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Silk, porcelain and lacquer : China and Japan and their trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500-1644. A survey of documentary and material evidence

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Historical Background



European entry into the Asian Maritime trade [1.1]

Building Iberian trading-post empires in the sixteenth century.

The Portuguese arrival in Asia, the establishment of Macao and the trans-Atlantic trade route monopoly to Europe [1.1.1]

The maritime voyages of exploration in the Atlantic Ocean in the late fifteenth century led the Portuguese down the coast of West Africa, and rounding the Cape of Good Hope and crossing the Indian Ocean, to India.¹ Vasco da Gama's voyage to India (1497–1498) opened up a new area for Portuguese settlement and trade.² Once the Portuguese led by Governor Afonso de Albuquerque (1453–1515), established their headquarters (*Estado da Índia*) in Goa on the western coast of India in 1510, and gained the support of its Hindu inhabitants, Goa came to replace Calicut as the principal trading port of India, between Cambay and Cape Comorin.³ The Portuguese presence in Goa, regularly visited by merchants from all over India, led to the development of the first workshops in the coastal region of Gujarat producing luxury mother-of-pearl objects, either inlaid entirely with pieces of mother-of-pearl or overlaid with it, after Indian and Islamic shapes, or more rarely after European shapes, specifically for the European market.⁴ In 1511, Governor Albuquerque took Malacca, a thriving port city ruled by a Muslim Sultanate strategically located on the Malayan side of the narrow Strait of Malacca, which had a multi-ethnic merchant community of Malays, Javanese, Chinese, Kelings (Tamils), Gujaratis, Bengalis, Arabs and Iranians (Fig. 1.1.1.1).⁵ The conquest of Malacca proved to be of great importance to the Portuguese Crown. By then Malacca controlled the principal gateway from the Indian Ocean into East and Southeast Asia, being linked to China and Eastern Indonesia, as well as to India, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.⁶ After securing Malacca, Albuquerque took Hormuz on

1 Boxer, 1991, p. 17.

2 A.J.R. Russell-Wood, 'Patterns of Settlement in the Portuguese Empire, 1400–1800', in Bethencourt and Ramada Curto, 2007, p. 178.

3 Since 1471, Goa had been in the possession of the Muslim sultans of Bijapur, but had been previously a principality of Vijayanagar. Disney, 2009, p. 130; and Boxer, 1991, p. 46.

4 Textual sources, including inventories of the Portuguese royalty, suggest that a considerable quantity of mother-of-pearl, as well as tortoiseshell objects, from Gujarat were imported into Portugal in the sixteenth century. For a brief discussion on such objects, see Vinhais and Welsh, 2009, pp. 54–65, no. 3, and pp. 46–53, no. 2, respectively.

5 Disney, 2009, pp. 130–131; and Subrahmanyam, 1993, p. 13. The Portuguese presence in Malacca lasted until the Dutch conquest in 1641.

6 Ibid.

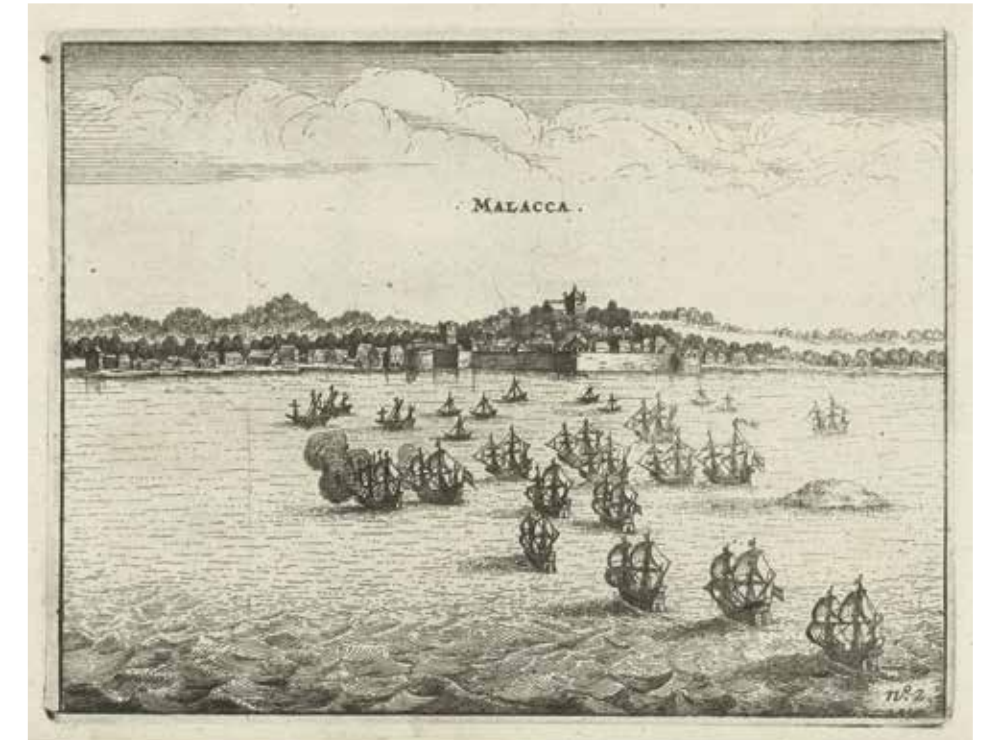


Fig. 1.1.1.1 *De Vloot bij Melaka, 1606*
Etching, 15cm x 20.5cm
Anonymous, 1644–1646
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
(museum no. RP-P-OB-75.447)

Djaroun Island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, in 1515.⁷ With Ormuz at one end of the Indian Ocean and Malacca at the other, the Portuguese had access to the spice trade with the Moluccas, and the trade of luxury goods coming from all over the East.⁸

Direct Portuguese trade relations with China began in the late Ming dynasty, during the reign of Emperor Zhengde (1506–1521) with the arrival of Jorge Álvares (d. 1521) on the Island of Tunmen,⁹ off Canton, in 1513 (Fig. 1.1.1.2). Canton in Guangdong province and Amoy in Fujian province, were the most important Chinese ports at this time. These port cities were directly connected with the overseas trade, on the one hand receiving imported goods for the vast Chinese domestic market, and on the other, exporting luxury Chinese manufactured goods, such as silks and porcelain.¹⁰ Four years later, Tomé Pires (1465–1524?), a former court apothecary and scribe of the Portuguese stronghold in Malacca, arrived at the Pearl River off Canton as the first Portuguese ambassador to the Imperial court in Beijing.¹¹ Although his mission to establish Sino-Portuguese commercial relations failed,¹² Lisbon soon became the most important commercial marketplace in Renaissance Europe for luxury goods from Asia, rivaling Seville, Antwerp, Venice and Genoa (Fig. 1.1.1.3). In 1503, according to Chaudhuri, a French merchant was already promoting the shops of Lisbon's principal commercial street, the *Rua Nova dos Mercadores*, where a wide range of luxury Asian goods and curiosities brought by the Portuguese merchant ships of the *Carreira da Índia* were available for sale.¹³

The sudden influx of Asian imported goods, as will be shown, brought about important changes in the tastes and customs of the royal court of King Manuel I of Portugal (r.1495–1521), which assumed a new role as intermediary between East and West. The exchange of rare and exotic gifts (including silk and porcelain) was a common way for the Portuguese and Spanish courts – related to each other by marriage – to introduce one another to new discoveries from remote lands.¹⁴ A letter

7 Disney, 2009, pp. 132–133; and Boxer, 1991, p. 46.

8 Following the conquest of Malacca, the Portuguese extended their trading activities to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, to the Spice Islands of Banda, Timor and the Solor Islands and Makassar. Ibid., p. 42.

