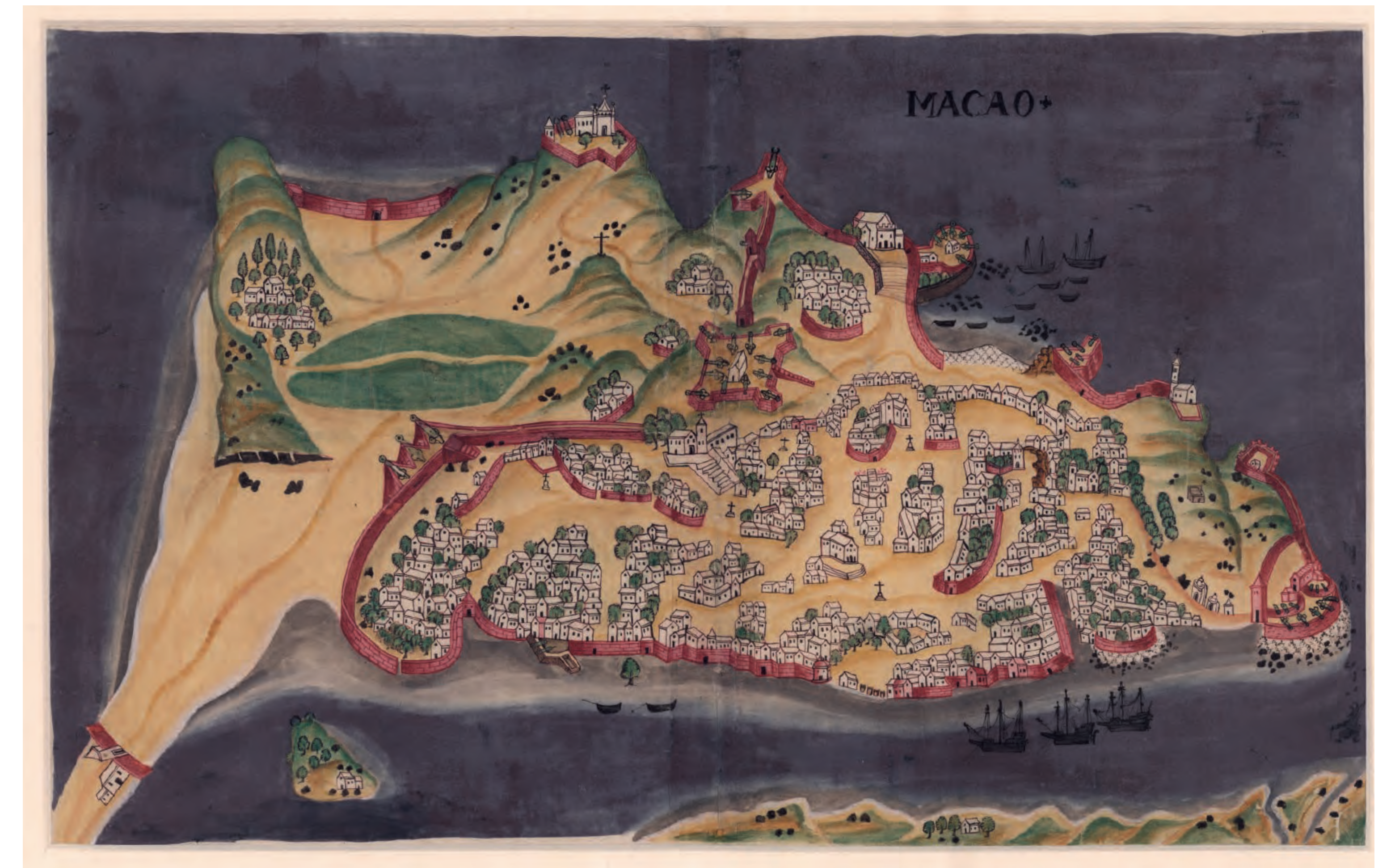

FIG. 9
«BPE-RES cod. CXV/2-1, nº47. Planta de Macau», 1635.
Livro das plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental, by António Bocarro, engravings by Pedro Barreto de Resende.

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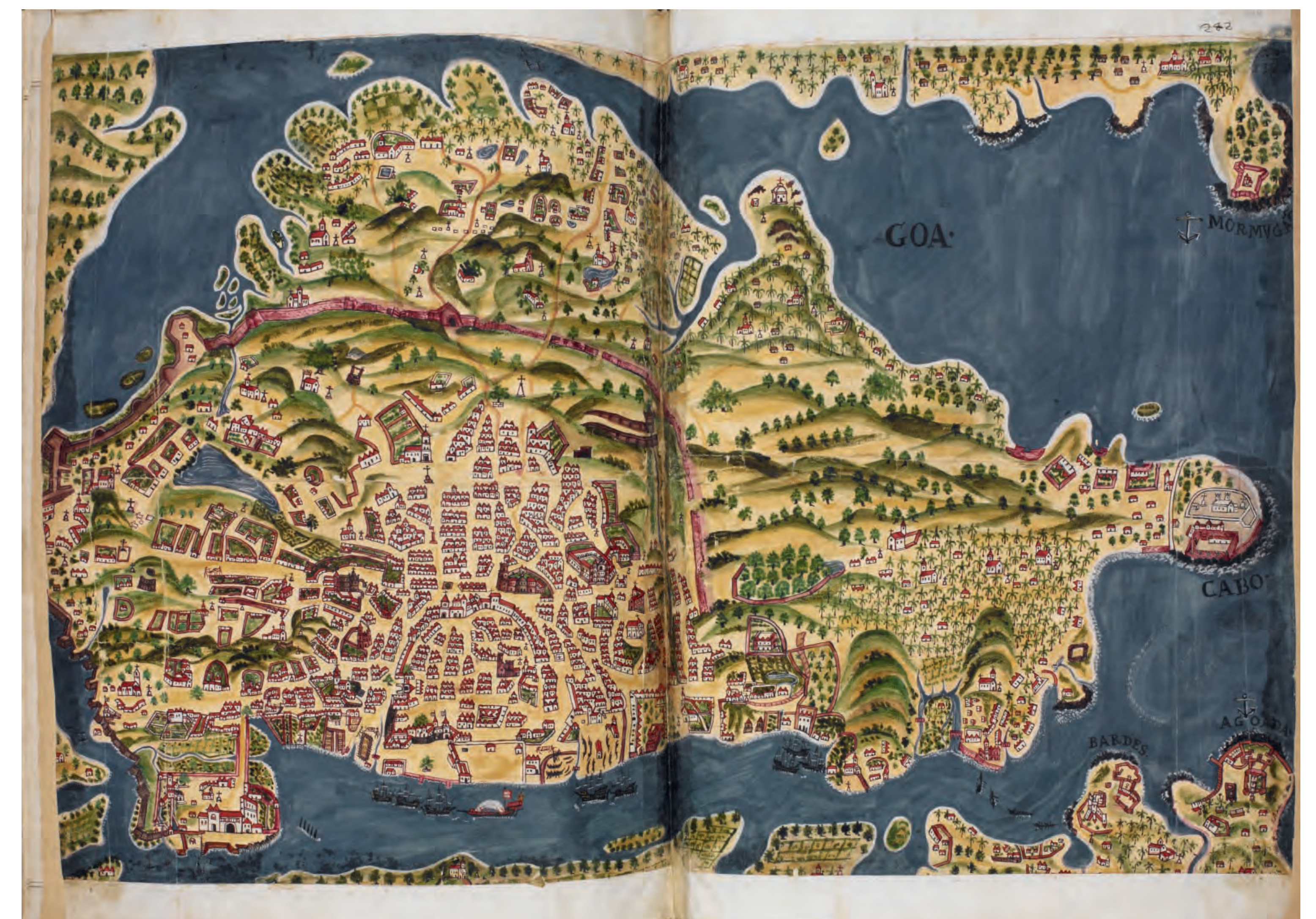

FIG. 10
View of Goa by Pedro de Resende, 1646.
Livro do Estado da Índia Oriental

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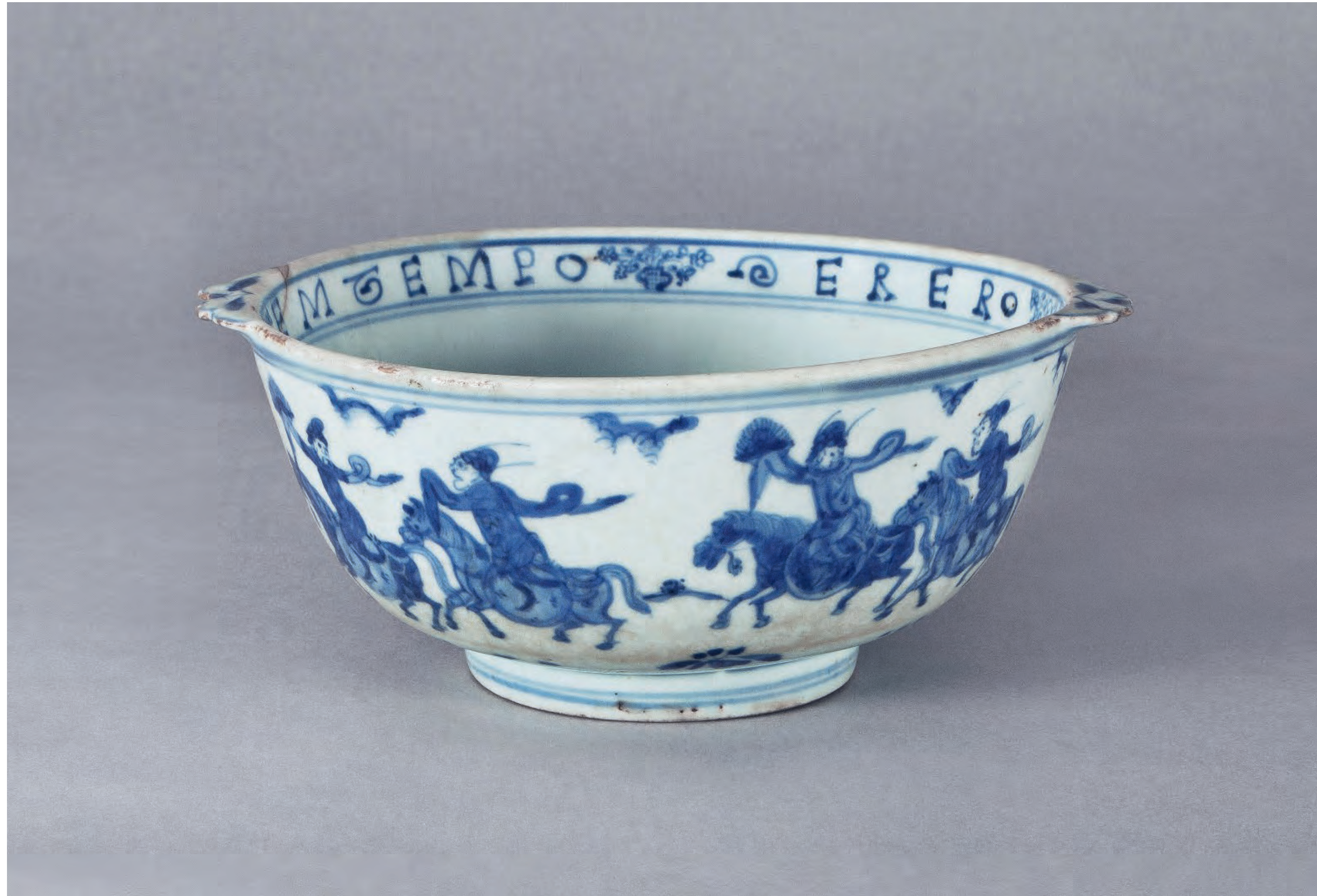

FIG. 11
Equelle with the legend
EM TEMPO DE PERO DE FARIA DE 1541,
white porcelain decorated in underglaze cobalt blue,
Ming dynasty, Jiajing period, dated 1541
H. 7.5 cm Ø16.5 cm

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State of India's authority and were linked to a place of residence. Moreover, the *casados* (literally, 'the married people'), a term that denotes more than just a civil status, were not a homogeneous group within themselves, but encompassed noblemen and knights of military orders, as well as former soldiers at the bottom of the social pyramid. For all of these people, however, trading in goods, and crucially inter-Asian trading, made up the most significant portion of their income, even if data on transaction volumes and the organization of this trade is largely unknown. Nevertheless, Dutch documentation leads us to believe that the amount of inter-Asian trading undertaken by *casados* would have been significant at the beginning of the 17th century, even if not all of this trade was controlled by them. We must also highlight the role played by high government officials, through business they conducted privately, as well as by religious orders. Also, the mid-17th century saw the progressive rise of unmarried merchants, who had no fixed place of residence and moved more freely in search of relatively easier profits.

Of all the objects that would circulate along these trading networks, Chinese porcelain was particularly relevant, not only because of the significant quantities that were traded between Asia and Europe, but also because it raises a number of issues relating to its production, acquisition and circulation. From the outset, in the period before 1557, when Macao was established, the main Portuguese influence in the China Sea was exerted by people who had established themselves there independently, either as private merchants or as adventurers. These were the people who, even before the establishment of this trading post, made use, in the 1530s and 40s, as well as all through the 1560s, of the ports of Ningbo and Chinchew, in Fujian Province, and later of the ports of Canton (Coloane, Pinhal and Lampacao islands), in order to build the foundations of Chinese–Japanese trade, which was structured through Macao from 1557 because of the Ming Dynasty's prohibition of all foreign trade with Japan.[53]

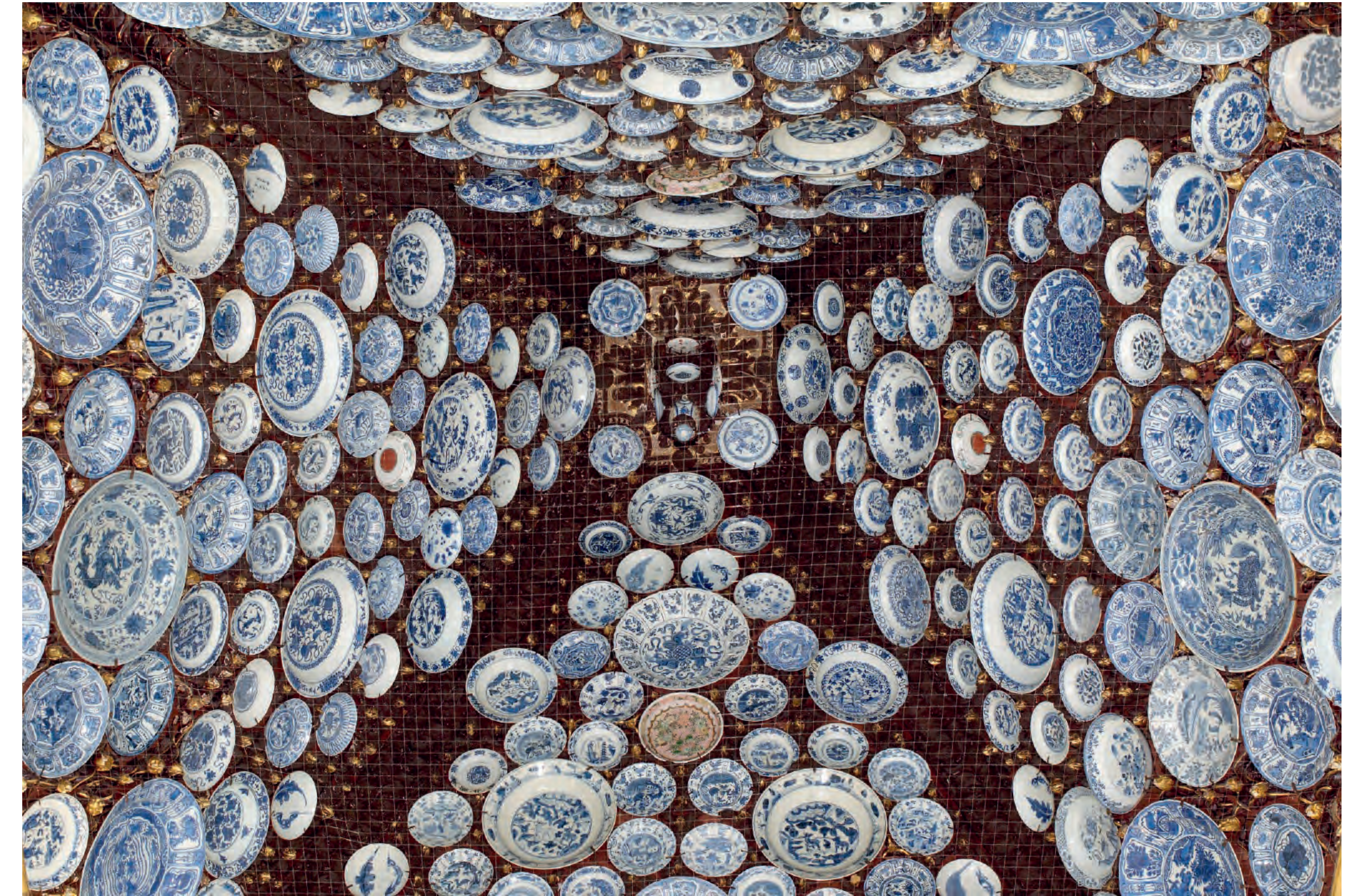

FIG. 12
Overview of the collection of plates and dishes on the ceiling of 'Casa das Porçolanas',
Santos Palace, Lisbon.

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER ALLERTON

Produced mostly in Jingdezhen, thousands of kilometres away from Macao, blue-and-white porcelain was a sought-after product whose commissioning required cooperation with the Chinese (both merchants and artists). Its value depended not only on the materials with which they were made (kaolinite and petuntse), but also the manufacturing technique, quality of work, and other, more abstract symbolisms that are harder to define.[54] All of these elements determined one of the most significant pieces of evidence of regular relations between Malacca and China in the period preceding the Portuguese settlement in Macao: the porcelain items commissioned in China by Pero de Faria, captain of Malacca in 1528–1529 and 1539–1542, which not only depicted the armillary sphere, but also bore the inscription *em tempo de pero faria*, 1541 [at the time of Pero Faria, 1541] (fig. 11).