9 It is important to note that the precise location of 'Tunmen' remains unknown. Scholars have put forward a number of different interpretations and identifications of 'Tunmen', and it may not be an island. I am grateful to Prof. Peter Y. K. Lam for bringing this point to my attention.

10 Michael N. Pearson, 'Markets and Merchant Communities in the Indian Ocean: Locating the Portuguese', in Bethencourt and Ramada Curto, 2007, p. 93.

11 Disney, 2009, p. 141.

12 The Portuguese not only committed breaches of etiquette during their arrival at Canton, but also continued to do following the death of Emperor Zhengde. Ibid., pp. 141–143.

13 Kirti Chaudhuri, 'A recepção da expansão portuguesa', in Francisco Bethencourt and Kirti Chaudhuri (dir.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, Vol. I, Lisbon, 1998, p. 529.

14 Mentioned in Teresa Canepa, 'The Iberian royal courts of Lisbon and Madrid, and their role in spreading a taste for Chinese porcelain in 16th-century Europe', in Van Campen and Eliëns, 2014, p. 17.



Fig. 1.1.1.2 Map of China, Japan, the 'island' of Korea, Luzon, Thailand and Burma
Gerard Mercator, Amsterdam, Henricus Hondius, 1613, Latin text edition.
Coloured woodcut, 35cm x 46cm
© Altea Gallery, London



Fig. 1.1.1.3 Lisbona. Basel, Henricus Petri, c.1580
Sebastian Munster
Coloured woodcut, 22.5cm x 3.60mm,
set in letterpress text
© Altea Gallery, London

written in India in 1522, a year after King John III (r. 1521–1557) had ascended to the Portuguese throne, states that one-third of ship's cargos returning from China contained 'porcelains and damasks, and iron nails and leather shields and necessary things for stock'.¹⁵ This same year, the Portuguese attempted to renew trade relations with China, but were forcibly expelled from the Guangdong coast. An Imperial decree was promulgated banning all trade with the *fan-kuei* or 'barbarians' – as the Portuguese were referred to – as well as with other foreigners. This kept the Portuguese from going directly to Canton to trade, but it did not prevent them from conducting business with Cantonese merchants outside of the city in Patani, Malacca, Siam and a few other ports in the South Seas.

Trade with China was so valuable that the Portuguese were not willing to relinquish this new and promising market without a struggle. Thus, Portuguese merchants continued to visit the south China coast, either clandestinely or sometimes with the support of local officials who were so anxious to do business with the Portuguese that they ignored the Imperial decree. In these circumstances, trade could only be conducted on the offshore islands, not in a major port. In the 1530s and 1540s illegal trade activities concentrated in the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian, where the Portuguese established temporary settlements. The presence of Portuguese merchants in Fujian at this time is described in the *Book of History of the Ming Dynasty*, which indicates that about 500 Portuguese were living in Zhangzhou in 1541.¹⁶ Among the first Portuguese to visit Fujian during this period was George Mascarenhas, who was engaged in trade and became established at Quanzhou and Xiamen, two coastal prefectures that border with Zhangzhou and face the Taiwan Strait.¹⁷

In the following decade, the Portuguese were using temporary shacks and tents to store and display their goods in Shangchuan, the largest island west of the mouth of the Pearl River, in Guangdong province. In 1555, the Portuguese Jesuit Belchior Nunes Barreto (1519–1571) described Shangchuan as a centre for trade with the Chinese where 'silk, porcelain, camphor, copper, alum and China-wood are bartered for many kinds of merchandise from this land [Japan]'.¹⁸ The Portuguese, as will be shown in section 3.4.1.1 of Chapter III, not only participated in a prolific trade of ordinary trade porcelain at Shangchuan, but also of porcelain made to order for them with European motifs. By this time large quantities of Asian goods were imported into Lisbon. João Brandão in his *Grandeza e abastança da cidade de Lisboa*, written in 1552, informs us that eight hundred cases of Asian goods passed through the *Casa da Índia*¹⁹ that year.²⁰

Once the Portuguese settled in Macao at the mouth of the Pearl River in 1557, during the reign of Jiajing (1522–1566), they secured a trading post and virtually monopolized European trade in Asia (Fig. 1.1.1.4). The Portuguese or *casados*, who had retired from the service of the Crown, married and settled permanently in Macao, he *Cidade do Nome de Deus* (City of the Name of God), and consequently found great opportunities for acting as trading agents for the Chinese merchants. Their geographical location gave them the added benefit of fitting into the existing long and middle distance trade networks both in the China Seas and in the Indonesian archipelago centred on Malacca. By then, Portugal's overseas empire extended across the world, from Brazil in the west to Japan in the east. To do so, the Portuguese set up a 'good for goods' trade formula, where they acquired goods at local market prices in one part of Asia and offered them for sale at a profit in another Asian market. They also traded on their own account in pepper, cloves, sandalwood and other goods from

15 Instituto dos Archivos Nacionais Torre do Tombo (hereafter cited as IANTT), *Corpo Chronológico*, part 3, bundle 8, doc. 1. p. 38. Cited in Maria Antónia Pinto de Matos, 'Chinese Porcelain in Portuguese Written Sources', *Oriental Art*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2002–2003, p. 38; and Canepa, 2014, p. 18.

16 Huang Shengzhang, 'Mingdai houqi haijin kaifang hou haiwai maoyi ruogan wenti' (A Few Problems in Foreign Trade in the Late Ming Dynasty after the Uplifting of the Sea-trade Ban', *Haijiaoshiyanjiu*, *Research on History of China's Communications with the Overseas*, no. 1, Quanzhou, 1988, p. 154. Mentioned in Rita Tan, *Zhangzhou Ware Found in the Philippines. "Swatow" Export Ceramics from Fujian 16th–17th Century*, Singapore, 2007, p. 15; Rita Tan, 'Zhangzhou Ware. Chinese Export Ceramics for the Market in Asia in the 16th–17th Century', in Pei-kai Cheng (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium: Chinese Export Ceramics in the 16th and 17th Centuries and the Spread of Material Civilization*, Hong Kong, 2012, p. 158; and Canepa, 2014, p. 251, note 31.

17 George Mascarenhas owned one of the five Portuguese ships that arrived to China in 1517. Sir Anders Ljungstedt, *An Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China and of the Roman Catholic Church and Mission in China*, Boston, 1836, pp. 1 and 2.

18 Cited in C. R. Boxer, *The Great Ship from Amacan. Annals of Macao and the Old Japan trade 1555–1640*, Lisbon, 1963, p. 22.

19 The royal trading firm entrusted with managing overseas trade with Asia will be further discussed in Chapter III.

20 João Brandão, *Grandeza e abastança de Lisboa em 1552*, edited by José da Felicidade Alves, Lisbon, 1990, 59–50. Mentioned in Annemarie Jordan Gschwend, 'The Marvels of the East: Renaissance Curiosity Collections in Portugal', in Nuno Vasallo e Silva (ed.), *A Herança de Rauluchantim – The Heritage of Rauluchantim*, exhibition catalogue, Museu de São Roque, Lisbon, 1996, p. 97.