The world of porcelain reveals new patterns of taste that came to define novel consumption practices, often linked to the status attached to the ownership of such products. Also revealing is the way in which porcelain was integrated into the daily lives of its elite owners: 'embedded both literally and figuratively into interiors and larger decorative programs'.[55] The case of the porcelain room in the Santos Palace, present-day seat of the French Embassy in Lisbon, is an important example in the Portuguese case (fig. 12).

The place that quality porcelain came to occupy within the main European courts – such as the Medici, the Habsburgs and the Austrias – as well as in rich families, even led to the emergence of a parallel market for ceramics that sought to approximate Chinese porcelain. Important centres of ceramics production, such as Faenza and Florence, in the Italian peninsula, began integrating formal echoes from Chinese porcelain and attempted to reproduce this product's glaze, which was considered one of 'China's marvels, the height of sophistication, fragility and perfection, similar to other *artificialia* imported from Asia and discerningly collected at European Royal houses' *Kunstkammern*'.[56]

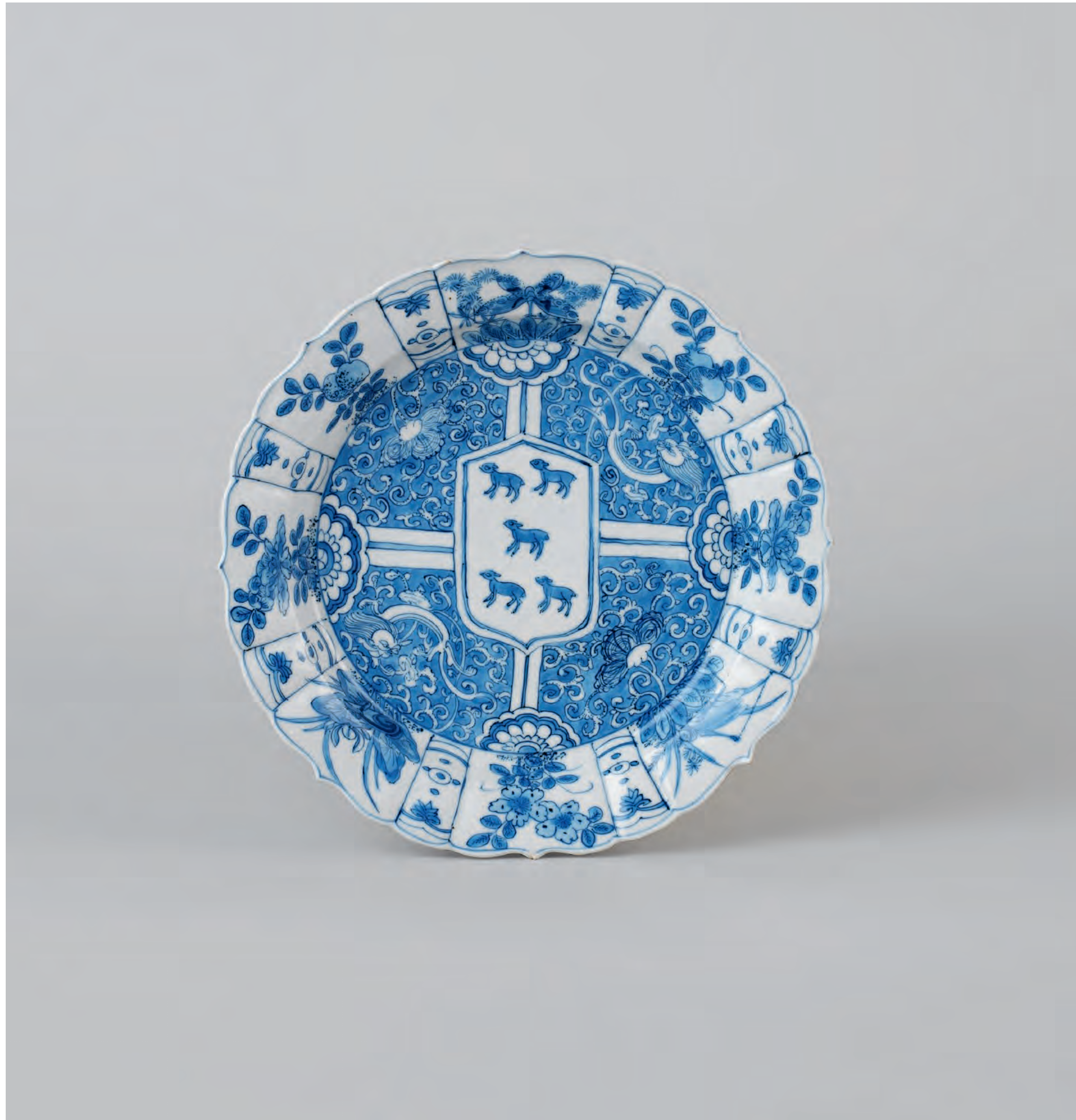

FIG. 13
Dish, white porcelain decorated in underglaze blue, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province, Ming dynasty, Wanli period (1573–1619), ca. 1575–1600. Ø 19.9 cm

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Because this was one of the most sought-after products, the incident of the *Santa Catarina* carrack became well known. On June 30, 1603, word emerged in Macao that the *Santa Catarina*, captained by Sebastião Serrão and departing from China to Malacca, had been captured by the Dutch in the Singapore Straits. This feat by Jacob Van Heemskerck led the cargo of the Portuguese vessel to be sold in Amsterdam for the truly astronomical amount of three and a half million guineas. Given the enormous amount of Ming porcelain on board, this was the incident that led Chinese porcelain to become known in The Netherlands as 'carrack' porcelain, or *Kraakporselein* (fig. 13). In another incident, Dutch ships seized a carrack travelling from Macao to Japan when the crew was still on land, with all its cargo, which consisted of 1400 piculs of silk, as well as gold and other goods.[57]

This carrack had been about to embark on one of the most profitable journeys in Portuguese trade in Asia – the Macao–Japan axis – which was beginning to emerge as one of the main foundations of this trading network. Copper and silver mined and sold from these outer boundaries of the Asian continent went into the Goa Mint, and the sale of goods from China–Japan journeys became an important source of income for the crown. In the 16th century, this axis opened up a new path for private trading, by drawing private merchants' attention to a field of business where they would not have to compete with the monarch.[58]

Access from Europe to products like Chinese porcelain was enabled through trading agents settled in cities like Lisbon or Goa, but also, as already mentioned, through the social, often family, networks that linked the various European courts. One of the most famous examples (because it has been documented and involves identifiable pieces) relates to ivory objects from Ceylon.

In 1542, the King of Kotte, Bhuvaneka Bahu VII, sent a diplomatic mission to Lisbon – the first Asian mission sent to Europe in the Modern Period – to consolidate his political relations with King João III and obtain the Portuguese king's support for his claim as Ceylon's suzerain (*chakravarti*), and confirmation of his succession. The Sinhalese king sent his chamberlain and Brahmin chaplain, Sri Ramaraska Pandita, and wished for his grandson, João Dharmapala, to be crowned in Lisbon as his heir, according to Sinhalese rituals and in the presence of King João III, who would officiate. The event took place in Lisbon's Royal Palace, in the presence of the Portuguese monarch, Queen Catherine of Austria and the court.

Along with the mission, a number of presents were also sent, especially jewellery and ivory pieces, including a set of chests, combs, ivory fans and quartz pieces, which had been produced as gifts from Ramaraska to the Portuguese monarchs. The shapes of the chests and combs followed European models, whereas the quartz jewellery was made in a local style known by the Portuguese as 'the Ceylon style'.

The mission from Kotte stayed in Portugal for a year, during which time Ramaraska learned to speak Portuguese. Upon his return to Ceylon, he became a key figure in the Bhuvaneka court, providing advice on the Portuguese and also taking on the role of artistic agent, procuring luxury ivory products to be sent to Lisbon, some of which were offered by Portuguese monarchs to other European courts (fig. 14).[59]

Moving on to a different context – the Atlantic, rather than Asia – with a different set of products – sugar, pepper, and slaves – and different agents – the trading clans formed by *cristãos-novos* (Jewish converts to Catholicism) – it is interesting to examine the trajectory of João Nunes Correia. He was a Portuguese *cristão-novo* who would have arrived in Brazil around 1582, when the sugar business was rapidly intensifying in the colony. He settled in Pernambuco and managed to join a complex trading network led by the main Sephardic trading clans. As an active member of society in Pernambuco, his trading relationships linked him with the most important Portuguese merchant groups, from Flanders and Amsterdam. And as owner of an immense fortune, proprietor of a sugar mill, and a merchant, he had stakes in the slave trade, dealt in brazilwood and was known to be directly involved in the pepper trade. He was thus an important man, with influent friends in different sections of society. His status led to his being repeatedly denounced to the Inquisition, arrested in 1592 in Bahia, sent to Lisbon to be interrogated and tried by the General Council of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, and ultimately released due to lack of evidence.[60]

It is indicative of this social group's financial importance that 'Portuguese' and '*cristão-novo*' were synonymous terms in the context of the great European commercial emporiums from the beginning of the 17th century.[61] From an economic and financial perspective, one must also highlight the role of Portuguese and *cristão-novo* bankers who settled in Madrid during the union of the Iberian Crowns (1580–1640). This was the sector that showed most interest in the Pacific Route as a way of reaching European

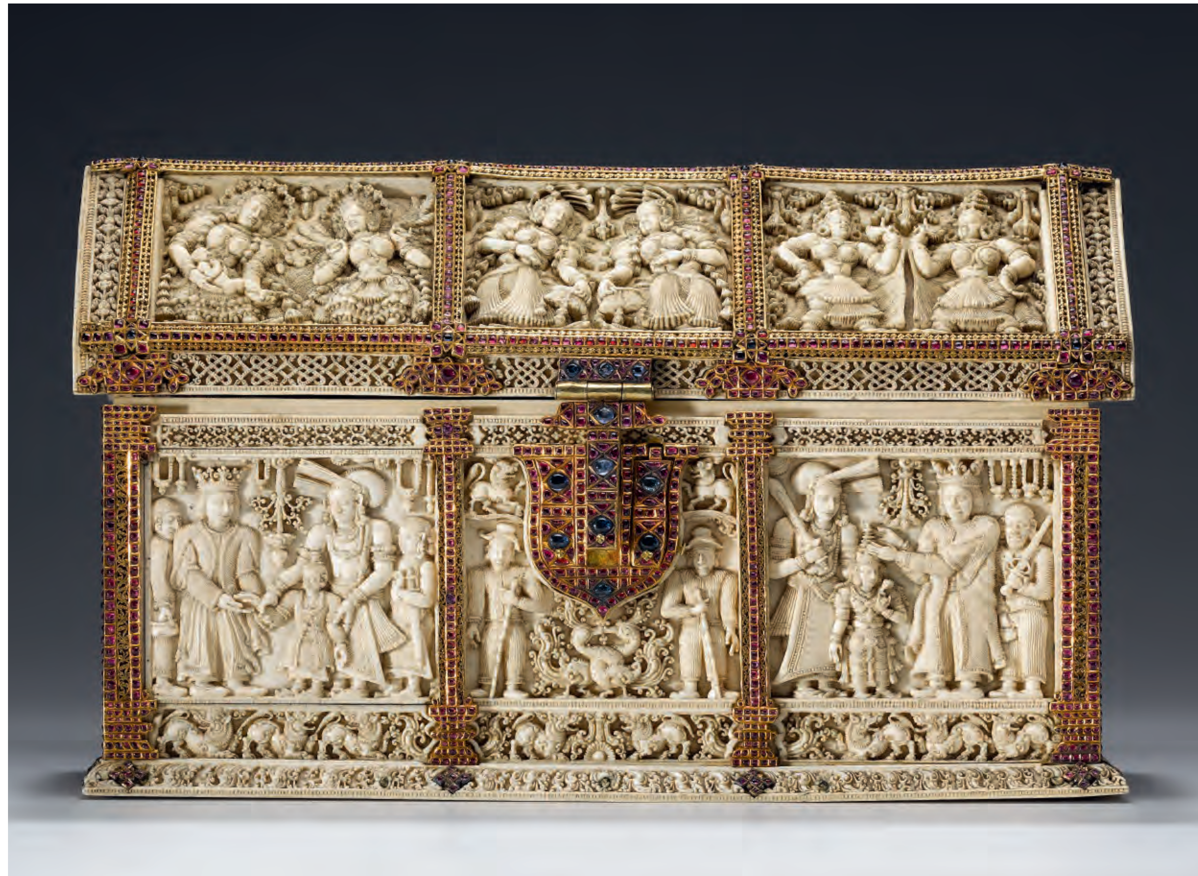

FIG. 14
Coronation casket and detail. Ivory, gold, rubies, sapphires, H. 18 cm, Kotte, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), around 1543

KAT. 1241, DI002350, BSV,
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markets, and they established a network of agents with interests in Mexico and Peru. People like Jorge de Paz and Afonso Fernandes da Costa were part of this group, and their capital took on a trans-Pacific dimension.[62]

In the last three decades of the 17th century, the Cape Route (or 'India Run') recovered from the arrival of European maritime powers in Asia – albeit on a much smaller scale than the levels of trade observed during the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries – through a trade that was powered by a new logic. From this moment onwards, vessels from the India Run began occasionally touching on Atlantic ports on the western coast of Africa, or in Brazil, opening the way to contraband. After it was founded in 1549, Salvador da Bahia became one of these ports where it was forbidden to stop, in accordance with the India Run regulations adopted in 1565. However, just as had been the case in Asia, with the routes between Macao and the Philippines, the legislation on Atlantic trade was hardly an impediment. From 1672, direct journeys from Goa to Lisbon began to include Bahia as an authorized port of call on the way back, and the inclusion of this leg became even more commonplace from 1690, when gold was discovered in Minas Gerais.[63] Thus, Brazil became a port of arrival for vessels from the India Run even before they reached the mouth of the Tagus, in Lisbon.

Objects and images

In a well-known passage, Pyrard de Laval (ca. 1578–ca. 1623), a French navigator who left a written account of his voyages to the 'East Indies, Maldives, Moluccas and Brazil', refers to the Royal Hospital of Goa, a city he visited (fig. 15). His description is the result of lived experience and is particularly important because it describes the inside of one of Goa's most important buildings, which, like much of the old city, has since been lost. The hospital was where, on arrival of a vessel on the India Run, any passenger would be brought who showed symptoms of disease, or of extreme fatigue, after what was one of the most demanding maritime voyages of the age – several months at sea interrupted only by brief and occasional stops to stock up on water.

According to Laval, *Car aussitôt qu'un malade est guéri et sorti de là, l'on ôte sa couchette, qu'ils nomment esquife, avec tout l'attirail, de sorte qu'il n'y a point de lits dressés, qu'il n'y ait [de] malades. Ces couchettes furent promptement dressées. Elles sont faites au tour, couvertes de laque et de vernis rouge, quelques-unes sont bigarrées, et d'autres dorées; les sangles pour les enfoncer de coton, et les oreillers de toile blanche remplis de coton, et le matelas et couvertures sont de soie ou de toile de coton façonnée à toutes sortes de figures et couleurs. Ils appellent cela gouldrins* [For, as soon as a patient is cured and leaves the hospital, his cot, which they call a skiff, is removed, along with all of its implements, so that there are no more prepared beds than there are patients. These cots had been promptly appointed. They are beautifully made, covered in lacquer and red varnish. Some have various colours, others are golden. The straps to fasten patients to the beds are made of cotton, and the pillows made of white cloth, stuffed with cotton; the mattresses and covers are made of silk or cotton cloth, fashioned with all manner of figures and colours. They call these 'godrins'].[64]

The richness and exoticism of these beds and cots, lacquered in red, sometimes with gold inlays, were matched by the silk covers and coverlets (named *godrins* in Portuguese) – stuffed quilts that were not only colourful but also exuberantly decorated. Apart from this universe of furniture and textiles, Chinese porcelain also occupied a privileged place, as, according to Laval, *Tous les plats, écuelles et assiettes sont de porcelaine de la Chine* [Every dish, bowl and plate is made of Chinese porcelain].[65]

Laval's account of the Goa Hospital points to a fact that is widely known, and yet often forgotten: what was considered a luxury in Europe wasn't necessarily so in a colonial context. The same can be said of the 'exotic' (a term which, as in the case of China porcelain, can be associated with the concept of luxury itself): exoticism is in the eye of the beholder. In fact, this word, derives from the Ancient Greek *eksotikos*, meaning, literally, 'from abroad', and this is the precise meaning given to the word by Rafael Bluteau (1638–1734) in his famous *Vocabulário Português Latino*, published in Coimbra between 1712 and 1721: 'Strange. A thing originating from outside of the land'.