Fig. 1.1.1.4 View of Macao in *Livro das Plantas de todas as fortalezas, cidades e povoações do Estado da Índia oriental*
 Pedro Barreto de Resende, (plans) and Antonio Bocarro (text)
 Portugal, c.1635
 Watercolour on paper, 41cm x 61cm
 Biblioteca Pública de Évora (COD-CXV-2-1 115)

the Indonesian Islands and financed voyages to Japan, and later also to Manila. The total ban imposed by China in 1557 on all direct trade with Japan, and the continuing raids by Japanese pirates on the China coast, enabled the Portuguese to gain a virtual monopoly of this trade. In 1586, the Portuguese Crown granted Macao the status of a municipal council identical to that of Évora. The overall command of Macao was in the hands of the Portuguese Captain-major of the Japan voyage, who spent several months in Macao each year en route to Japan from Goa via Malacca. This situation continued until 1623, when the constant menace of Dutch raids in the early decades of the seventeenth century prompted the governor of the *Estado da Índia* to begin appointing a permanent captain in Macao.²¹

The Portuguese trade from India eastwards beyond Cape Comorin to Indonesia and the China Sea introduced a range of new commodities carried from Goa or Cochin. In Goa – the Indian port city where East met West – the Captain-major's ship, known as the Black Ship (*kurofune*), was loaded with goods of European origin including Flemish clocks, wine glasses, crystal and cloths, as well as Indian textiles. The ship sailed with the monsoon in April or May to Malacca, where much of its cargo was traded for Indonesian spices, camphor and sandalwood, and hides from Siam. Much of the cargo destined for China actually originated in India, such as pepper and ivory, but the shipments also included objects carried from Europe such as lenses, timepieces, mechanical devices and prisms. Once the Black Ship docked in Macao, the cargo was exchanged for Chinese products, including raw silk, silk cloth, floss, porcelains, gold and musk. The ship then stayed in Macao for the silk fairs in Canton (held in June and January), where as will be shown, the finest silks from central China were sold. On the next monsoon (between June and August) the Captain-major would set sail to Japan, the final port of call, which after 1571 was Nagasaki.²²

21 Francisco Bethencourt, 'Political Configurations and Local Powers', in Bethencourt and Ramada Curto, 2007, p. 209.

22 The Portuguese initially traded in the ports of Kagoshima, Funai, Hirado and Fukuda.

The first encounter between Japan and Europe occurred in 1542/1543,²³ during the reign of Emperor Go Nara (r. 1536–1557) in the Muromachi period (1333–1573), when Portuguese merchants arrived by accident, aboard a Chinese junk, on the island of Tanegashima, a small island off the coast of Kyūshū. Japan, semi-isolated and then maintaining commerce only with the Ryūkyū Islands and Korea, was involved in a long civil war under the divided rule of feudal warlords. The ruling imperial house and the emperor were only symbolic figureheads and had no real power. The Ashikaga *shogūns* had established their government in Miyako (as Kyoto was then frequently called) and controlled all the court administration until 1573, when the powerful warlord Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582) eliminated this shogunate, bringing the Ashikaga dynasty (1335–1573) to an end.²⁴

In 1549, the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–1552) arrived at Kagoshima in the southern part of Kyūshū and travelled to Miyako to deliver his first sermons.²⁵ An anonymous Japanese textual source, dating to 1639, inform us of the mixture of fear and fascination that the arrival of the huge three-masted Black Ship and the first sight of a Jesuit missionary caused in Japan some 90 years earlier. It reads 'In the reign of Mikado Go-Nara no In ... A Southern Barbarian trading vessel came to our shores. From this ship for the first time emerged an unnameable creature, somewhat similar in shape to a human being, but looking rather more like a long-nosed goblin or the giant demon Mikoshi Nyūdō. Upon closer inspection it was discovered that this being was called Bateren [Father]. The length of his nose was the first thing that attracted attention: it was like a conch shell. His eyes were as large as spectacles and their insides were yellow. His head was small. On his hands and feet he had long claws. His height exceeded seven feet, and he was black all over ... What he said could not be understood at all: his voice was like the screech on an owl. One and all rushed to see him, crowding all the roads in a total lack of restraint'.²⁶ Visual evidence of the annual arrival of the Black Ship to Nagasaki and the exotic nature of the procession of Portuguese merchants, Christian missionaries and their multitude of attendants bringing foreign gifts, exotic birds and animals is provided by a number of extant *Namban* folding screens (*byōbu*), dating to the Momoyama period (1573–1615) (Fig. 1.1.1.5a and b). The Black Ship also brought a variety of both religious and secular goods required for the Jesuit mission in Japan.²⁷ The Portuguese and their attendants (sailors, African slaves, Indians and Malays) were called *Namban-jin* by the Japanese. *Namban*, literally meaning 'southern barbarians', was a term used by the Japanese to refer to all foreigners except Chinese and Koreans.²⁸

After the Portuguese arrived in Japan, they took advantage of the Ming maritime ban on all direct trade to Japan acting as intermediaries between these two countries. Raw silk and silk finished products were in great demand in Japan, where Chinese and Japanese merchants had previously controlled a substantial trade of Chinese silk for Japanese silver during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁹ Once the Portuguese settled in Macao in 1557, and the jurisdiction over Nagasaki was transferred from the *daimyō* Ōmura Sumitada (1533–1587) to the Jesuits in 1571, the Portuguese not only secured access to Canton but also established a lucrative triangular illicit silver-for-silk trade, the so-called Nagasaki-Macao-Canton trade.³⁰ The economy of Macao came to be largely dependent on the direct silk trade with Japan.³¹ The Macao authorities, in order to preserve the exclusive monopoly on the silk trade and stabilize its selling price in Japan, decided that silk could be shipped to Nagasaki only in the annual voyage of the Black Ship and also devised a system of bulk sale, which stabilized the price

23 The exact date in which this encounter took place has been subject of much debate among historians. Some believe that the Portuguese arrived at Tanegashima in 1542 and others that it was in 1543.

24 The Ashikaga shogunate, also known as the Muromachi shogunate, was the second dynasty of *shogūns*. For this opinion, see Miyeko Murase (ed.), *Turning Point: Oribe and the Arts of Sixteenth-Century Japan*, exhibition catalogue, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New Haven and London, 2003, p. 52.

25 Father Francis Xavier, who had recently been appointed apostolic nuntius, left Portugal in April 1541 with the East Indian fleet and reached India in May 1542 with two companions. There he took charge of the Christian missions in Goa and on the Southwest coast. After working for three years among the pearl-fishers of the Fishery Coast, he continued to the East Indies, Malacca and the Indonesian Spice Islands. Finally, he proceeded to Japan. The presence of Father Francis Xavier in Japan and his Jesuit missionary work there will be discussed in section 4.1.1.1 of Chapter IV.

26 Cited in G. Elison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*, Cambridge, MA, 1991, p. 321; and Anna Jackson, 'Virtual Responses: Depicting Europeans in East Asia', in Jackson and Jaffer, 2004, p. 202.

27 For more information, see Pedro Moura Carvalho, 'The Circulation of European and Asian Works of Art in Japan, Circa 1600', in Victoria Weston (ed.), *Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan: Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods*, exhibition catalogue, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2013, pp. 38–41.

28 Jackson, 2004, p. 202.

29 Japan produced silk, but Chinese silk was of superior quality. Chinese junks continued to visit Japan after the Ming ban was imposed, and thus offered competition to the Portuguese. According to Flynn and Giraldez, 60 to 80 Chinese junks (the largest averaging about 600-tons) visited Japan annually between 1613 and 1640, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century Japanese 'red seal' ships also competed with the Portuguese. Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, 'Silk for Silver: Manila-Macao Trade in the 17th Century', in Ma, 2005/2, p. 38.

30 Ma, 2005/1, p. 13; and Flynn and Giraldez, 2005, p. 37.

31 Michael Cooper, 'The Mechanics of the Macao-Nagasaki Silk Trade', *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1972), pp. 423–424.



Figs. 1.1.1.5a and b Pair of six-panel folding screens with the arrival of a Portuguese ship to Nagasaki
Japan, Momoyama/early Edo period, c.1600–1625
Dimensions: 169cm x 363cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (museum no. AK-RAK-1968-1-A)

and ensured a fair distribution of profits among most citizens of Macao.³² The silk-for-silver trade to Japan proved exceedingly profitable.³³ The Jesuits, who used their residence and college in Macao to supervise their missionary activities in Asia, made an agreement with the Portuguese in 1578 for the allotment of a fixed share of raw silk in the annual cargo as a way to finance their mission in Japan.³⁴ In November, with the northeast monsoon the Black Ship returned to Macao, where the silver acquired in Japan³⁵ was exchanged for gold, copper, ivory, porcelain, musk, pearls and more silk. From Macao the Captain-major then carried this cargo back to Goa. There was a great demand for silk in India. This was such a profitable trade for the Portuguese that they sold the bulk of their silk cargo there, shipping only a small quantity to Lisbon.³⁶

In 1580, two years after the death of King John III's wife, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), King Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–1598), a member of the Habsburg dynasty, became King Philip I of Portugal, ending the Avis-Beja dynasty.³⁷ This represented the union of the two Iberian Crowns, which lasted until 1640.

European competition begins: The Spanish establishment of Manila, and the direct trans-Pacific trade route between the Spanish colonies in the New World and Asia, and trans-Atlantic trade route to Spain [1.1.2]

The Spanish, following their Iberian neighbours in the expansion to Asia, sent an expedition led by the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521) in search of a westward route to the Spice Islands, which after sailing around the southern tip of

³² Ibid., pp. 425–426.

³³ Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540–1750*, Stanford, 1996, p. 533.

³⁴ As noted by Alden, scholars do not agree on the precise date in which the Jesuits gained a share of the silk trade. Boxer and Cooper suggest that it was in the 1550s, but Takase believes it was much later, in about 1570. For this opinion, see Ibid., p. 533, and note 23. The revenue of the Jesuit missionaries, who were rapidly gaining influence in Japan, depended mostly on their investments in the Macao-Japan trade. Tanya Storch (ed.), *Religions and Missionaries around the Pacific, 1500–1900, The Pacific World. Lands, Peoples and History of the Pacific, 1500–1900*, Vol. 17, Burlington, VT, 2006, p. 361.

³⁵ In Japan, new deposits of silver mines were discovered in Honshu, whilst China possessed very little silver and was willing to acquire it in exchange for gold. Japan supplied between 60 and 70 percent of China's silver during the period of 1550–1650. During the late 1530s, Japanese ships were trading large volumes of silver in Korean markets for Chinese goods, until the Koreans banned this practice in 1539.

³⁶ Boyajian, 1993, p. 70.

³⁷ Portugal's royal house of Avis became linked with the court of the Habsburgs, one of the principal sovereign dynasties at the time, in a double marriage celebrated in 1525 and 1526. King João III of Portugal (r. 1521–1557), who was the son of King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521), married Catherine of Austria (1507–1578). Her brother, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (r. 1519–1555), married the sister of King João III, Isabella (1503–1539). The vast Habsburg family network connected Lisbon and Madrid with imperial courts in Brussels and Vienna.

³⁸ This expedition led to the death of Magellan and some of his men. The surviving Spanish departed to Spain across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope after relations with the local inhabitants deteriorated. Magellan's expedition caused immediate protests from the Portuguese Crown due to the importance that the Spice Islands had for the economy of the *Estado da Índia*. In 1529, with the treaty of Zaragoza, an agreement was finally reached and King Charles V of Spain (r. 1516–1556) sold the Spanish rights on the Spice Islands to the Portuguese Crown.

³⁹ The viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru administrated and governed on behalf of the King of Spain the territories in the New World up until the early eighteenth century. The viceroyalty of New Spain, established in 1535, initially included all land situated north of the Isthmus of Panama. It later included upper and lower California (present-day central and south-western United States), the territory eastward along the Gulf of Mexico to Florida and the Caribbean. The viceroyalty of Peru, established almost a decade later in 1542, included all the land that covered from Panama to Tierra del Fuego (present-day Chile and Argentina) except for the coast of what is now Venezuela and part of Brazil that belonged to Portugal.

⁴⁰ AGI, Filipinas, Leg. 6, ramo 1, no. 5. Carta de López de Legazpi al Rey de 23 de Junio de 1567. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (eds.), *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898*, Cleveland, 1903, Vol. II: 1521–1569, p. 110.

⁴¹ Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (eds.), *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1898*, Cleveland, 1903, Vol. III: 1569–1576, p. 58.

⁴² AGI, Filipinas, 29 N. 10. 8 June 1596. A transcription of the original document in Spanish and an English translation is published in Krahe, 2014, Vol. II, Document 25, p. 270.

present-day South America reached the island of Cebú in the Philippines in 1521.³⁸ Its location was strategic, bordered by the Philippine Sea on the east, the South China Sea on the west, the Luzon Strait on the north, and the Celebes Sea on the south. By the time Philip II succeeded his father to the throne in 1556, Spain had established a vast colonial empire in the New World that encompassed the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru.³⁹ Nine years later, in 1565, the Spanish army led by Miguel López de Legazpi (1505?–1572) finally conquered Cebú and established the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines. A letter written in 1567 by Legazpi to King Philip II, describes the existing trade to the Philippines at the time as 'Farther north than our settlement, or almost to the northwest not far from here, are some large islands, called Luzon and Vindoro [Mindoro], where the Chinese and Japanese come every year to trade. They bring silks, woolens, bells, porcelains, perfumes, iron, tin, colored cotton cloths, and other small wares, and in return they take away gold and wax'.⁴⁰ Legazpi's desire to establish trade relations with China is clearly stated in his *Relation of the Filipinas Islands of 1569*, as he writes 'We shall also gain the commerce with China, whence come silks, porcelains, benzoin, musk, and other articles. Thus partly through commerce and partly through the articles of commerce, the settlers will increase the wealth of the land in a short time'.⁴¹

Direct trade between the Philippines and the viceroyalty of New Spain began four years earlier, in 1565, when the Spanish Augustinian friar and navigator Andrés de Urdañeta (1508–1568) discovered a passable eastward route across the Pacific Ocean to Acapulco. We learn from a letter written in June 1596 by Andrés de Miranda, nephew of Legazpi and auditor of the Royal Treasury, that the ill-fated flagship that had set sail from Cebú in the year 1568 was carrying 'samples of pieces of silk and porcelain and other things as I mentioned were curious and that contented and that were pleasing to Your majesty's vassals to come to this land to serve God and Your Majesty'.⁴² In 1571, Legazpi moved northwards to the Island of Luzon, where the city of Manila was founded upon a pre-existing indigenous settlement (Fig. 1.1.2.1). The founding of Manila, only four years after a Ming maritime trade ban had been



Fig. 1.1.2.1 *View of Manila*
 Johannes Vingboons?, c.1630
 Ink and wash
 Cartas Castillo 22, Castello 749
 Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence

43 Trade contact between China and the Philippines begun as early as the Tang dynasty (618–907), as evidenced by archaeological excavations in Butuan. See Oriental Ceramic Society of the Philippines, *Chinese and South-East Asian White Wares Found in the Philippines*, Singapore, 1993, pp. 9–13. The Island of Luzon was then part of one of the two established routes of the Chinese junk trading system, that of the Eastern Sea, that included the Muslim Sultanate of Sulu in the southern Philippines, Borneo and the Spice Islands.

44 Despite the fact that the profits of the merchants from Fujian, and partly from Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces, suffered in 1581 because of a new taxation on their goods (which was valued at 3 percent of the imports as well as for the exports), they continued to reach Manila and even increased in number. For this opinion, see Ubaldo Iaccarino, 'Manila as International Entrepôt: Chinese and Japanese Trade with the Spanish Philippines at the Close of the 16th Century', *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies*, Vol. 16, 2008, p. 80, note 25.

45 Mentioned in Colin Sheaf and Richard Kilburn, *The Hatcher Porcelain Cargoes. The Complete Record*, Oxford, 1988, p. 16.