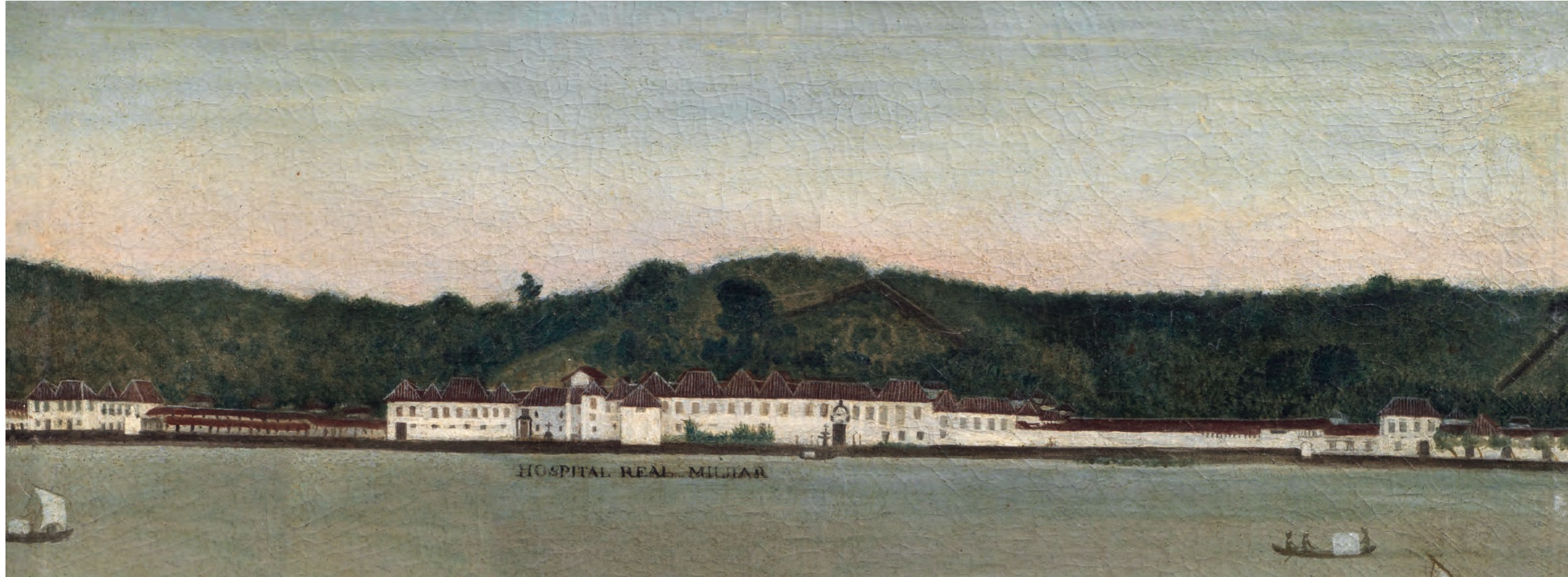

FIG. 15
Oil on canvas (detail). Gentio de Cabaia, Gentia de Lançol – Hospital Real Militar Goa, India, 1829's. H. 66 cm W. 55 cm

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An exhibition held a few years ago at the Museu Nacional do Azulejo, in Lisbon,[66] explored one of the premises of Peter Mason's work, which inspired the exhibition's title: the idea that the exotic is never at home.[67] According to this author, the exotic never exists *a priori*, meaning it only surfaces after having been discovered. Furthermore, one of the conditions for something to be exotic is its ability to awe us – and, going back to Laval's writings, we can tell that a sense of awe underpins them. It is with a wondrous gaze that he describes some of the rooms at the Goa Hospital, to the point of stating: *Cet hôpital dont est le plus beau, que je crois, qu'il y ait au monde, soit pour la beauté du bâtiment et des appartenances, le tout fort proprement accommodé, soit pour le bel ordre et police qui y est* [This hospital is the most beautiful that I believe to exist in the world, not only for the beauty of the building as well as its furnishings, all of which are carefully appointed, but also for the meticulous order and neatness that it presents].[68]

According to Mason, in order for the exotic to be apparent, it must be taken out of its original context and transferred into a new environment or, to put it in another way, recontextualised. Thus, what is valued are not the 'original' geographical and cultural contexts, but the object's ability to adapt and take on new meanings in a new one. Thus, because it is the result of a continuous process of decontextualization and recontextualization, the 'exotic is never at home'. As an act and a gesture (of resetting and reframing), the exotic emerges when an object is taken from its original context or when it is purposefully produced in that context to be given a foreign (external) use, and, consequently, a use that is distant and outside of its original reference.

In the work of Dutch author Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563—1611), who penned *Itinerario, voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huygen van Linschoten naar oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Itinerary, journey or navigation towards the East Indies, or Portuguese Indies), published in Amsterdam in 1596 after his five-year stay in Asia, there is a curious excerpt about the 'reinóis', or the people who originated from the kingdom (of Portugal). Linschoten writes that this is 'a mocking nickname for recent arrivals from Portugal, who are still not familiar with the customs and other Indian-style ceremonies.

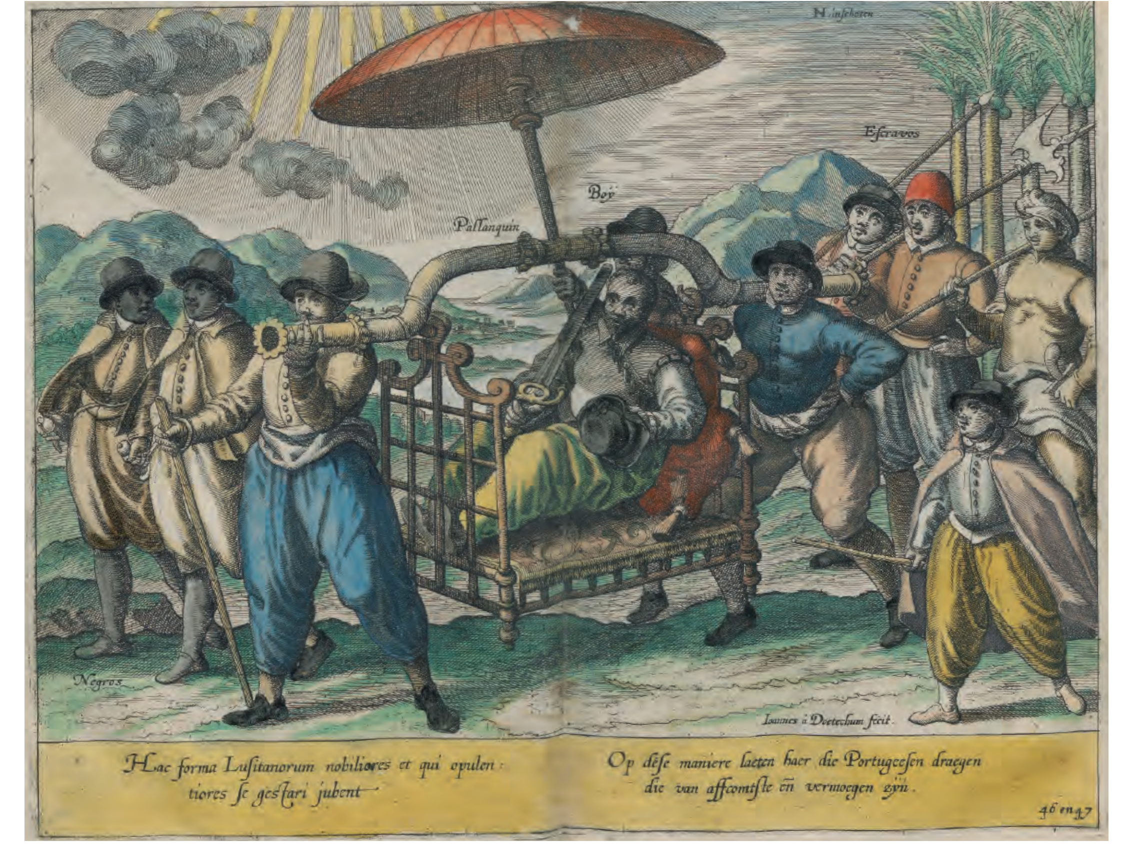

FIG. 16
Portuguese man travelling in a palanquin
'Itinerario' by Jan Huygen van Linschoten

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, T FOL 133 (RARIORA) PT. 1

At first, these people are often called on the street until such time as they become used to Indian ways, to which they manage to adhere wonderfully well' (fig. 16).[69]

For the Portuguese and Luso-Asian population in the overseas territories, who quickly adapted to the new climate and to some customs and traditions of their new surroundings, the use of several raw materials and objects that would be considered exotic in other contexts (namely, in Europe) became a necessity. Gaspar Correia's mention, in his *Lendas da Índia*, that Afonso de Albuquerque used to complain of 'the loss he incurred by feeding people in porcelain objects' became widely known.[70]

From the outset, practical reasons led to the use of local timbers, minerals and textiles, along with the technologies and manufacturing techniques of each region, which also went hand in hand with a tendency to integrate local decorative elements. This hybridity and material, technical and decorative eclecticism represent the most striking element of so-called 'Portuguese colonial art'. These are mostly small or medium-sized objects that could be transported by one or two people, in keeping with the nomadic lifestyles of most of these individuals, whether they were religious agents, soldiers, members of the administration or merchants.[71] They are made from materials including sissoo wood, teak, ormosias (timbers from the Indian subcontinent), hinoki cypress (for pieces made in Japan), embellished with a coating of mother-of-pearl and/or lacquer, and carvings or decorations in ivory; other materials included porcelain, quartz, gold, silver or metal alloys, with decorations made from precious or semi-precious stones, coloured glass, silk, cotton, or wool, all which may or may not have been joined by metallic wires. Together, they make up a universe of objects of astounding material and visual richness.

It was through this combination of techniques and materials that, for instance, the production of Christian art in India gained proximity to the artistic training of local artists and craftspeople.[72] A vivid example of this is provided by works in wood, such as furniture or carved wooden altar fronts, panels in bas-relief and church pulpits, or by imagery made in materials such as ivory and gold, which combine European with Indian forms and details, thus making way for 'the tendency and decorative exuberance of

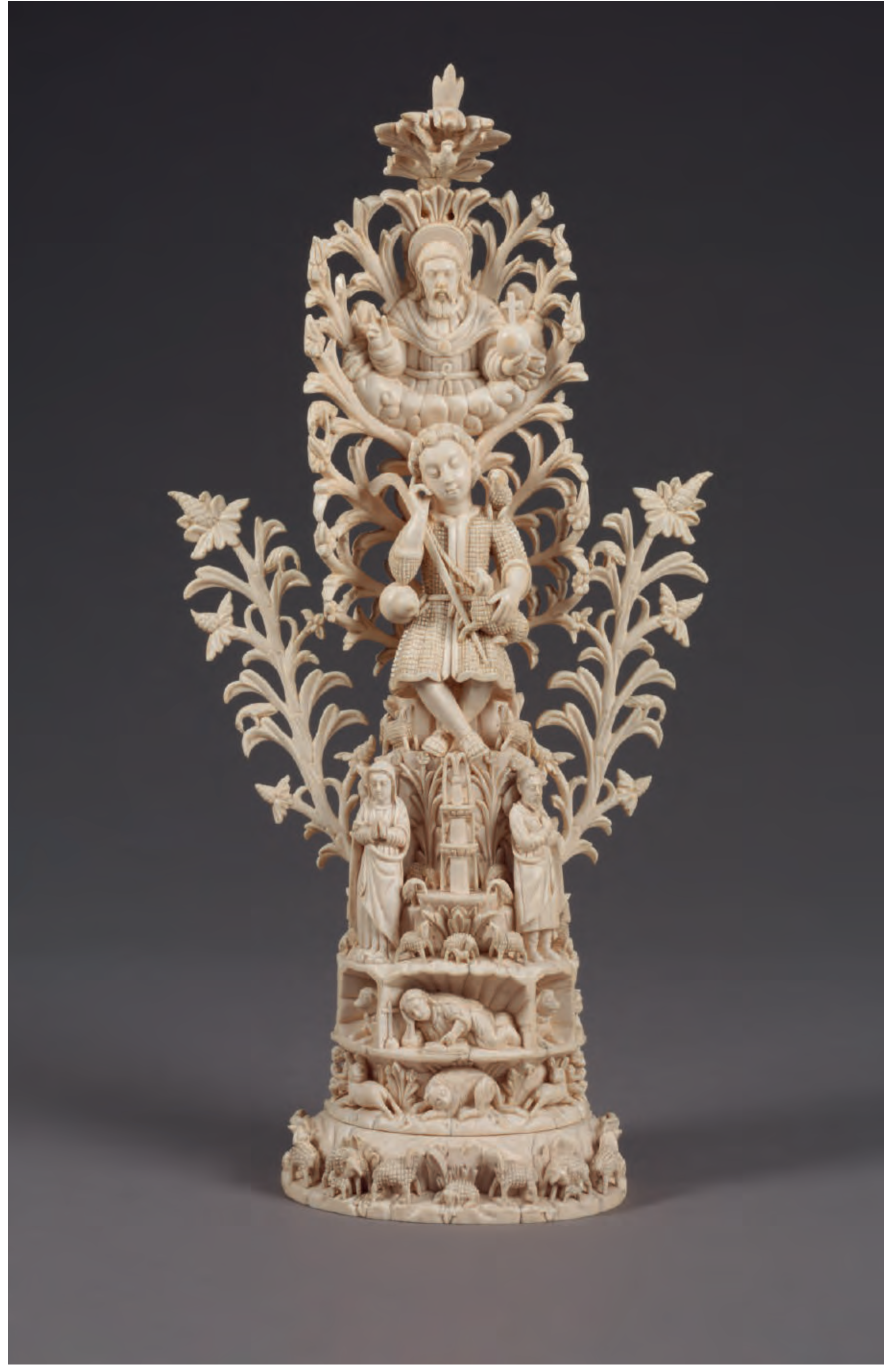

FIG. 17
Group 'The Mount of the Good Shepherd', ivory. Indo-Portuguese (Goa), ca. 1650

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Hindu art, which transforms the art of wood carving and sculpting into a platform for dialogue between the forms and the meanings of Christian and Indian arts'.[73]

Within the realm of ivory images, a recurring example of the symbolic interactions between different cultures and religions is the image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd (fig. 17). In the words of Rui Oliveira Lopes, this model is formally echoed in India by images of the Buddha meditating before his enlightenment. Thus, we witness parallel ways, formally and conceptually, of depicting ideas of purification, liberation from the earthly realm, and spiritual ascension: 'these examples of bas-relief sculpture allow us to conclude that there is a mutual acknowledgement between the contemplative nature of Christianity and the meditative nature of Hinduism and Buddhism, which underpins a dialogue of form and meaning, uncovering a close relationship between universal and primordial principles'.[74]

Even in a city like Goa – of all the 'Portuguese' cities in Asia, perhaps the one where religious proselytism was most present – not even the establishment in 1560 of the General Council of the Holy Office of the Inquisition managed to put an end to the disarray of habits and all manner of excesses, to recall the words of Geneviève Bouchon.[75]

This was simultaneously the Goa of the Counter-Reformation, the 'Rome of the Orient', with a Roman Catholic cultural and spiritual framework, and one of the places where daily life was most obviously ruled by new habits. Inside Goa's churches, the liturgical furniture, altar pieces, pulpits, altars and fonts are decorated with lotus flowers and cashew plants, with celestial entities such as *nagas*, *nagini* and *apsaras*, as well other divinities from the Hindu pantheon and imagination.[76]

Documental research carried out in Goa by Vítor Serrão revealed information on carved wooden altarpieces made by Indian artists for the church of the Augustines. Although, in 1591, it was a Hindu master who had made the carvings in the pulpit of the College of the Society of Jesus in Cochin, by 1621, the works in the church of Nossa Senhora da Graça in Goa had been handed over to Babuxa, a master of religious imagery. He was responsible for the sculptures at the Santa Mónica convent for cloistered nuns, where one of the most fascinating pictorial cycles of mural paintings left over from the Portuguese presence in Asia can be found, and for the main altarpiece at the church of Nossa Senhora da Graça. This documentation reveals that Babuxa was in charge of the carved works, working with Santopa, carver of the works at the cloister for Augustine nuns. During that undertaking, which lasted from 1620 to 1635, these artists were joined by the *reinóis*, Diogo Moniz and Manuel Rodrigues, the latter being the artist responsible the carpentry for the church's high choir.[77] An important testimony of this is the chest for ecclesiastical robes, which would then have been placed in the sacristy. We know that much of the furniture belonging to the Augustine cenoby was distributed among several churches on the outskirts of Panjim, Goa's new capital, during a period that stretched from the closure of the convent, in 1835, and the building's collapse (the dome collapsed in 1842 and the façade in 1931).

FIG. 18
Three-section altar frontal, Lisbon, ca. 1650
Polychrome faience.Provenance: Carmelite convent of the Coimbra region. On deposit at MNAz, Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon, Portugal (Collection Museu Nacional de Machado de Castro)

MUSEU NACIONAL DO AZULEJO
©FRANCISCO MATIAS, DGPC/ADF

At the church of Graça, where we find remnants of ceramic plaques with Mughal coating next to typically Portuguese tiles, we see that, contrary to the practice throughout the kingdom, the latter are placed on stretches of wall characterized by rectangles framed by simple friezes. This is precisely the same type of decoration we find in numerous Islamic, or Islamic-inflected architecture, usually buildings from the Mughal Empire, such as the Red Fort in Agra, founded by Emperor Akbar in 1565. Either through their presence in Goa or, later, in the Bengal region, especially in Hugli, the Portuguese in general, and missionary orders in particular, established fertile relations with this empire, whose cultural roots were in Persia. The Augustines, who were particularly active in Persia, will have taken to their main church in Goa models of mural coatings derived from the cultural area they knew best as the result of proselytising.[78]

Conversely, on return trips, the Portuguese tile began showing evidence of Persian, Indo-Persian and Indian influences, which started being integrated into its design from the 17th century, especially in frontispieces.