46 William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, New York, 1959, p. 27.

47 The number of Chinese living in Manila rose from about 40 in 1570 to 10,000 in 1588. By 1603, there were an estimated 30,000 Chinese and only a few hundred Spanish settlers living in Manila. For this opinion, see William Atwell, 'Ming China and the Emerging World Economy, c. 1470–1650', in Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (eds.), *The Cambridge History of China, The Ming Dynasty, 1398–1648*, Vol. 8, Part 2, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 390–91.

48 Geoffrey C. Gunn, *History Without Borders. The Making of an Asian World Region, 1000–1800*, Hong Kong, 2011, p. 123.

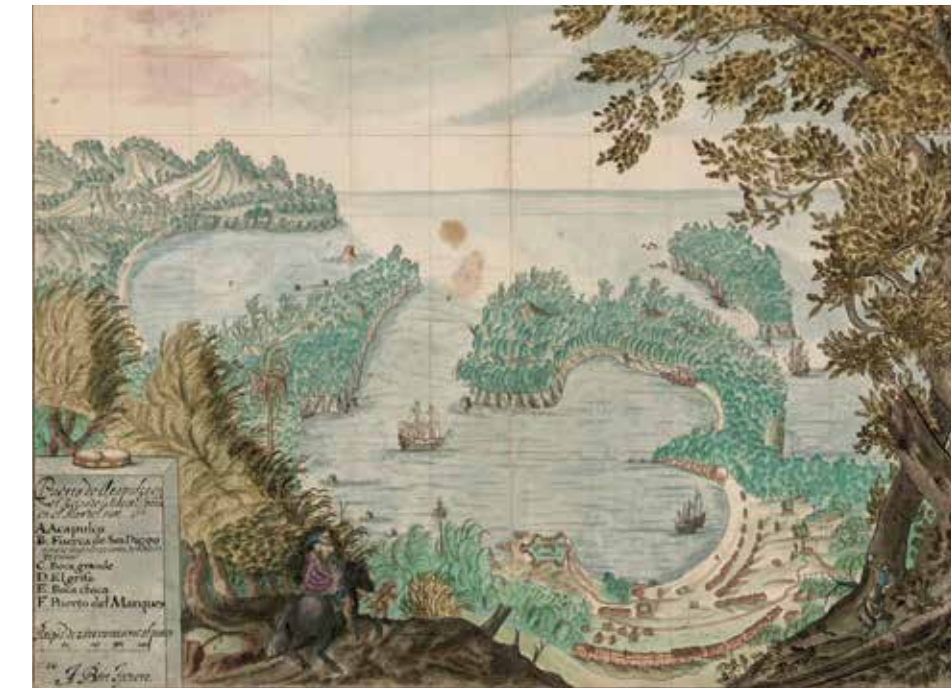


Fig. 1.1.2.2 *Puerto de Acapulco en el reino de la nueva España en el mar del sur*
 A. Boot, 1628
 Pen, brown ink and watercolour on paper,
 42cm x 55cm
 Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
 (acc. no. VD-31 (2) – FT4, Gaignières, 6470)

49 Cited in *Ibid.*

50 Cited in Alberto Santamaria, 'The Chinese Parian (El Parian de los Sangleyes)', in Alonso Felix Jr. (ed.), *The Chinese in the Philippines 1570–1770*, Vol. 1, Manila, 1966, p. 90.

51 Boxer, 1963, pp. 61–62.

lifted, gave the Spanish Crown a foothold in the profitable Asian trade network.⁴³ The Philippines were financed and administered by the government of New Spain, which had been established in the capital, Mexico City. Manila became a flourishing trading and transshipment port for Spain and a crossroads for their interests in the New World, China and Japan. Manila's exceptional location gave the Spanish the ability to acquire valuable goods from Chinese and other Asian merchants who came there to trade.

By the time of the unification of Spain and Portugal in 1580, when King Philip II became also King of Portugal, and Emperor Wanli (1573–1620) was ruling China, the overseas junk trade between the ports of Zhangzhou, Quanzhou and Xiamen prefectures in Fujian province and Manila was well established and highly profitable.⁴⁴ In 1589 among the junks that were granted official licences for overseas voyages, sixteen went to trade in Manila.⁴⁵ This number varied annually from only seven in 1616 to fifty in 1631.⁴⁶ After 1645 the number of junks arriving in Manila decreased sharply as a result of the civil wars in China. The relatively short distance from Fujian to Manila – a journey of about 15 to 20 days that involved relatively few risks on the sea – as well as the exceptionally high profits derived from the junk trade encouraged a large number of Fujian merchants to visit Manila clandestinely. There was a large Chinese community, mostly merchants and craftsmen of Fujianese origin, living and trading in Manila.⁴⁷ The Spanish authorities referred to them as *Sangleys*, a term supposedly derived from 'seng-li', the word for business in the Hokkien dialect. In the early 1580s, the *Sangleys* were assigned their own quarter – the *Parían* or silk market – within the Spanish walled city, *Intramuros*. When the *Parían* or silk market was destroyed by fire in 1583 (only a year after it had been founded) probably in the northeastern part of the city, the fifth Spanish Governor, Diego Ronquillo (1583–1584), relocated it to a marshy site on the Pasig River.⁴⁸ The Bishop of the Philippines, Domingo de Salazar, gives a detailed description of the latter *Parían* in a letter written to Fray Sánchez dated June 2, 1588. He says 'Inside this city is the silk-market of the Sangley merchants, with shops to the number of one hundred and fifty, in which

there are usually about six hundred Sangleys – besides a hundred others who live on the other side of the river opposite this city; these are married, and many of them are Christians. In addition to these there are more than three hundred others – fishermen, gardeners, hunters, weavers, brickmakers, lime-burners, carpenters, and iron-workers – who live outside the silk market, and without the city, upon the shores of the sea and river. Within the silk market are many tailors, cobblers, bakers, carpenters, candle-makers, confectioners, apothecaries, painters, silversmiths, and those engaged in other occupations'.⁴⁹ Three years later, in 1591, Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, who had been appointed Governor of Manila in 1589, wrote to the King informing a larger number of shops and Chinese inhabitants. He stated that 'Within the city is the silk-market of the Parian where the Chinese merchants trade. They have 200 stores which probably employ more than 2,000 Chinese'.⁵⁰

The huge profits earned from the trade with Chinese merchants and the potential for further riches that China offered induced the Spanish to try to enter Chinese territory. Between 1574 and 1590, they made several attempts to establish a permanent trading post on the south China coast, as the Portuguese had done earlier with Macao in Guangdong province. In 1598, the authorities in Guangzhou finally granted the Spanish a post in a place called 'El Pinal' somewhere on the coast between Guangzhou and Macao (its exact whereabouts are still unknown), but it was abandoned shortly afterwards.⁵¹ In 1626, they were successful in establishing Fort San Salvador at Keelung and Fort Santo Domingo at Tamsui in the north of the island of Formosa, from the Spanish 'La Isla Hermosa' (The Beautiful Island) (present-day Taiwan), and thus incorporated it in the Manila-Acapulco trade route. In 1646, however, the Dutch who were at war with the Spanish over the Moluccas and had taken control of the southern part of the island in 1624, expelled them and temporarily took over the island.

The so-called Manila Galleon – known in Spanish as *Nao de China* or *Nao de Acapulco* – that traversed the Pacific from the port of Cavite in Manila to Acapulco on the west coast of the viceroyalty of New Spain was the economic foundation of



Fig. 1.1.2.3 Map of Mexico City from the city atlas *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, 1572
Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg (Attributed to Antoine Du Pinet, 1564; after a plan in B. Bordone, Isolaro, 1528)
Coloured engraving
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem & The Jewish National & University Library



Fig. 1.1.2.4 Puerto de Veracruz nueva con la fuerza de San Ju° de Ulua, en el reino de la nueva España en el mar del norte
A. Boot, 1628
Pen, brown ink and watercolour on paper, 42cm x 55cm
Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (acc. no. VD-31 (2) – FT4, Gaignières, 6468)

52 The trade in Chinese silk from Manila to the Spanish colonies in the New World will be discussed in section 2.1.4 of Chapter II.