Careful attention was devoted to altar tables, which were fundamental pieces of furniture during religious ceremonies. These were often richly adorned with embroidered cloth placed over the front of the altar, and gadroons hanging on the sides, while the altar top was covered with a tablecloth hung at the front to form a pelmet. These various textile components could sometimes be reduced to a single piece, whose decoration nonetheless maintained the memory of its different elements. This can be seen in many of the tile panels that have remained *in situ* or in museums, such as the frontal ornament of the three-section altar front, originally from a Carmelite convent in the Coimbra region and today part of the collection at the Museu Nacional do Azulejo, Lisbon (fig. 18). In this example, the depiction in tile of the embroidered materials is done through lateral bars (gadroons), and of the cloth by an ornamental fringed bar running along the length of the upper part of the tile (pelmet). The illusory nature of this image is further highlighted by the use of a colour pallet that adds yellow to a blue and white background, suggesting laminated gold-thread embroidery in the fringes and other adornments in the ornamental textile of the altar.[79]

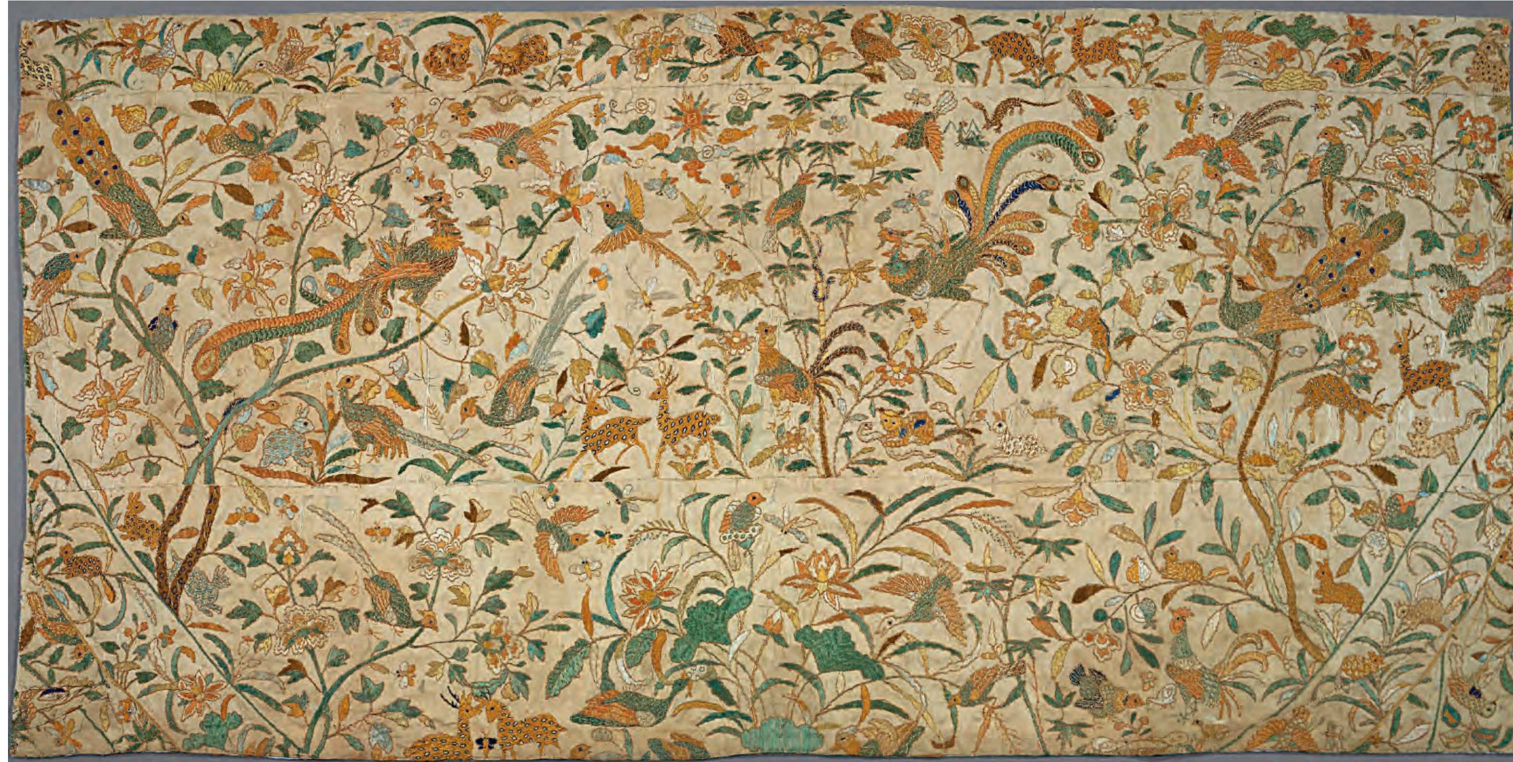


FIG. 19
Altar frontal, China 1575 – 1600, Satin of white silk embroidered with silk thread with no visible torsion, gold laminated paper thread. H.86 x W.195 cm

MUSEU NACIONAL DE MACHADO DE CASTRO, COIMBRA, INV. 6459; T 541 © JOSÉ PESSOA, DGPC/ADF

Indeed, along with porcelain, Asian textiles were among the most sought-after products in Europe in the Modern Age.[80] In 1522, the Portuguese crown decreed that one third of the cargo of all vessels returning to Lisbon from Asia should include blue-and-white Chinese porcelain, and Chinese silk,[81] which, from the second half of the 16th century, were the most frequently traded items, and the most profitable of all products brought to Portugal via the Indian Run.[82]

According to Maria João Ferreira, 'By the seventeenth century, it was the embroidered and woven Chinese fabrics that the Portuguese coveted the most, due to their distinctive features. The manufacturing techniques, utilising expensive materials like silk and gold threads, the novelty and sophistication of the technical and decorative schemes and the place of origin were all prized. Even though Chinese silks only represented between five and six per cent of all the textiles imported from Asia in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, their high reputation reflects the primacy ascribed to silks in Europe since Roman times'.[83]

An embroidered cloth with peacocks, probably made in Macao but intended for the Portuguese market in the 17th century – one of the rare examples of the kind of embroidery sometimes named 'carpet' – shows why Chinese textiles were so coveted.[84] (see entry no. 21) On the other hand, a frontal piece for an altar, produced in India or China in the first half of the 17th century, decorated with foliate and animal motifs (peonies, bamboos, lotus, and peacocks, phoenixes, deer, rabbits and hares, roosters, squirrels, butterflies, dragonflies and others), as well as presenting an image of the sun among Chinese clouds, points to a Chinese recreation of the cosmos, even though its decorative overload is not in keeping with typical Chinese taste,[85] which tended to be more streamlined and selective (fig. 19).

The same decorative details that we find in many of these Asian textiles, especially Chinese ones, are also present in lacquered pieces of furniture believed to have been made in the Bengal region, the Coromandel Coast, and Cochin. Recent interdisciplinary research that encompasses art history, as well as conservation and restoration, has put forward some very interesting hypotheses on the circulation of lacquered objects. One of the instances that has received careful attention is a lacquered shield, currently part of the Museu Nacional Soares dos Santos collection, in Oporto. Ulrike Körber suggests this shield was made in India and sent to the Ryūkyū Islands, or maybe Southern China, to be lacquered (fig. 21).[86]

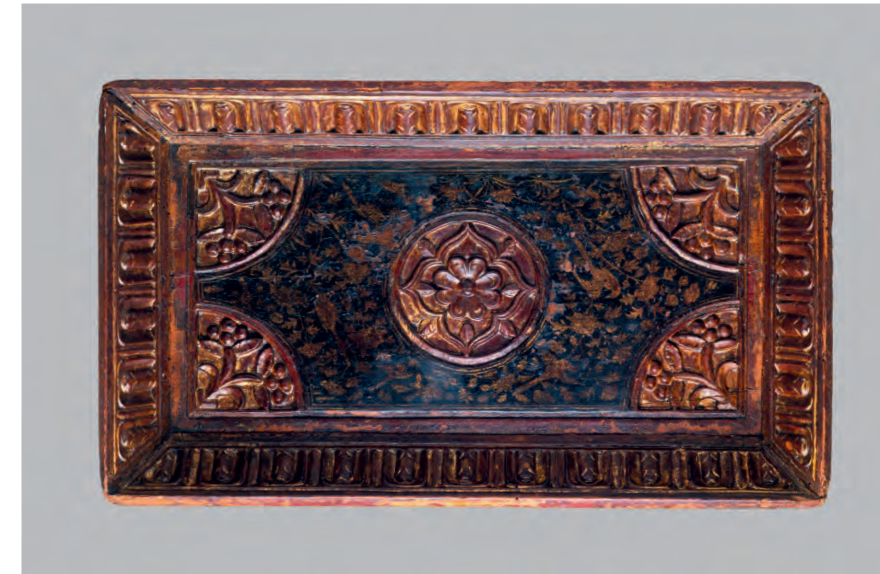


FIG. 20
Tray, carved, painted and gilded, 17th century.
37 x 63 cm

MUSEU NACIONAL DE ARTE ANTIGA, LISBON, INV. 44 BAND ©LUÍS PAVÃO, DGPC/ADF

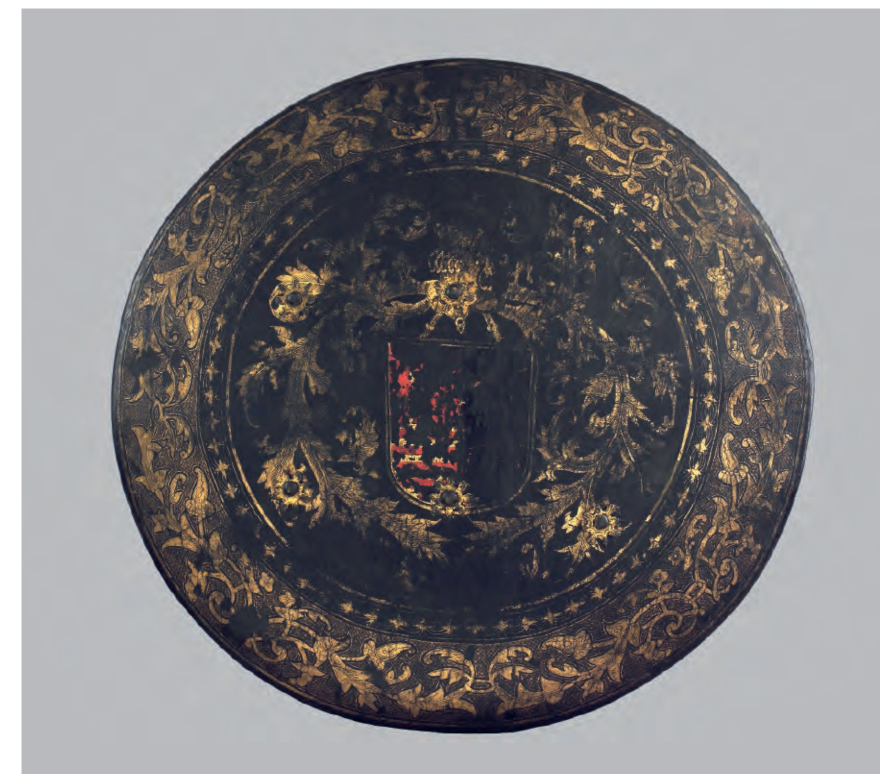
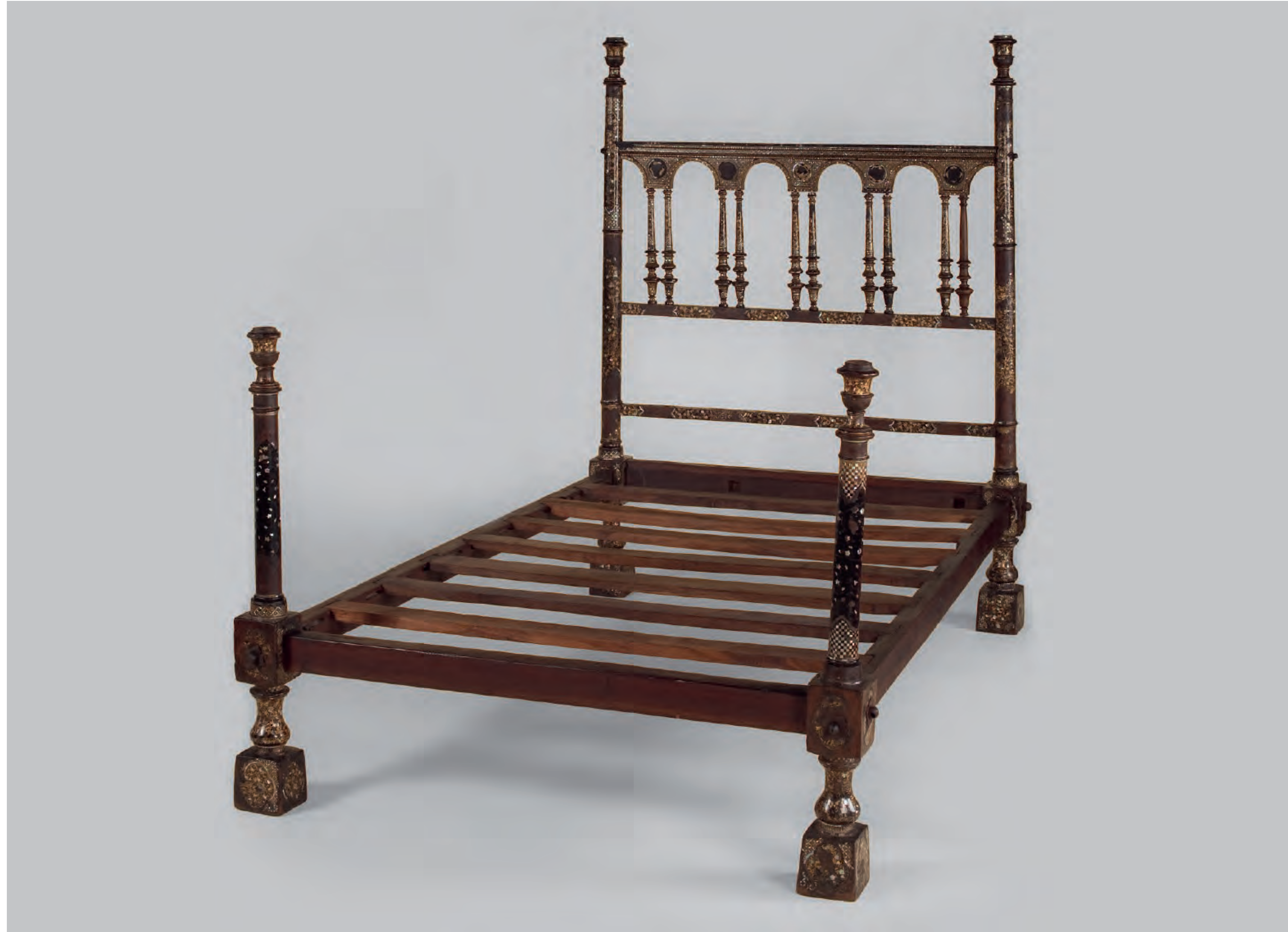


FIG. 21
Shield, unknown artist, Ryukyu Kingdom, Nansei Islands (?), 16th century, lacquer, paint and gilt on wood.
1,9 x 51,5 cm

MUSEU NACIONAL DE SOARES DOS REIS, OPORTO, INV. 63 DIV MNSR ©LUIS PIORRO AND PEDRO SOUSA, DGPC/ADF

Recent research focusing on a series of lacquered objects, especially trays, has shed light on the intense trading practices and migrations that produced these objects, creating an environment that was favourable to circulation and in which certain commissioned pieces could contain raw materials from one place, be designed in another, and manufactured in yet another (fig. 20). In the case of the so-called 'Ryūkyū lacquer', the carved wood of Indian origin (whose engravings point to Indo-Portuguese details) is complemented by lacquered decorations that reflect direct *namban* influences, that is, Japanese art production for the southern European markets, but using manufacturing techniques and materials that are clearly Chinese and Ryūkyūan in origin. In order to interpret these objects, we must broaden our horizons and employ a wider outlook on a map that includes multiple production centres: whereas the wood carvings came from Portuguese India, the lacquered coatings indicate a place of origin somewhere along the coastal areas at the intersection of the South and East China Seas, where the Chinese provinces of Fukien and Guangdong are located, as well as the Ryūkyū Islands.[87]



When it comes to Japan, VOC records reveal that it was common for Indian shields to be lacquered in the archipelago, a process that began when the Dutch settled in Deshima in 1647, but which could have started with earlier Portuguese practices, as evidenced by the paintings on *namban* screens that depict the Portuguese carrying similar shields.[88] Indeed, an incomplete bed frame owned by a Portuguese family with historic ties to India was one of the first items whose study suggested this geographical dispersion. This piece of furniture remained in the family's house in Goa until the end of the 19th century, at which time it was brought to Portugal.[89] From a formal standpoint, it is a model that presents similarities with other known pieces of furniture and follows European typology (fig. 22). Its originality lies in the technique and decoration, first and foremost because its wood is lacquered, bears marks of gold and silver dust (following the Japanese *maki-e* technique, in which the design is made by spreading adhesive metallic dusts), and is inlayed with mother-of-pearl (according to the Japanese *raden* technique, in which a shell, mainly mother-of-pearl, is encrusted in lacquered objects, following a process that involved applying the shell directly onto the wood by lightly cutting its surface). In terms of decoration, and similar to most Japanese lacquered pieces made for the Portuguese/Iberian market, we can see the same foliate, geometrical and zoomorphic ornamentation, with a very meticulous application of gold and mother-of-pearl inlays.

Analysis of the lacquer used on this example led to the conclusion that it is *Melanorrhoea usitata*, not *Rhus vernicifera*. The former is one of three species of lacquer tree growing in Asia, in this case in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma). The other two are *Rhus vernicifera* (Japan, China and Korea), and *Rhus succedanea* (Vietnam). This fact is consistent with information from the VOC *dagregisters* (daily registries), which note an impressive amount of Thai lacquer being carried to Japanese territory (between around 50 and 100 tonnes per year) during the period 1636–1643.

This bed frame might therefore have been commissioned in the first half of the 17th century, before the Portuguese were expelled from Japan, by a Portuguese/Luso-Asian family living in Goa. In addition, it might have been made in India but taken to Japan, a country well known for the art of lacquering, along with the raw materials needed (*M. usitata*, certainly less expensive than the Japanese *Rhus vernicifera*), originating from Siam, present-day Thailand. After being lacquered in the Japanese archipelago, this piece of furniture would then have been returned to Goa, where it remained for two centuries.

The above is therefore another piece of material evidence for a link already glimpsed in the written documentation and confirmed by an extremely rich and multifaceted material culture. This culture distinctly shows the melding of different commissioning networks within India that directly linked the Portuguese settled in India, Southeast Asia and Japan, and reveals the existence of different markets, as well as the large-scale circulation of other products, objects and goods.

Equally fundamental, from a conceptual and methodological viewpoint, is the understanding that this material and visual culture cannot be reduced to spatial and/or ethnographic categories, so that terms such as 'Afro-Portuguese', 'Indo-Portuguese', 'Sinhalese-Portuguese', and 'Sino-Portuguese' are not only reductive, they also dangerously distort this context. Indeed, a broad, far-reaching, borderless perspective is the only way to look at these objects, and it is only by superimposing all these different cultural references that their meaning can be fully understood. In order to interpret them, we must therefore not forget, just as Roland Barthes suggests for the study of literature, that: *Nous savons maintenant qu'un texte n'est pas fait d'une ligne de mots, dégageant un sens unique, en quelque sorte théologique (qui serait le 'message' de l'Auteur-Dieu), mais un espace à dimensions multiples, où se marient et se contestent des écritures variées, dont aucune n'est originelle: Ie texte est un tissu de citations, issues des mille foyers de la culture.* [We now know that a text is not made of a line of words, producing a unique, somewhat theological meaning (which would be the 'message' from the Author-God), but a space of multiple dimensions, where various writings are married and contested and none of them is an original: the text is a weaving of quotations, arising from the thousand homes of culture].[90]

The previously mentioned phenomenon of the church of Nossa Senhora da Graça in Goa, which highlights not only visual and material hybridity, but also the connections between Luso-Asians and local artists, can also be seen in Macao – perhaps even more expressively – at the Jesuit Church of Madre de Deus, of which only the façade remains today (fig. 23). The history of this church is inextricably linked to that of the College of São Paulo, which was founded on December 1, 1594. Documentation from that time reveals that between 150 and 200 Chinese labourers worked on the building's construction for about a year and a half. This new college, which came to take on the status of what would today be considered a university, functioned not only as the last stage in the training of clergy from Europe, but also as a training centre for indigenous members of the clergy, meaning Japanese and Chinese priests. The college's building, similar to the Nossa Senhora da Assunção church built subsequently, is situated in a strategic spot in Macao's geography: central, on high ground and located next to the fortress of São Paulo, or Nossa Senhora do Monte (with a gateway dated 1626). This hill was the chosen spot for a big church, which was built thanks to contributions from merchants and inhabitants, and whose first stone was laid in 1602, according to a design attributed to the Jesuit missionary Carlo Spinola SJ (1564–1622), a mathematician of Italian origin.

This was an enormous building, on a scale rivalled only by buildings in Goa (the basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa dates from 1593): built with a Latin-cross plan and a deep apse, the temple is structured by three naves with five spans, measuring about 40 m in length and 20 m in width, and thus requiring large columns to support the dome. Of all the descriptions of this church's interior, that featured in the *Carta Ânua* from 1603 is perhaps the most complete, giving an account of the white carved stone that made

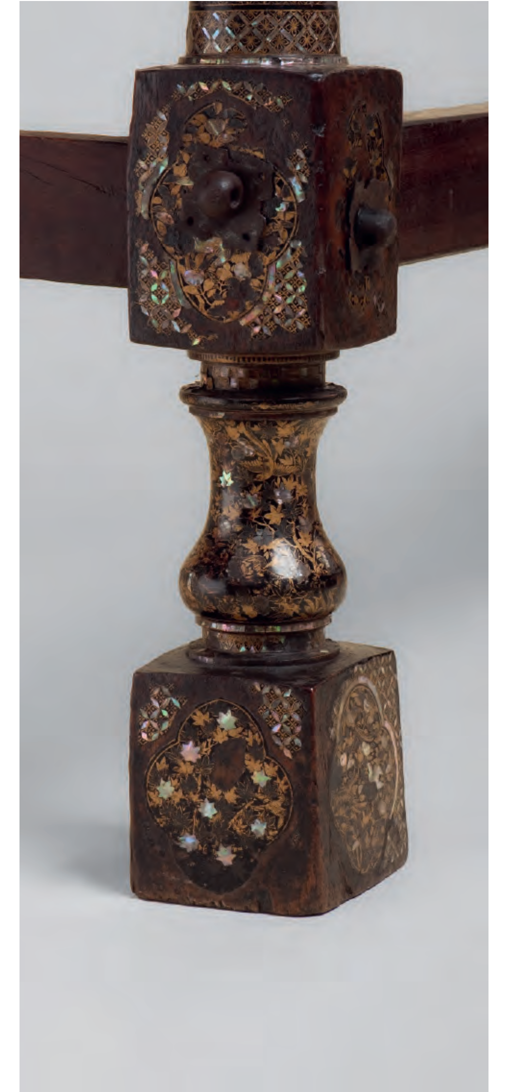


FIG. 22
Bed and detail. Japan (?), probably 1st half of the 17th century. Wood, lacquer (Melanorrhoea usitate), gold and silver powder (maki-e) and mother-of-pearl inlay (raden). Iron fittings. H. 157 x L. 195 x W. 122 cm

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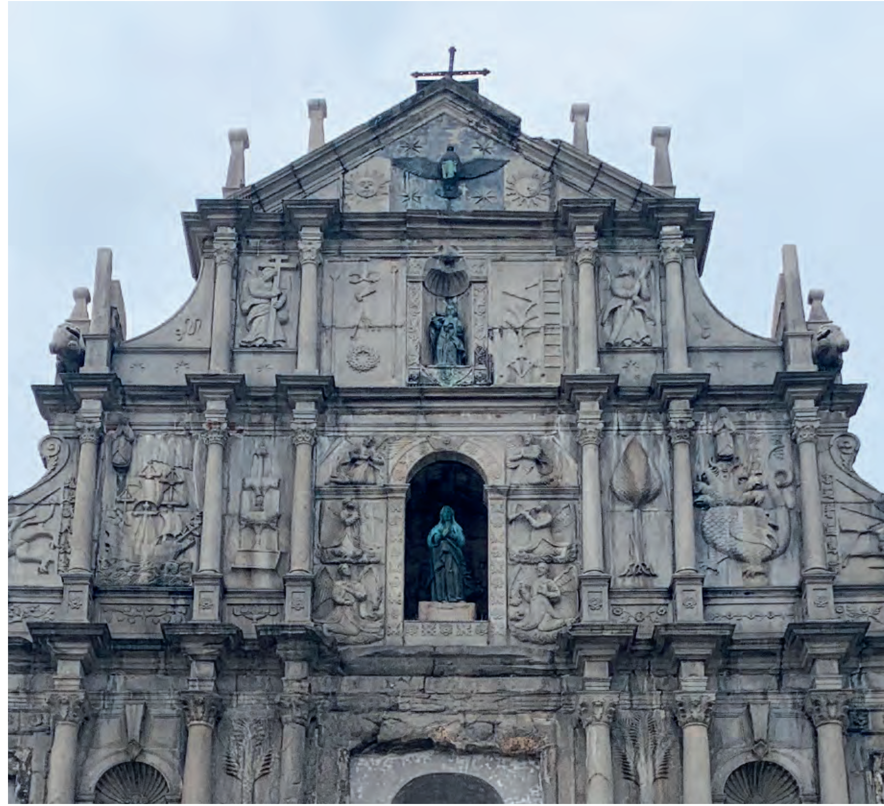

FIG. 23
Igreja da Madre de Deus (detail), Macao.
PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANCISCO VIZEU PINHEIRO

up the arches of the main and collateral chapels ('the first three stone arches made in this land', i.e. China), their coverings in fine Japanese wood, the walls that were over 12.5 m in height, and the eight columns made of thick wood that supported the magnificent dome, which could have been built even higher had it not been for typhoons.[91]

At the Madre de Deus church, the richly carved ceiling is described by the English merchant and voyager Peter Mundy who, alongside the Florentine Francesco Carletti (who visited in 1598–1599) was one of the most celebrated foreigners to visit the city at the beginning of the Modern Age. He writes: 'The rooffe of the Church aperteyning to the Collidge (called St Paules) is of the fairest Arche that yett I ever saw to my remembrance, of excellent worckmanshippe, Don by the Chinois, Carved in wood, curiously guilt and painted with exquisite collours, as vermillion, azure, etts., Devided into squares, and att the Joyning of each square greatt roses of Many Folds or leaves one under another, lessning till all end in a Knobbe'.[92]

This was therefore the result of work carried out by Chinese carpenters working in a European style – flat, with panelled ceilings and hanging rosettes – even though the chosen colour pallet (red, blue and gold) points, as with churches in India, to a different atmosphere than the one that prevailed in the city or the rest of Catholic Europe, a fact echoed by many other texts. An example of this comes from a document titled *Relação da Viagem que os Portugueses de Macao fizerão em Japão No anno de 1685,*[93] which tells the story of the events that unfolded after the arrival in Macao of a Japanese ship, which had been adrift with twelve Japanese people on board. The document tells of the visit they made to the Jesuit church and, later, in a conscientious effort to please these visitors, of a dinner that was served to them at the College of São Paulo. It must be taken into consideration that, by this point, the Portuguese had long been expelled from the archipelago (in 1639) and relations between the two kingdoms were definitively severed.

'One day, the high priests invited them to supper at the College, and they came and were exceedingly well treated, having been dined at a room carpeted in their fashion, and all else was likewise done according to Japanese custom, for which they were very pleased and delighted'.[94]

The reference to the existence at the Jesuit college in Macao of a room 'carpeted in their fashion', namely, in a Japanese style – a clear reference to the use of *tatami*, or cushioned mats made of woven wicker and grass, which covered the floor of Japanese dwellings – is information that can be linked directly to some of the images in *namban* screens that depict Jesuit churches and homes in Japan, suggesting that European missionaries transposed a Japanese custom onto Macao soil.

In front of the church, there was a churchyard with a majestic staircase, one of the last additions to the building, made in 1640. Indeed, this structure can still be seen today and, together with the façade, became Macao's calling card. It is precisely the façade of the *Mater Dei* that makes up the most fascinating element of this church, and which, paradoxically, only stopped changing its face after the fire of 1835. Of all the Catholic church façades built by the Portuguese in Asia, the Madre de Deus church remains the most cryptographic, and the one that most attests to artistic and cultural syncretism.

Incorporated into the previously existing building, the façade observed today, made of granite and built between 1620 and 1637, is probably not identical to the one originally designed by Spinola (even if he is traditionally considered its author), which would have been simpler in its planimetry and figurative cycle. The reason why it is unlikely that Spinola designed this work is precisely because of its iconography, which therefore requires analysis.

The church's remarkable stone reredos has five levels divided into seven sections, and with reference to a classical aesthetic, includes 30 freestanding columns, 10 obelisks, 6 bronze statues and 18 high-relief sculptures with religious motifs. Framed as a square (H. 24 m x W. 23 m), the whole can be read starting from ground level, perhaps the only one made as Spinola initially intended, where three doors open up, separated by pairs of ionic columns, the middle one bearing the inscription MATER DEI. 'From there upwards, to a height of 24 metres, the most unexpected exotic decorations dominate, becoming more intense as it gets higher, driven by the rhythm of the mighty monolithic shafts made in smooth granite'.[95]

On the second level, with its rhythmically placed rectangular windows, which are aligned with the doors below and framed by columns with Corinthian capitals, the middle one flanked by two palm trees – symbols of resurrection and the immortality of the soul – there are four niches with larger-than-life-size bronze statues that reference four saints from the Society of Jesus. These are St Ignatius of Loyola and St Francis Xavier, in the centre, and Francis Borgia and Aloysius Gonzaga, on the sides, the first referred to as 'holy', the second as 'blessed'. This set allows for the establishment of a probable date for the whole façade, because Loyola and Xavier were canonized in 1622 (even though the news only reached Macao two years later), Borgia was beatified in 1624 (he would only be canonized in 1671), and Gonzaga in 1621. This specific set of images is clearly linked to the consecration of the Jesuits. The church thus becomes a work of praise, sending a message both within the Society of Jesus and, crucially, to the religious orders that were present in Macao and, more generally, in the East, including the Philippines.

On the façade's third level, where the composite order dominates, the main highlight (first and foremost because of its central placement) is the niche holding an image of the patron, Our Lady of the Assumption, framed by angel musicians enveloped in clouds of an Eastern design. Missing from the set are two bronze angels that used to be shown in a semi-circle crowning the Lady, according to a description made in the Codex 1659.[96] On each side of the lily-adorned niche (a sign of the Virgin's purity), there are images that are common to both European and Chinese cultures, as Gonçalo Couceiro well pointed out.[97] Occupying the central section of the work are symbols such as the fountain of life (representing immortality and wisdom), the cypress (a symbol of eternal life for Christians, immortality for the Chinese and incorruptibility and purity for Japanese Shintoists), the seven-arm candelabrum (an allusion to the Old Testament and to Christ's spiritual light), the cross (a source of life and salvation), the *Speculum sine macula*, or miraculous mirror,[98] the carrack (the 'Vessel of Mystic Contemplation'), or the *Triumphus Ecclesiae*, one of the symbols of the Post-Tridentine Catholic Church's triumphant tone,[99] and 'the Virgin crushing the head of a dragon', as explained by the caption in Chinese script.

The triumphalist tone associated with the carrack and its correlation with the struggle between good and evil are highlighted, if not actually rendered, in the Madre de Deus church's façade, by the two truly exceptional figures engraved on the enormous volutes on either side of this work. The first, on the left, is a speared monster, with a Chinese engraving reading, 'The devil incites man to do evil'. The second, on the opposite side, represents a skeleton – an absolutely unprecedented image to place at the frontispiece of a Christian temple – with the engraving, 'Remember death and thou shall do no evil'. Completing the set are two lions, symbols of strength whose significance in Chinese culture is well known: protective guardians, which is why they frequently feature in religious and palatial architectural works.

The triumph of the Society of Jesus, represented through its four main figures, and the church itself, is matched, on the fourth level, by an image of Christ the Redeemer, Saviour of the World, surrounded by the instruments of the Passion and by angels holding the column and the cross. On the volutes, the ropes and bales of wheat recall the sacrament of the Holy Communion, as well as death and resurrection, a symbol further highlighted by the statues of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, pillars of the Tridentine Church. Finally, to top off the set, the triangular pediment boasts an engraving of the dove of the Holy Spirit surrounded by the sun, the moon, and the stars.

While it seems certain that this 'stone-carved catechism', to borrow a term coined by Rafael Moreira,[100] was aimed at the other religious orders present in Macao, as well as at the ranks of Protestants who, both in Europe and in Asia (where they were increasingly present), questioned the Tridentine orthodoxy practised by the Jesuits, it is equally certain that another of the targeted audiences, perhaps even the main one, was the Chinese community. Only thus can the existence of a work of such absolute syncretism be explained. It is also why the design of this façade cannot be attributed to Carlo Spinola, who only left Lisbon for Asia in 1599, arriving in Japan in 1602. Rather, the design is believed to be the work of another missionary: Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), one of the shrewdest missionaries at the service of the Portuguese Patronage in the East and, along with Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607), a fundamental figure of the Christian missions in China. Ricci was in charge of designing the strategy that came to dictate how Christianity itself was presented to the higher ranks of Chinese society, less as a religion than as a moral and philosophical doctrine based on the principle of reason.[101] One of the ideas that Ricci most fiercely defended – which also became one of his most controversial – was the idea that exposure to the Christian concepts one wanted to spread should be very carefully planned. From an early stage, Ricci maintained that only the fundamental principles of Christianity should be taught, by which he meant the existence of God, creator of the universe; the immortality of the soul; the reward of the just; and the punishment of sinners. It was based on this strategy that he prepared his catechism – *Tianzhu Shiyi*, or *The True Meaning of the Lord of the Heavens*, which he started in 1593 and published for the first time in late 1603 or early 1604. This book, which achieved enormous success among the literate because of its numerous references to classical texts, the elegance of its writing style and its criticism of Buddhism and Taoism, 'limits the general aspects of Christianity in such a manner that they end up having few similarities with a real catechism'.[102]

Besides reflecting a new experience and understanding of Christianity, which had practical consequences for the China mission, the principles advocated and promoted by Ricci are interesting because they allow us to set up a visual parallel between, on the one hand, the three concepts that were announced and explained in *Tianzhu Shiyi* and, on the other, the three top levels of the Madre de Deus façade in Macao.[103] In this context, the third level, bearing the sculpture of the Virgin, the symbols of the Old Testament and the images with Chinese captions (the famous skeleton and the Virgin stepping on the monster, or seven-headed hydra), would be matched by the principle or concept of the punishment of sinners and salvation of the just. The second level, with the Saviour of the World surrounded by the instruments of the Passion, corresponds to the ideas of the Resurrection and immortality of the soul. Lastly, the pediment, with the dove of the Holy Spirit flanked by cosmogonical elements (sun, moon and stars), represents the idea of God as creator of the universe.

The process that Naoko Frances Hioki named 'visual bilingualism',[104] where one work can speak different languages aimed at culturally different audiences, from both an aesthetic and a religious point of view, finds in this façade one of its most surprising manifestations. It is not about acknowledging the hybridity of these compositions, but about accessing the intended scope at a higher level. Doing so might allow us to state that, whereas visual bilingualism necessarily entails a hybrid nature, the opposite is not necessarily true.