53 Vast supplies of silver became available following the Spanish conquest of the New World and the subsequent discovery of rich mines in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru in 1546. The majority of the silver was mined from Potosi in Peru (present-day Bolivia). Productive silver mining was also obtained from Zacatecas, located 300 miles northwest of Mexico City. Silver from these mines flowed into international circulation almost immediately, but it was not until the mercury amalgamation process of refining was disseminated throughout the Spanish colonies in the New World after about 1550 that the production soared. Silver was introduced in Manila shaped in coins (*reales de a ocho* or *peso*) or in bars. For a discussion on the importance of the trade of American silver for silk, see Katharine Bjork, 'The Link That Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade, 1571–1815', *Journal of World History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp. 25–50.

54 This eastward route became part of the first global trade route in history, which stretched from Manila to Seville crossing two oceans and linking three continents regularly until 1815. It connected Manila with Acapulco across the Pacific, Acapulco with Mexico City overland and finally Veracruz with Seville (later Cadiz) across the Atlantic. For a recent discussion on the Manila Galleon trade and the global trade that emerged in the late sixteenth century, see Arturo Giraldez, *The Age of Trade: Manila Galleons and the Dawn of the Global Economy*, Lanham, Boulder, New York and London, 2015.

55 The transcription of the original text in Spanish reads: 'La fina loza del Sangley medroso'. Bernardo de Balbuena, *Grandezza Mexicana*, Sociedad de Bibliotecas Mexicanas, Mexico, 1604, Chapter 3, p. 77. Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes. <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/nd/ark:/59851/bmcjx073>. Accessed June 2014.

56 J. Eric Thompson (ed.), *Thomas Gage's Travels in the New World*, Norman, 1958, pp. 35–36.

the colony in the Philippines. The Manila Galleon trade was primarily based on the exchange of Chinese silk,⁵² for Mexican and Peruvian silver.⁵³ New Spain, positioned at the international crossroads of both trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic trade routes, facilitated the exchange and circulation of large quantities of Chinese and Japanese manufactured goods in both the New World and the Iberian Peninsula.⁵⁴ After the Manila Galleon reached Acapulco in November or December, the imported Chinese silk, porcelain and other Asian manufactured goods were sold in the *Feria de Acapulco* (Acapulco Fair), a wholesale and retail fair that was held in January. Merchants from all the Spanish viceroyalties attended (Fig. 1.1.2.2). Most of the cargo was intended for consumption in New Spain, and was carried inland by mule train on an arduous journey over the mountains to the viceroyalty's capital, Mexico City, formerly the ancient Mexica city of Tenochtitlán. There it was sold in the city market (*Parián*) of the Plaza Mayor (present-day Zócalo area) (Fig. 1.1.2.3). The Spanish Bernardo de Balbuena (1562?–1627) in his poem *Grandezza Mexicana*, published in 1604, mentions among other Asian goods that were imported from Spain, the rest of Europe, and Manila, 'the fine porcelain of the Sangley medroso'.⁵⁵ In 1625, the English Dominican Thomas Gage, who travelled through the viceroyalty of New Spain and Guatemala until 1637, was quite impressed by the centrality of New Spain. Upon his arrival in Veracruz that year, in 1625, Gage regaled his readers with a lengthy inventory of the regions connected to the colonial New Spain. All of which, the traveller wrote 'The great trading from Mexico, and by Mexico from the East Indies, from Spain, from Cuba, Santo Domingo, Yucatán, and by Portobello from Peru, from Cartagena, and all the islands lying upon the North Sea, and by the River Alvarado going up to Zapotecas, San Idelfonso, and towards Oaxaca, and by the river Grijalva, running up to Tabasco, Los Zoques, and Chiapa de Indions, maketh this little town very rich and to abound with all the commodities of the continent land, and of all the East and West Indies' treasures'.⁵⁶ A small quantity of the Asian goods imported into Acapulco was then

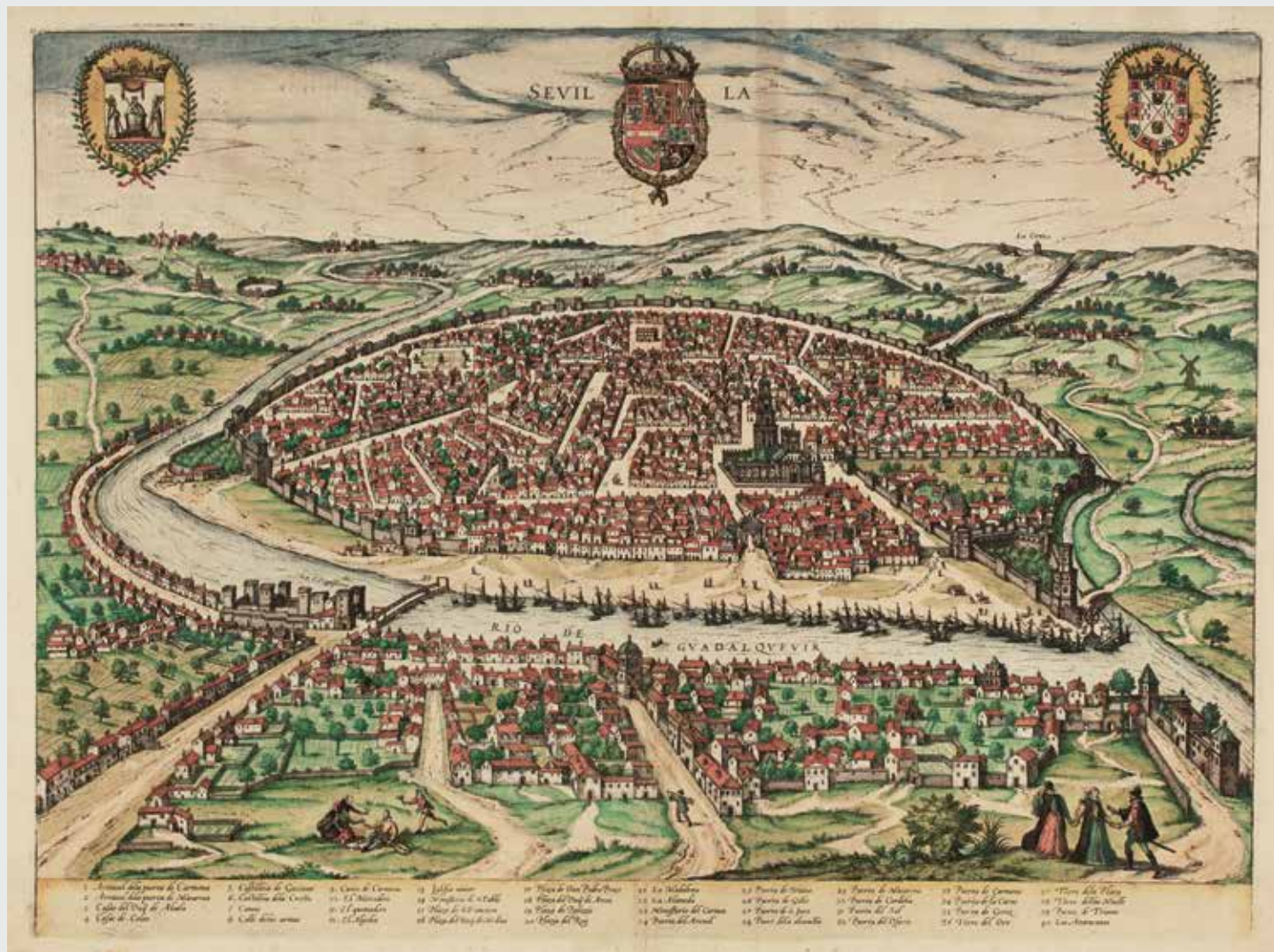


Fig. 1.1.2.5 Map of Seville from the city atlas *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*
Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg
Cologne, 1588
34.5cm x 51cm
© Altea Gallery, London

carried by mules via Puebla de los Angeles and Japala to the port of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico (Fig. 1.1.2.4), where it was loaded onto the Spanish Treasure Fleet that traversed the Atlantic to Seville in Spain (Fig. 1.1.2.5), after calling at Havana in present-day Cuba.⁵⁷ In addition to these trans-oceanic trading ventures, a significant coastal trading network serviced other Spanish colonial settlements and carried such goods, sometimes clandestinely, between the vicerealties of New Spain and Peru.