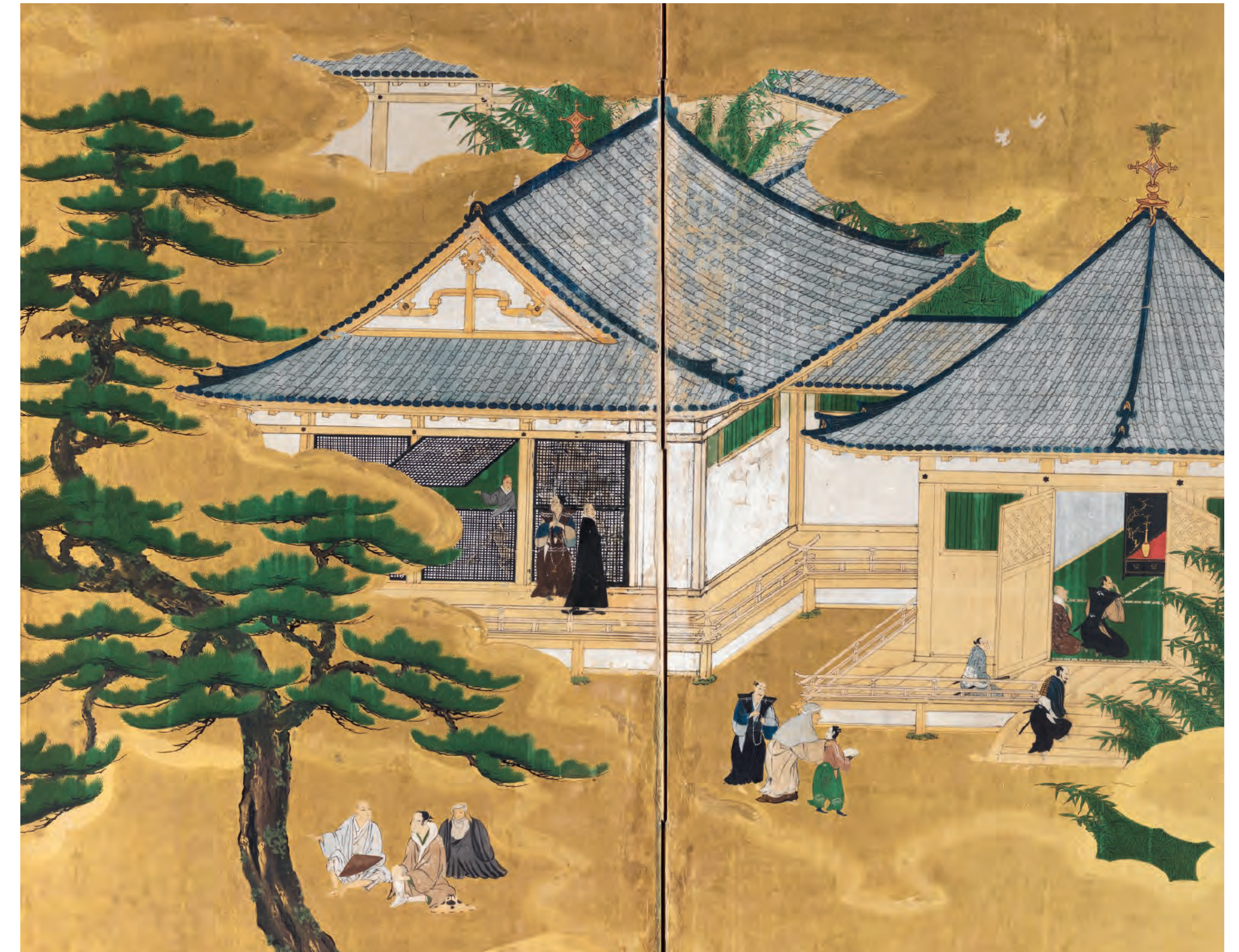

FIG. 24
Namban folding screen (detail), seal of Kano Naizen / school of Kano, 1593 – 1601, Wooden frame covered with paper, gold leaf, tempera, silk and lacquered; metal. H. 178 x W. 366 cm

MUSEU NACIONAL DE ARTE ANTIGA, LISBON, INV. 1641 MOV, ©LUÍSA OLIVEIRA/JOSÉ PAULO RUAS (DGPC/ADF)

For the message to produce the intended effect, it was not only necessary to enter into contact and dialogue with Chinese culture and elites, but also to lay the groundwork for a process of progressive familiarity, among this elite, with the European and Christian culture and imagination. This practice was promoted and brought to fruition by Ricci and Ruggieri from the outset, that is, as soon as they reached Shiuhing, in the southern region of Kwangtung province, on September 10, 1583. The examination of Ricci's writings compiled by Pasquale D'Elia and Tacchi Venturi, namely *Storia dell'Introduzione del Cristianesimo in Cina*,[105] which Ricci authored shortly before his death, as well as the account by his companion, the Jesuit Sabatino de Ursis (1575–1620), makes it possible to follow the evolution of this process – an analysis that should, ideally, also include Jesuit letters and some remaining movable assets – and to state that Ricci only succeeded as long as his Chinese converts failed to understand him completely.[106]

Macao, to where the painting seminar opened by Jesuits in Japan was moved, became, especially throughout the 17th century, an artistic centre connected to Peking (through Jesuit missionaries), Goa, Manila, the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru, and Europe.[107] Japan is excluded from this map from 1640 onwards, when the Portuguese were definitively expelled. However, up until that point, and even after the missionaries were expelled in 1614, the Macao–Japan axis was fundamental, from both an economic and a cultural standpoint. So much so, in fact, that the 'Western-style' painting which had begun in the Japanese archipelago was taken forward on Chinese soil, while certain Japanese artistic practices were transposed onto European buildings, such as the College of the Society of Jesus, as previously mentioned.

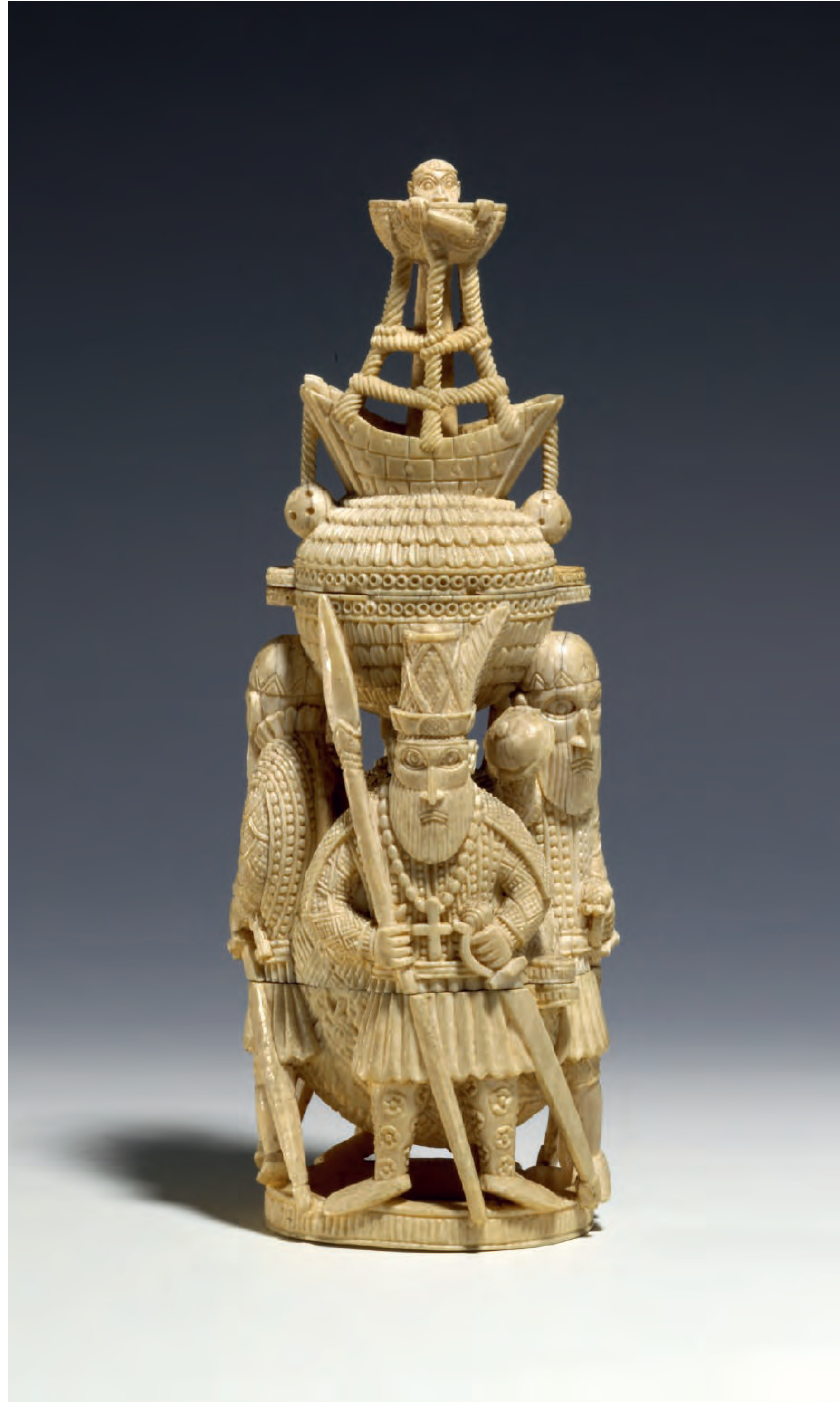

FIG. 25
Carved ivory salt-cellar, in three parts, Elephant Ivory, Sixteenth Century, Benin, British Museum, London

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This appropriation of local architecture is perhaps most evident in Japan. The Jesuit missionaries' adjustment to Japanese ways of living became apparent from the outset as they adopted Japanese wooden buildings interconnected by hallways, allowing for a hierarchy of rooms and a distinction between the private and public spheres. The buildings also had ample roofs, interior spaces enclosed by sliding doors, and sparse furniture, with floors covered in *tatami*. These domestic styles are echoed in the images painted on *namban* screens representing the carrack known as 'Black Ship' and the *namban-jin*, or 'southern barbarians', a reference to people from southern Europe who docked in Japan from Malacca and, from the end of the 1550s, from Macao (fig. 24).[108]

In this furthest borderland of Portuguese presence in Asia, which was never subjected to the Portuguese crown's control or jurisdiction, the presence of merchants and, above all, missionaries from Portugal, Spain and Italy brought about vigorous adjustments to language, food, dress, ceremonies, ways of inhabiting spaces and the very objects with which people surrounded themselves, reflecting new customs that sprang from this contact with other civilisations. In Japan, it seems to have been the apex of a process that began at the end of the 15th century, when contact was made with African communities on the Atlantic coast, and which gave rise to the commissioning of new kinds of objects, both in the civil and religious realms.

Visual and written depictions of the Portuguese (fig. 25) on first arrival and after miscegenation with local populations point to a need for them to be seen through their belongings, which thus became defining elements of their identity. From the outset, these people were identified through the objects they owned and displayed; as inhabitants of a foreign land, it was therefore they who were perceived as exotic, rather than the native populations.

Epilogue: ruling over the seas

The progressive ruling over the seas on an increasingly global scale, first by the Iberian powers and then by the emerging European maritime empires, especially from the 17th century onwards, led to the gradual 'politicisation of the oceanic space'. However, according to Elizabeth Mancke's analysis,[109] the definition of oceans as a politicised international space is an integral but little-examined part of modern European expansion in the period between 1400 and 1800, and it is therefore important to explore the implications of this development of European imperialism and global ruling. Mancke sees the first modern European empires as characterized by ruling over the seas, not the land, especially when it comes to Africa and Asia, where, in many cases, political and economic control by local cultures and civilisations prevailed. This marks a fundamental difference from the other empires of the time – Ottoman, Safavid, Mughal, Ming and Qing – that Europeans found in Asia, which were land empires. The Ottoman Empire, during the kingdom of Suleiman (r. 1520–1566), known as 'the Magnificent', reached the peak of its geographic and commercial expansion, stretching from Tabriz (Iran) to Bagdad (Iraq) in 1534, and to Georgia in 1549. Its borders extended from present-day Hungary to the Caucasus, from Crimea to the eastern Mediterranean, the Arabian Peninsula and northern Africa. However, for Europeans, who in 1529 saw the Turks lay siege to Vienna (which they would do again in 1683), the long learning process of controlling the seas would become essential for the emergence of European land empires in the 19th century, both in Asia and Africa.

These new 'maritime' empires of the Modern Age bore little resemblance to the land empires,[110] which were characterized by their adjacent provinces. In this respect, it is interesting to analyse the term 'colony'. In his essay on the origin and evolution of this word, Francisco Bethencourt draws attention to the fact that, in Raphael Bluteau's *Vocabulário* (1712), 'colony' is defined as 'people who are sent to some newly-discovered or conquered land in order to settle it', and 'settler' as 'one of the founders of a colony', and 'farmer'.[111] Towards the end of the century, in the first edition of *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, by Morais da Silva (1789), there is reference to the classical origins of the term – *colonus* derives from *colere*, or 'cultivate' – and it is said that 'the Romans unburdened the Republic by sending colonies to the countries they conquered'. These terms thus acquire a rural meaning, as well as one pertaining to expansion and the creation of new communities. Gradually, the concept becomes more complex, and derivations start emerging, such as 'colonial' (pertaining to the colonies), 'colonise' and 'coloniser', which came into use in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Between the 15th and 18th centuries, the colonies of these new empires were separated not only from their respective metropoles but also from other colonies. Another important piece of information is that the distances were not only for the most part enormous, but the colonies were also dispersed among different continents, hence separated by oceans, which made many of these settlements a lot more vulnerable. Examples of this are provided by Dutch colonisation in Asia (Ceylon, Japan (first Hirado and then Deshima/Nagasaki), Batavia (Jakarta) and Macassar, in Indonesia, Formosa (Taiwan), Malacca, and Cochin); in North America (with the foundation of New Amsterdam, present-day New York, in 1612); in South America (Brazil); and in Africa (St George of the Mine, in present-day Ghana, and Arguin, in Mauritania). British colonisation

included North America (Jamestown, Plymouth, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania); the Caribbean (Jamaica, the Virgin Islands); India (Masulipatam, Madras, Calcutta, Serampore); the Indian Ocean (Coco Islands); Japan (Hirado); and Africa (Gambia, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone), while French colonisation ruled territories in North America (New France, Québec, Texas); South America (French Guyana and Brazil); the Caribbean (Haiti, Martinique, Dominican Republic); India (with the foundation of Puducherry (Pondicherry) in 1673); the Indian Ocean (Island of Réunion, Mauritius and Seychelles); and Africa (Gambia). Least mentioned is the Danish presence in or occupation of places like Trincomalee (Ceylon); Tranquebar and Oddeway Torre, in Malabar (India); Pipli and Serampore (western Bengal), Gondalpara (Bengal); Virgin Islands (Caribbean); Nicobar Islands (Indian Ocean); North America (New Sweden, Delaware River); Africa (Gulf of Guinea); and the Caribbean (Saint Barthélemy).

The Spanish empire is also worthy of mention, not only because of the proximity of the two metropoles (Portugal and Spain), politically expanded during the union of the Iberian crowns (between 1580 and 1640), but also because it was mostly a land-based empire. However, as Mancke rightly points out, the three areas of the American continent where Europeans undertook the most significant land conquests before the 18th century were directly linked to the subjugation of important pre-Colombian political or economic systems (in Central Mexico, Peru, and the region of the Great Lakes and the Atlantic coast in North America).[112] Other than this, with few exceptions, all other European empires undertook territorial incursions in the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa only in the 19th century. Bethencourt even suggests a parallel between Greek (with the foundation of autonomous cities) and Roman (with the integration of territories) colonisation, on the one hand, and the European empires, on the other. Whereas the English empire in North America and the Caribbean followed a Greek model, with the colonies enjoying relative autonomy until the beginning of the 18th century, the Iberian case resembled the Roman model, even though the big rupture with these classical models came precisely from Portugal and Spain, through the domination and integration of local populations by evangelisation of the natives.[113]

Another noteworthy aspect regarding the 'politicisation of the oceanic space' by the Europeans is that conflicts that had existed within European borders were transferred to the Atlantic and Asian seas. A paradigmatic example of this is the decision, taken by Philip II in 1585, to close Lisbon's spice market to Dutch and English traders, largely as a reaction to the civil war being fought against Dutch Protestants, with the support of the English.[114] Initially, English merchants interested in Asian trading sought a northern maritime route to India, negotiating with Asians via the Russia Company and the Levant Company. After finding no viable solution, they finally used the South Atlantic route to India, sailing through waters dominated by the Spanish and Portuguese. The entry of the first English and Dutch armadas into the Indian Ocean (James Lencaster in 1592, and Cornelis de Houtman in 1596, respectively) were initially no cause for alarm in the State of India, because the East India Company, especially, sought to avoid direct confrontation with the Portuguese. However, confrontations did eventually take place, namely through the Portuguese alliance with local powers, such as in Surat, where the Mughal emperor refused to grant trading privileges in the city to the EIC. As retaliation, the English attacked Indian vessels and took on the Portuguese. Subsequently, the emperor granted the English trading rights in Surat and finally expelled the Portuguese from the city in 1632. In Persia, Shah Abbas (r. 1588–1629) expelled the Portuguese from Ormuz in 1622, with the support of the EIC. Due to its political and financial implications and, just as significantly, to its symbolic impact, the fall of Ormuz determined the formation of the union between the Portuguese and Spanish. In fact, it was even proposed that the pepper route be altered, with pepper shipped to Europe via Mexico.[115] From this point forward, the context of the Portuguese presence, not only in Asia but also in South America and Africa, shifts radically, mostly due to the advances of the VOC in the seas, and attacks become more common, occurring in 1624 in Bahia; in 1637 in Olinda and Recife (Brazil), in Mombasa (Kenya) and St George of the Mine (Ghana); and in 1638 in Arguin (Mauritania). Malacca fell in 1641, the year that Maranhão was also taken.

What was at stake were mostly intra-European disputes elevated to a global scale: 'As these examples demonstrate, the control of oceanic space had become not just a commercial question but part of the construction of power in the European state system'.[116] More than an epilogue, this was the beginning of a new era.