By 1604 the Spanish and Portuguese had suffered great losses after the attacks of the Dutch in Asia. This is clear in a letter sent from Goa by the Englishman Thos. Wilson to the Secretary of State, Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury (1563–1612), in England in July of that year, stating that ‘The riches brought home by the Spanish ships, but for the Chinese stuffs were none at all; the Hollanders, by taking the year before the St. Tiago and St. Valentine coming from China, one worth a million the other 400,000 (ducats? *corn*), having disfurnished Goa and those parts of all China stuffs, which with other prizes since taken, had quite spoiled the commerce in the south parts, and no man dares budge forth or venture anything’.⁵⁸

A report to Emperor Chongzhen (1628–1644) written in 1630 by He Qiaoyuan (1558–1632), a Ming court official and historian from Fujian, clearly shows that silk was sold by the Chinese junk traders at a much inflated sale price in the Philippines, and that porcelain from Jiangxi, in all probability Jingdezhen, was sought after by the Spanish. This Chinese source records that ‘When our Chinese subjects journey to trade in the [Indian Ocean], the [foreigners] trade the goods we produce for the goods of others. But when engaging in trade in Luzon we have designs solely on silver coins ... A hundred jin of Huzhou silk yarn worth 100 taels can be sold at a price of 200 to 300 taels there. Moreover, porcelain from Jiangxi as well as sugar and fruit from my native Fujian, all are vividly desired by the Foreigners’.⁵⁹ Although Macao and Manila were competitors in the global silk-for-silver trade in the 1630s, they sometimes collaborated with each other.⁶⁰ According to Schurz, the value of the annual silk imports from Macao to Manila between 1632 and 1636 was estimated at about a million and a half pesos.⁶¹ This is, as noted by Flynn and Giraldez, six times greater than the legal limit imposed by the 1633 royal prohibition of the Macao-Manila trade.⁶²

57 In 1526, Emperor Charles V issued a royal decree stating that all ships were to travel across the Atlantic in convoy to counteract frequent attacks on their ships by English, French and Dutch raiders. By the 1560s, the Treasure Fleet system was well established and centered on two fleets that sailed from Spain to the New World every year: the Tierra Firme and the New Spain. The two fleets returning to Spain with treasures from the New World sailed to the Caribbean in early spring. The Tierra Firme fleet stopped at Cartagena in present-day Colombia to load gold and emeralds before calling at Nombre de Dios (after 1585 replaced by Portobello as port-of-call) in present-day Panama to load Peruvian silver and gold that had been packed overland across the Isthmus of Panama. The New Spain fleet went on to the harbor of San Juan de Ulúa near Veracruz in New Spain (present-day Mexico) to load specie from the royal mint in Mexico City as well as colonial products, such as cochineal, cacao, indigo and hides. The two fleets would later meet up in the port of Havana to be refitted for the return voyage to Spain in the early summer. The bulk of the precious metals were carried in large, heavily armed royal warships, while smaller, privately owned vessels carried other goods.

58 Extract from Correspondence, Spain. July 28/Aug. 7, 1604, Bayonne. W. Noel Salisbury (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, East Indies, China and Japan*, (Hereafter cited as CPS, Colonial), Volume 2: 1513–1616, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, London, 1864, p. 142. Accessed September 2014. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/east-indies-china-japan/vol2/p142>.

59 Cited in Richard Von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700*, Berkeley, 1996, p. 201.

60 Flynn and Giraldez, 2005, p. 41.

61 Schurz, 1959, p. 135.

62 Flynn and Giraldez, 2005, p. 60.

Shifting European powers [1.2]

Dutch and English trading companies enter and partly gain control of the Asian maritime trade

The Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company or VOC) [1.2.1]

By the end of the sixteenth century, the taste for acquiring Asian manufactured goods continued to grow, not only in Portugal, Spain and the Southern Netherlands, but also in the rest of Europe. For much of the sixteenth century, the Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands in northwestern Europe were part of the Spanish Habsburg Empire.⁶³ When King Philip II invaded the region in 1568 to quell support of the Protestant Reformation, the seven northern, Dutch-speaking provinces revolted.⁶⁴ In 1585, Philip II of Spain/I of Portugal, as part of his economic warfare against the Northern Netherlands, imposed an embargo on all Dutch trade and shipping throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Prior to Philip's embargo, the Dutch served as middleman between Northern and Southern Europe and used their position to make hefty profits reselling spices and exotic Asian goods imported by the Portuguese.⁶⁵

Their desire to participate in the highly profitable trade of East Asian spices drove them to search for a route to Asia and this ambition put the Dutch in direct competition with the Portuguese monopoly.⁶⁶ Until then these goods, which were expensive and reached Europe only in limited quantities, were acquired in Antwerp and Lisbon, where the Dutch visited regularly.⁶⁷ After numerous failed attempts to establish trade contacts with Asia, an expedition led by Cornelis de Houtman round the Cape of Good Hope and reached Bantam (near present-day Banten) on the island of Java (present-day Indonesia) in 1596 (Fig. 1.2.1.1).⁶⁸ Two years later, in 1598, a fleet of eight ships under the command of Jacob Cornelisz Van Neck (1564–1638) and Wybrandt Warwijck arrived in Bantam. Although the profits of these expeditions

⁶³ Emperor Charles V, governing from Brussels, not only ruled the dukedom of Burgundy, which included seventeen northern provinces (comprising most of present-day Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg and the region of Nord-Pas de Calais in France) but also Castile and Aragon in Spain, as King Charles I (r. 1516–1556). In 1549, Charles V promulgated the Pragmatic Sanction edict consolidating the seventeen provinces as a state, independent of the Holy Roman Empire, and subject to his rule. When in 1555, Charles V abdicated to enter a monastery, he divided his empire between his brother, Ferdinand, who acquired the original domain of the Holy Roman Empire, and his son, Philip (future King Philip II), who acquired Spain and the Southern Netherlands.

⁶⁴ The leader of this revolt was William of Orange (1553–1584), a German prince with vast estates in the Netherlands, who had been brought up at the court of Charles V in Brussels as a loyal subject of the Spanish Crown. Eleven years later, in 1579, a treaty was signed to unify these seven provinces into a Protestant Union, known as the Union of Utrecht. William, known as 'the silent', allied himself with the Protestant cause and led his people into a war against Spain that would last for eighty years (1568–1648).