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[1] Flores, 1998, p. 51.
[2] Mark, 2007, pp. 189-211; Afonso; Horta, 2013, pp. 79-97.
[3] Yonan, 2011, p. 244.
[4] Mensch, 1990, pp. 141–57; Ames, 2003, pp. 98–106.
[5] MacDonald, 2006, pp. 81–97.
[6] Mathew, 1997.
[7] Appadurai, 2003, pp. 76-91.
[8] Francisco Bethencourt debates these issues in relation to the concept of 'heritage': Bethencourt, 2015, p. 149.
[9] 'The past is a foreign country' is the opening sentence of L.P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*, published in 1953. It is also the title of a book by David Lowenthal, originally published in 1985 and recently republished by Cambridge University Press (2015). Araújo, 2015, p. 57.
[10] Armitage, 2014, pp. 232-52.
[11] A term that is also applicable to the analysis of European cultural phenomena; see Burke, 2012.
[12] In this respect and on the work Homi Bhabha, see Loomba, 2015, especially pp. 173 and ff.
[13] Vlachou, 2016.
[14] Herren; Ruesch; Sibille (ed.), 2012, p. 6.
[15] Vlachou, 2016, especially pp. 3-4.
[16] Rossini; Toggweiler, 2014, pp. 5-9.
[17] Armitage; Subrahmanyam, 2010, p. xxxi. Armitage, 2014, p. 11.
[18] Harvey (ed.), 2009; Yonan, 2011; Gerritsen; Riello (eds.), 2015.
[19] Fagg, 1959.
[20] Regarding the study of ivories from the Gulf of Guinea, and in addition to the previously referenced works, refer to Bassani; Fagg, 1988, and to Curnow, 1983; Mark, 2007; Mark; Horta, 2011; Afonso; Horta, 2013. See also Bailey; Massing; Silva, 2013, and Pereira, 2010.
[21] Bassani; Fagg, 1988, p. 53.
[22] Pereira, 2010, p. 306 and ff.
[23] Mark, 2007, p. 190
[24] On the meaning of these terms in Portuguese, Peter Mark writes: 'Etymologically both terms appear to refer to these individuals' renegade status, since their presence on the coast was generally not legally recognized by the Portuguese Crown: 'Tangos mãos' (those who hold hands) and 'lançados' (those who are thrown/cast themselves). Some Portuguese sources give the former term as 'tangos maus' (they hold to ill or evil)'. Mark, 2007, p. 191.
[25] Mark, 2007.
[26] This term has been borrowed from Albuquerque; Ferronha; Horta; Loureiro, , 1991.
[27] Mark, 2007. The dating of these objects is not consensual. Some authors (namely, Bassani and Curnow) argue that the production of such works ended as early as the first half of the 16th century.
[28] Mark, 2007, pp. 189-90.
[29] Refer to the introduction and first chapter in Pereira, 2010.
[30] Afonso; Horta, 2013.
[31] See Silva, 2007, especially pp. 287-88.
[32] Pereira, 2010, p. 317 and ff.
[33] See Stockhorst, 2010.
[34] Pereira, 2010, p. 14.
[35] See, as an example, Bianchi, 1997, pp. 275–89.
[36] Moreira, 2002, pp. 11-21.
[37] Berry, 1994, p. 101.
[38] Godinho, 1990, p. 375; Curto, 1988, p. 193.
[39] Miranda; Serafim, 1988, Vol. 1, T. I, p. 183. Parker, 2006, p. 33.
[40] Cummins, 2004, p. 4.
[41] Frank, 1998, p. 170, based on Colin Clark's work from 1977.
[42] McCants, 2007, p. 435.
[43] Herculano, 1884**.** For the scope of products that could be bought, turn to pp. 119-133. Alessandrini, 2021, pp. 43-61. https://rime.cnr.it/index.php/rime/article/view/539/803
[44] Oliveira, 1804, p. 181.
[45] For a discussion on the concept of luxury, refer to the aforementioned work by Berry, 1994, as well as the article by McCants, 2007, especially p. 455 and ff.
[46] Gommans, 2015, p. 32.
[47] Frank, 1998, p. 324.
[48] Mancke, 1999, p. 228.
[49] Boxer, 1969, p. 40 and ff.; Oliveira, 2003, p. 37 and ff.
[50] Thomaz, 1994, p. 210.
[51] On Portuguese colonial cities, see Brockey (ed.), 2008.
[52] In 1516, there would have been around 4,000 Portuguese people in Asia, and in the 1,540s, between 6,000 and 7,000, most of whom evaded the scrutiny of the Portuguese authorities. Subrahmanyam, 1995, p. 105.
[53] Oliveira, 2003, p. 53.
[54] On Chinese porcelains commissioned by the Portuguese, see Pinto de Matos, 1997; Pinto de Matos, 2000, pp. 66-75; Pinto de Matos, 1993, pp. 40-56; and Pinto de Matos; Monteiro, 1994. See also van Campen, 2015.
[55] Corrigan; van Campen; Dierks, 2015, p. 15.
[56] Lopes, 2011, p. 314.
[57] Boxer, 1990, p. 64.
[58] Subrahmanyam, 1995, pp. 148-149.
[59] The Sinhalese chest representing the coronation of João Dharmapala by King João III can now be found in the Munich Residenz. van Campen, 2015, p. 78; Gschwend, 1985; Gschwend, 1998, pp. 195-227; Gschwend; Beltz (eds.), 2010; Bailey; Massing; Silva, 2013, pp. 90-93.
[60] Ricardo, 2006.
[61] Russel-Wood, 1998, p. 183.
[62] Valladares, 2001.

[63] Subrahmanyam, 1995, p. 261.
[64] Laval, 1998, Cap. 1, pp. 524-25.
[65] Laval, 1998, Cap. 1, p. 532.
[66] Museu Nacional do Azulejo, 2013.
[67] Mason, 1998.
[68] Laval, 1998, pp. 525–26.
[69] Linschoten, 1997, Cap. 31, p. 157.
[70] Correia, 1858-1866, p. 409. On Afonso de Albuquerque and material culture in the Indian Ocean, see also Moás, 2016.
[71] Moreira; Curvelo, 1998, pp. 532-70.
[72] See the work by Maria Helena Mendes Pinto on furniture, Bernardo Ferrão Tavares Távora on ivory images, Nuno Vassallo e Silva on jewellery and Vitor Serrão on painting in Goa.
[73] Lopes, 2011, p. 149.
[74] Lopes, 2011, p. 170.
[75] *Cette contrainte n'empêchait ni le désordre des mœurs, ni les excès de tout ordre dont les récits des voyageurs se firent maintes fois l'écho.* [This constraint did not put a stop to the disarray of habits nor to all manner of excesses, often chronicled in the accounts of voyagers.], Bouchon, 1999, p. 298.
[76] Lopes, 2011.
[77] Serrão, 2010, pp. 337-74.
[78] Curvelo, 2012(a), pp. 335-48.
[79] Museu Nacional do Azulejo (coord.), 2012, cat. 2, pp. 166–71.
[80] See Hallett; Pereira (eds.), 2007.
[81] Direcção-Geral do Livro, dos Archivos e das Bibliotecas, Torre do Tombo, Lisboa, Corpo Cronológico, 3, maço 8, doc. 1. See Gschwend, 2015, p. 85; Gschwend, 1985.
[82] Ferreira, 2015, pp. 147–68.
[83] Ferreira, 2015, p. 156.
[84] Museu Nacional do Azulejo (coord.), 2012, cat. 3, pp. 172–75.
[85] Museu Nacional do Azulejo (coord.), 2012, cat. 5, pp. 179-83.
[86] Körber, 2013, pp. 45-56.
[87] Körber, 2019. Polido, 2016
[88] Körber, 2013, pp. 45-56.
[89] Curvelo, 2010, 'Introdução / Introduction' and cat. 40, pp. 155–61.
[90] Barthes, 1986, pp. 52–53.
[91] Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Códice 1659, fl. 84. To be compared with the version kept in Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, 49-IV-66, fl. 87v-88.
[92] Mundy, 1919, pp. 162–63.
[93] Biblioteca da Ajuda, Jesuítas na Ásia, 49-V-19, fls. 576v-577. The complete transcription of this document can be found in Curvelo, 2007, pp. 549–56.
[94] Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, 49-V-19, fl. 577v.
[95] Moreira, 1999, p. 164.
[96] Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Códice 1659: Notícias relativas à Igreja de São Paulo, fls. 83 and ff. To be compared with the version kept in Biblioteca da Ajuda, *Jesuítas na Ásia*, 49-IV-66.
[97] Couceiro, 19999, pp. 177–96; Couceiro, 1994, pp. 55–61.
[98] Pereira, 1999, p. 234.
[99] Pereira, 1999, p. 234.
[100] Moreira, 1999, p. 166.
[101] Pina, 2001, p. 65.
[102] Pina, 2001, p. 65.
[103] This idea was first presented in the author's PhD dissertation: Curvelo, 2007, Part III, Chapter 1, especially pp. 351 and ff. Herein is an adapted version of that text.
[104] Hioki, 2011, pp. 23-44.
[105] D'Elia, 1949. See also Ricci, 1911 and 1913.
[106] Rubiés, 2005, pp. 237-80.
[107] Curvelo, 2007; Tremml-Werner, 2015.
[108] Curvelo, 2015.
[109] Mancke, 1999, pp. 225–36.
[110] See the works by Boxer, 1990 and 1969, as well as Subrahmanyam, 2006, pp. 66–92.
[111] Bethencourt, 2015, pp. 123–24.
[112] Mancke, 1999, p. 227.
[113] Bethencourt, 2015, pp. 129–30.
[114] Mancke, 1999, p. 229 and ff.
[115] Subrahmanyam, 1995, p. 224 and ff.
[116] Mancke, 1999, p. 233.

JAPAN AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW VISUAL AND MATERIAL CULTURE (CA. 1543–CA. 1640)

Alexandra Curvelo

The arrival of the first Europeans in Japan, in 1542 or 1543, and the continuation of contacts from that moment onwards, gave rise in the Japanese archipelago to a material and visual culture that can be characterized as 'new', in that it was the result of interactions between civilizations that occurred for the first time in their history. The objects and images of this new culture included a specific iconography, of which the *namban* screens depicting Portuguese carracks, known as *Nau do Trato* (or Black Ship), and the 'southern barbarians', are a prime example. However, slowly and gradually, other pieces and pictorial compositions emerged, which can only be interpreted through a prism of more long-lasting contacts and deeper mutual knowledge. These images and objects could not have emerged had the foreign presence been sporadic and concerned with purely commercial objectives. What are these pieces? They include paintings mounted onto screens, in rolls or placed in oratories (fig. 91), but also ceramic works (entry no. 45), lacquered objects of different typologies (entry nos. 42, 43, 44, 48, 49 and 50), metal pieces (entry no. 57), and textile fragments. Together, these artefacts form a tangible universe, endowed with a physical and material dimension. However, associated with this universe, there is also a *corpus* of work made up of more less tangible elements, which cannot be seen or touched except through an exercise of the imagination: for instance, music and the instruments with which it was played, or the ceremonial objects.

FIG. 91
Namban Oratory, wood, lacquer (*urushi*), gold and silver powder, copper, mother-of-pearl, Japan, Azuchi-Momoyama period, end of 16th century. H. 47.2 cm, L. 35 cm, W. 5.1 cm

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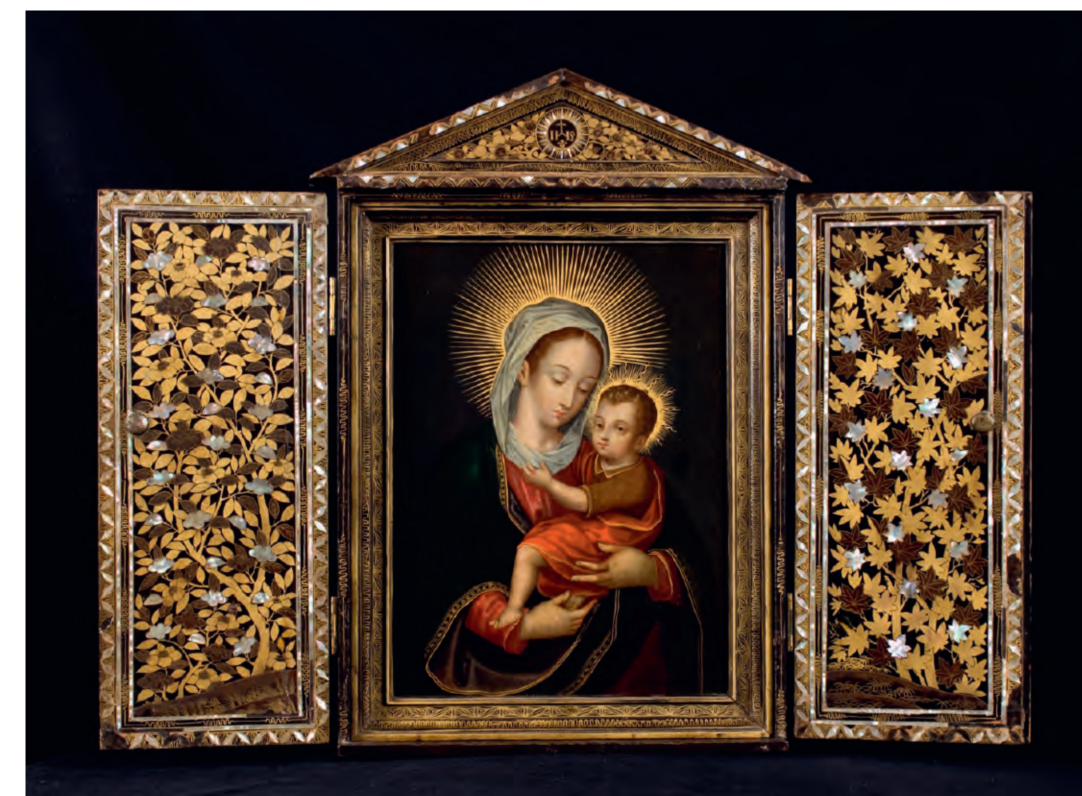

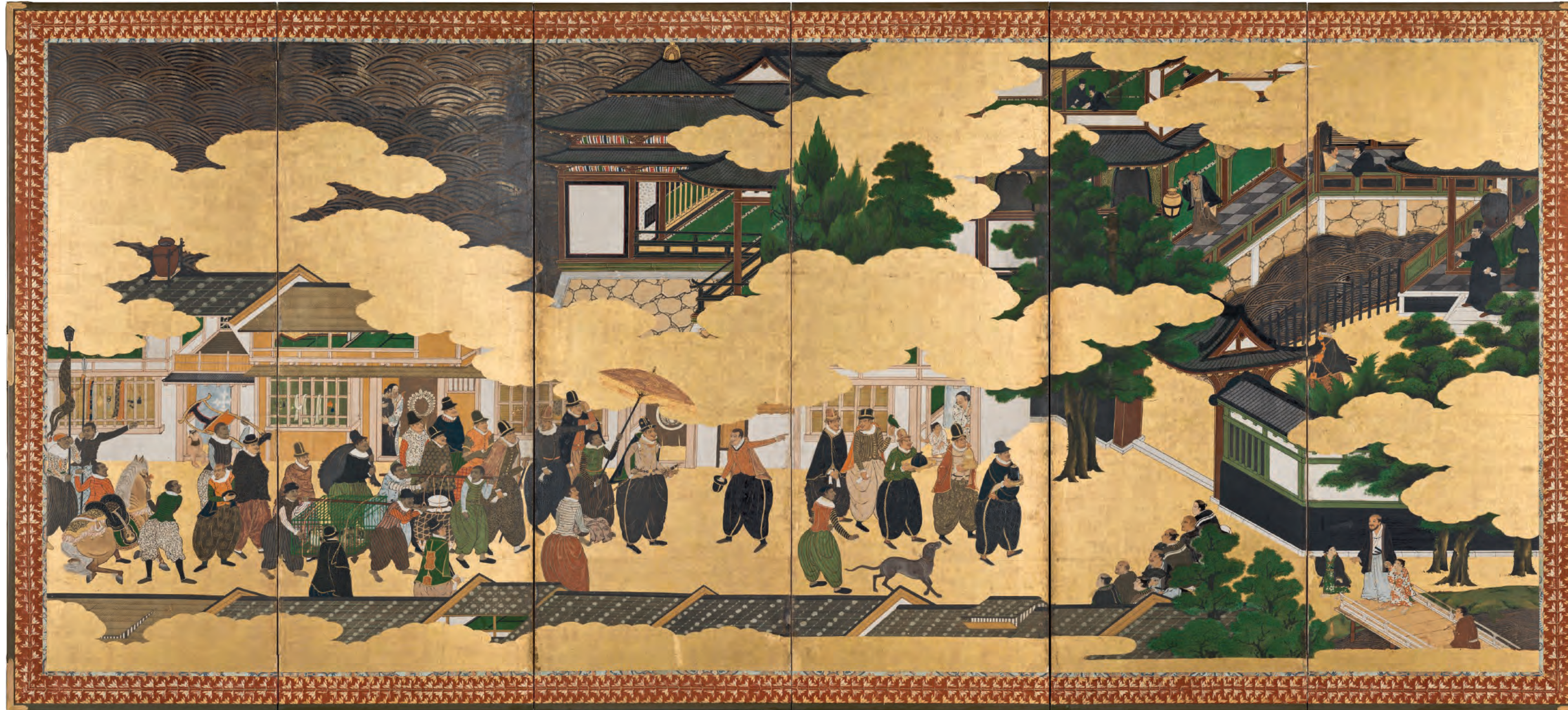

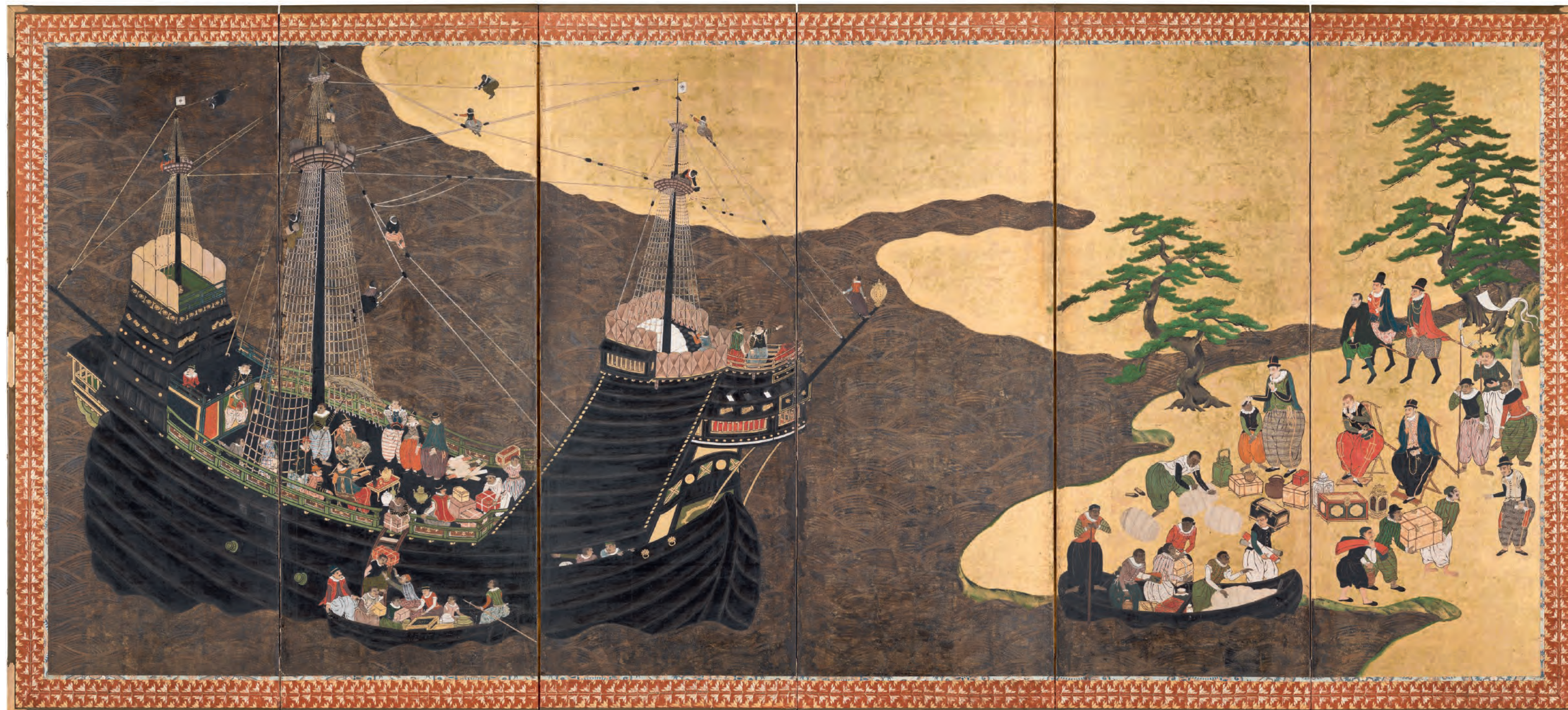

FIG. 92
Namban Screen (pair), Namban Art, 1593-1601, att. Kano Domi, Kano school (inv. nos 1638 Mov and 1639 Mov.), tempera on mulberry paper, gold leaf. H. 178 L. 366 cm

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This new iconography revealed the presence of an 'other' that had never been seen before within the boundaries of Japanese land. Europeans were the predominant non-native group, but other foreigners in Japan included slaves and people from different parts of Asia (such as the Malabar Coast, China, Malaysia, Gujarat), who performed tasks on board ship and who existed on both the lower and higher rungs of the social hierarchy, such as the *Sarangs* and the *Jurubahasas* (local pilots and interpreters), many of whom were from the region of Malacca. The first screens depicting these foreigners established a set of pictorial and iconographic rules that served as a template for subsequent paintings. With some minor variations, most of the repertoire of *namban* screens depicts the Black Ship and its arrival on Japanese soil, the goods that were unloaded, and the parade or procession (the *namban gyōretsu*) that ensued, often heading to the local Jesuit residence, all of which would have been observed by the local population (entry no. 47).[1]

Japanese historiography has set the years following 1591, and the city of Nagoya, in Kyūshū, where Toyotomi Hideyoshi ordered the construction of the castle, as the starting points for the production of *namban* screens with this type of content.[2] It is argued that, in the spring of 1593, when the decoration of the castle was being completed, a group of painters from the Kanō school – including Kanō Mitsunobu (1562/65–1608) – likely visited Nagasaki, which by then was already an important city in terms of its Christian mission and *namban* trade. While visiting this port, they would have had the opportunity to observe first-hand the *namban-jin* ('southern barbarians') and the *kurofune* (the Black Ship), as well as to experience the most cosmopolitan atmosphere of any city in the archipelago.[3] By then, Nagasaki had become a safe harbour, a centre for commerce between Macao and Japan, and the main base of operations for Western traders and missionaries.[4] It is therefore likely that the oldest-known *namban* screens, dated 1593–1605, and linked to the artists Kanō Naizen (1570–1616) and Kanō Domi (dates unknown) (fig. 92), stem from the presence of important members of the military elite in Kyūshū during the Korean campaigns (1592-1598), and from Nagasaki's growing importance. The parties commissioning these works will have been members of the warrior class, as well as rich clients from the Kyoto and Ōsaka/Sakai regions, where the most important painting workshops of Kanō artists were located.

From the moment when the 'exotic' became associated with the presence of foreigners, and with the goods that the Black Ship brought into Japan, a new Japanese pictorial repertoire emerged. Painters from the Kanō school were the first to inaugurate this theme, which rapidly became sought after by a public acutely interested in these people. Though we know that the depiction of certain details, such as the ship, is far from accurate (including characteristics that have been made up or exaggerated), in general, these images record the reality as these painters perceived it (entry no. 46). They appreciated the exoticism of the people and the variety of goods – silk, fabrics, porcelain, furniture, musk, gold, tiger and leopard furs, among others – which led to the *kurofune* becoming associated with traditional Japanese iconographies. Thus, the vessel itself, which established a direct route between Japan and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, came to symbolise fortune, abundance and a faraway, unknown world. Eventually, it also came to be identified with the traditional Japanese treasure ship, or *takarabune*, a symbol of wealth and happiness, and became an auspicious motif, particularly cherished by merchants involved in maritime trade. *Namban* screens could therefore be seen as bearers of good luck and fortune (*engimono*), and if we take into account that some screens belonged to merchant families involved in the maritime trade of Sakai and the coast of the Sea of Japan, this link between the screens and

FIG. 93
Western Manners and Customs,
byobu, Momoyama period (1568-1600),
Anonymous Momoyama-period artist

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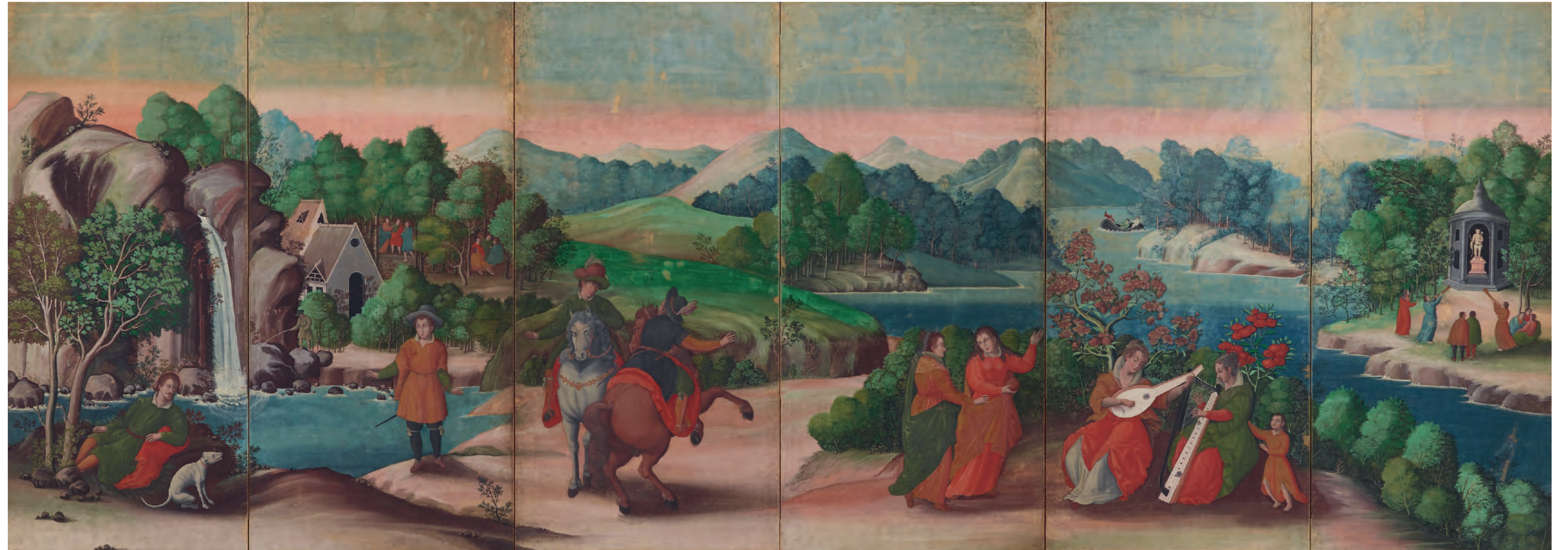

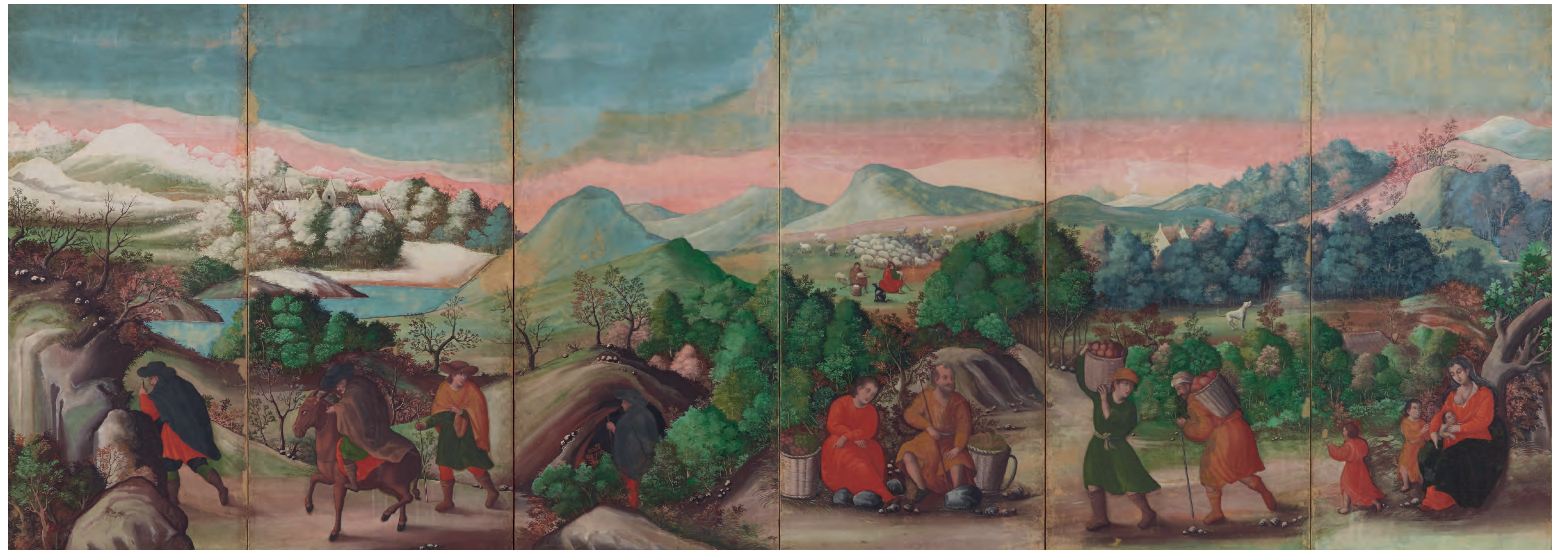

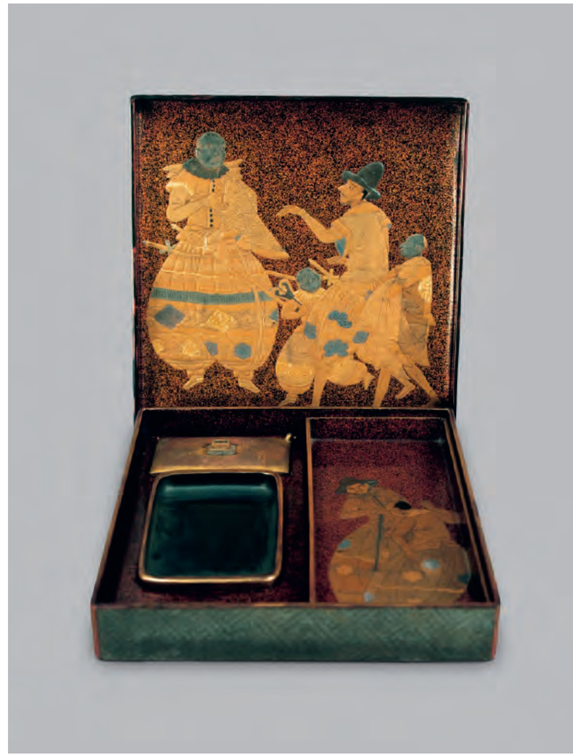

FIG. 94
Writing-box (*suzuribaco*),
black lacquered wood, gold background (*nashiji*),
gold and silver lacquer (*taka-maki-e*), gold and
silver sheets (*heidatsu*), Rinpa School, Japan, 17th century.

DONATED BY PAULO DA CUNHA,
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good fortune would have been reinforced.[5] On the other hand, images of 'southern barbarians' at once a source of curiosity and fear, also became associated with some of their attributes (entry nos. 52, 53, 54 and 55). This explains why members of the Japanese warrior elite class sometimes appropriated a style of dress similar to that of the *namban-jin*. As a cultural and social phenomenon, this relates to the transformation that took place in the Japanese imaginary of the 'barbarian' or 'foreigner', a process that has been termed 'the Indianisation of Iberia'.[6]

Along with the merchants, who acted as a fundamental pillar of the Portuguese presence in Japan, came the missionaries, who disembarked there for the first time in 1549, when Francis Xavier docked at Kagoshima and inaugurated the missionary practice that would be adopted by the Society of Jesus. This mission undertook a strategy of evangelisation aimed at the ruling class, who sporadically converted to Christianity and commissioned objects associated with this new faith. The strategy was based on a form of cultural accommodation, or 'enculturation', first tested in Japan and Brazil during the beginning of the 1550s,[7] which involved the central use of imagery, and which was frequently referred to in letters sent by missionaries to Goa and Europe during the mission's first decades. The reason for this imagery was twofold: on the one hand, paintings and engravings sent from Europe took between two, and two-and-a-half, years to reach Japan, and most remained in Goa or Macao, where religious imagery was also needed. On the other hand, Japan's complex and tumultuous political conditions in the second half of the 16th century – a period that coincided with the territory's unification, ending in 1600 with the Battle of Sekigahara – led to constant travel by the mission, which would became more settled only around 1600, fourteen years before the missionaries were expelled from Japan.

The solution to this dearth of imagery was the creation of a painting seminary, which became fully operational during the 1590s, a period that coincided with the return of the Tenshō mission (1582–1590). This was the first diplomatic mission sent from Japan to Europe, in which representatives of three Christian lords from Kyūshū island embarked on a journey to Portugal, Spain and the Italian Peninsula, culminating in a visit to papal Rome. Their return brought renewed impetus to the Christian mission in Japan, which was then still an exclusive enterprise of the Society of Jesus. Giovanni Niccolò (ca. 1558–1626) was the Jesuit chosen to organize this seminary, where paintings, engravings, musical instruments and mechanical clocks were also made, and where several Japanese and Sino-Japanese painters, such as Giovanni Niva (Ni Yi ceng) and Emanuel Pereira (You Vem hui), were trained. These artists spread knowledge of European pictorial techniques, such as linear perspective, both in Japan, including in Buddhist circles, and to the China mission, especially after the painting seminary was transferred from Nagasaki to Macao, after 1614.[8] The institution adopted a multifaceted practice that used copies of European models as one of its main tools, though not the only one,[9] leading to the creation of hybrid images and multiple meanings.[10] The surviving pictorial repertoire of paintings that can be linked to the seminary and that represent a tiny percentage of a much larger production destroyed by persecutions against Christians and the passage of time, includes oil, tempera and mixed-technique paintings on wood, paper or copper, of small and medium size. The exception, in terms of scale, are the screens depicting 'genre scenes', to use a European term, with Western figures in idyllic landscapes (fig. 93), as well as images of horsemen and kings, and, importantly, maps, associated with cities, peoples of the world, or historical events such as the Battle of Lepanto (fought in 1571 and therefore contemporary with the European presence in Japan).[11] These images of the world are a reminder that from ca. 1543 Japan was present on the world map then being drawn, and that a significant portion of the planet also became known to Japan, not only in terms of physical geography, but also in terms of its people, cultures, languages and religions.

The agents of these processes were generally the same as those associated with the *namban* phenomenon. Thus, the first people to commission works of so-called '*namban* art' were members of Japan's trading and military elite, as well as some of the main European groups present in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries, namely, traders and missionaries.[12] It is clear that the different iconographies and typologies of these works reflected the tastes and needs of their commissioners. Thus, the choice of *namban-jin* as a pictorial motif, whether represented in large objects such as screens, or depicted as individual figures or in small groups (such as on certain lacquered objects), is linked to commissions made mostly by Japanese. Furthermore, besides the iconography, analysis of *namban* works reveals that the decoration covers only a part (never the whole) of the black lacquered surface, and mostly refers to Japanese objects: *jubako* (food boxes), *suzuribako* (writing cabinets) (fig. 94), *abumi* (stirrups). To this body of works can be added another, with very different characteristics, consisting of an impressive array of pieces of several sizes – rarely large – in which a European-type article is allied to a Japanese coating technique (*urushi*, the name given to Japanese lacquer) and marked by copious ornamentation with plant and animal motifs taken mostly from a Japanese decorative repertoire, including constant use of mother-of-pearl inlays (*raden*). Objects such as trunks (entry no. 42), chests, caskets, coffers (entry no. 44), writing desks, cabinets (entry no. 43), tables and trays (entry no. 41) were all produced in remarkable quantity, as evidenced by documentation from the time and surviving pieces, which are scattered across the world in public, private and religious collections.[13] This group of works also includes pieces of a markedly religious nature, such as lecterns (entry no. 50), wafer boxes (entry no. 48), or portable altars (entry no. 49), whose typology and depiction of Christian symbols, allied to Japanese details, reflects both the commission context of the object and its related use.

Far from ending in 1639, the year when Portuguese traders were expelled from the territory and Japan radically changed its policy toward foreigners, creation of this material and visual culture continued, albeit in different settings. However, by then, due to the presence of multiple markets, production had spread outside of Japan. This applied not just to the Japanese domestic market – perhaps the most significant as it included the Catholic mission and Japanese converts to Christianity – but also to the Asian export market, thanks to the Portuguese and Luso-Asian presence in Asia, mainly in Macao and Goa. However, extant data seems to indicate unequivocally that the number of goods arriving in Europe were a small part of the whole, and consisted mainly of lacquered pieces arriving via two different, but complementary routes: the Cape (of Good Hope) Route and the Pacific Route, through the Vice-Royalty of New Spain.[14] Asia remained the centre of the trade in, and consumption of, Japanese objects, because this was where the pieces were commissioned and used, and where people, raw materials, objects and products circulated. The hubs for this trade were located at the confluence of the Pacific Ocean and the China and Indian Seas, not in Europe or the Atlantic, which were a very long distance away.

1 Sakamoto; Narusawa; Izumi, et al., 2008; Curvelo, 2015; Pinto, 1998.
2 Okamoto; Takamizawa, 1970.
3 Hesselink, 2016.
4 The most recent work on the *namban* trade, herein referred to, is Oka, 2021.
5 Jackson, 2004, pp. 200–17, and Lippit, 2007, pp. 244–53.
6 'The Indianness of Iberia' and 'Indianizing Iberia'. Toby, 2019 and 1994, pp. 323–51.
7 Costa, 1998.
8 Curvelo, 2021, pp. 239–73.
9 Curvelo, 2008, pp. 111–27.
10 Hioki, 2011, pp. 23-44.
11 Sakamoto; Ide; Ochi; Hidaka, 1997; Vlam, 1976.
12 Okamoto, 1972; Garcia Gutiérrez, 1993, pp. 101–32.
13 Pinto, 1990; Impey; Jörg, 2005; Canepa, 2016.
14 Curvelo, 2010, pp. 11-31.

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