⁶⁵ Due to the strategic geographic location of the Netherlands on the North Sea, the Dutch developed a strong naval force using modern ships and skilled sailors. Dutch merchants were able to create extensive trading networks in Europe and the Mediterranean that allowed them to participate in large-scale trade of high value merchandise. Spice trading with Portugal had been profitable for Dutch

Fig. 1.2.1.1 *Situs civitatis Bantam et Navium Insulae lauae delineatio* from Varthema's *Travels* Ludovico di Varthema Leipzig: Heironymus Megister, 1610, 7.5cm x 11.5cm © Altea Gallery, London



merchants during the years of Habsburg rule. In 1584, Portugal that was technically at war with the Netherlands (after the union of the Iberian Crowns in 1580) diverted the spice trade to the merchants in the southern provinces of the Netherlands.

⁶⁶ In 1493 Pope Alexander VI (1431–1503) had granted the Portuguese exclusive rights to sail around the Cape of Good Hope.

⁶⁷ The products that the Portuguese and Spanish imported from Asia and the New World to Lisbon and Seville were carried further north in Holland and Zeeland ships. Antwerp had been the great distributing centre for northern and middle Europe, but after its fall in 1585 and the consequent closure of the Scheldt by the rebels of the Northern provinces, the trading towns of Holland and Zeeland, and particularly Amsterdam, inherited its position.

⁶⁸ This route, which had been kept secret by the Portuguese, was revealed in 1592 by the Dutch Protestant merchant Jan Hyughen van Linschoten, who in 1583 travelled in a Portuguese carrack to Goa. There he worked as secretary to the Portuguese archbishop for six years. His treatise *Reysgheschrift etc. (Travel Document of the Navigation of the Portuguese to the Orient)*, published in 1595, contained explicit information and sailing directions to the islands of the South Sea and Indian Ocean, and his *Itinerario*, published a year later exposed how the Portuguese held their trading monopoly. Cornelis de Houtman faced scurvy, piracy and loss of many sailors in his voyage.

⁶⁹ Vol. VI, book 36, fol. 38. J. Keuning (ed.), *De Tweede Schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Jacob Cornelisz. van Neck en Wybrant Warwijck, 1598–1600, Werken uitgegeven door de Linschoten-vereeninging* 44, 1940, p. lxxx: V. I am grateful to Jan van Campen for this bibliographical reference and the translation of the text. Cited in Canepa, 2014, p. 35.

⁷⁰ Carletti's porcelain carried on board the *São Tiago* will be briefly discussed in section 3.2.1 of Chapter III.

⁷¹ Two Dutch East India men arrived at Hirado with a letter from Prince Maurice of Nassau requesting permission from the shogun Tokugawa Iyasu to establish a permanent trading factory in Japan. This led to the entrance of two VOC envoys, Abraham van den Broeck and Nicholas Puyck, to the capital city of

were not as high as expected, the voyages were instrumental in getting further access to the riches of the Spice Islands. The Dutch historian Pieter Christiaensz Bor (1559–1635), in his *De oospronck, begin ende vervolgh der Netherlandsche oorlogen*, published between 1595 and 1634, describes the treasures brought back to Amsterdam by Jacob Cornelisz Van Neck: 'Never had such ships with such rich cargos reached Amsterdam, as they had 400 loads of pepper, 100 loads of cloves, except of the mace, nutmeg and cinnamon, porcelain, silk, silk cloths and other valuable items (Fig. 1.2.1.2).⁶⁹

The first contacts between the Northern Netherlands and Japan began during the Momoyama period, when the ship *Liefde*, under the command of the Englishman Will Adams, arrived in Bungo by accident, in 1600. The following year, in 1601, Jacob Cornelisz Van Neck left Ternate with two ships, heading for Patani on the northeast coast of the Malay Peninsula, but being blown out of his course by a storm near Borneo arrived near Portuguese Macao. The request to conduct trade there was not granted. That same year, in 1601, Jacob Cornelisz Van Neck arrived in the coast of China. Direct trade in China, then under the rule of Emperor Wanli, was not possible. The profit obtained from the sale of the cargo of the Portuguese carrack, the *São Tiago*, which was captured by the Dutch off St. Helena on its homeward journey from Goa to Lisbon, greatly stimulated the Dutch interest in trade with China. The cargo, sold in the autumn of 1602 in the port of Middleburg in the province of Zeeland, included spices, amber and musk, pearls, gold jewellery, raw silk, silk and cotton cloth, bedcovers, gilded woodwork, ebony, and a considerable quantity of porcelain, which belonged in part to the Florentine traveller Francesco Carletti.⁷⁰ This same year, the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company, or VOC) was formed as a chartered company to trade directly with Asia. The Dutch East India Company (hereafter VOC) became actively involved in the trade with Asia. In 1609, the Northern Netherlands became the Dutch Republic of the United Provinces (hereafter Dutch Republic) governed by the States General.

The VOC made several failed attempts to establish a permanent trading post in China. In 1609, however, the VOC was able to open a trading factory at Hirado on the western coast of the island of Kyūshū, near Nagasaki.⁷¹ The VOC faced fierce



Fig. 1.2.1.2 Profile of the city of Amsterdam from the river IJ, made of 3 separate plates
Print maker: François van den Hoeye; publisher: Peter Queradt, 1620–1625
Print
Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
(museum no. RP-P-1902-A-22401)



Fig. 1.2.1.3 Fort Zeelandia in Taiwan, 1632
Anonymous, 1644–1646,
Etching, 16cm x 20.8cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
(museum no. RP-P-0B-75.470)

Edo (present-day Tokyo) on a diplomatic mission. The delegation was received favorably at the court and the trade permit was issued.

⁷² The incident with the Portuguese carrack *Nossa Senhora da Graça*, which took place a few months after the Dutch factory was established, resulted not only in the loss of the ship and its cargo, but also in the reinforcement of the Dutch presence in Japan. C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, London and Berkeley, 1951, pp. 272–285.

⁷³ After 1644, the number of Chinese junks arriving in Formosa decreased considerably as a result of the civil wars in China. The lucrative VOC trade from Formosa was further impeded after 1655, when the first Qing emperor, Shunzhi (1644–1661), imposed a ban on foreign exports to eradicate Ming loyalist resistance harboured by the maritime powers. From then on the junk trade fell into the hands of the Ming loyalist and powerful sea-merchant Zheng Zhilong, who wanted to overthrow the Manchu rule on the mainland.

competition with the Portuguese, who until then were the only Europeans trading directly with Japan and supplying them with Chinese goods.⁷² Five years later, in 1614, a general commission was issued by the States General that allowed the VOC to engage in privateering against Portuguese and Spanish ships in Asia.

In 1619, the fourth VOC Governor-General Jan Pieterszoon Coen seized from the Sultan of Bantam the small port of nearby Jakarta, and renamed it Batavia (Fig. 1.2.1.3). The VOC headquarters were set up with a central government, the *Hoge Regering*, which supervised and administered all trade in Asia. Chinese goods were initially acquired at Bantam, where the Dutch had established a trading factory in 1603, and shipped to Batavia, located 90 kilometers to the west. Direct trade with China was so valuable that the Dutch established a fortified settlement in 1624 at Fengguiwei, a peninsula situated in the south of Penghu Islands, known by the Portuguese as the Pescadores (Fishermen's Islands), off the western coast of present-day Taiwan in the Taiwan Strait. That year, the Ming military troops besieged the VOC fortress and forced them to move to the larger island in the western Pacific Ocean, known at the time as Formosa (Fig. 1.2.1.3). The location of Formosa was crucial to the VOC. It was within easy access for the merchants and migrants from Fujian and for the Dutch, it was the ideal post to manage the highly profitable trade between China, Japan and Batavia; to fend off Portuguese and Spanish rivals, and ultimately to cut off the Manila-Fujian silk-for-silver trade. The Dutch, as well as private Chinese traders, took over this silk trade in the early seventeenth century, using Formosa as an intermediary base.⁷³ Chinese porcelain and Japanese lacquer were some of the many Asian goods used by the VOC as part of its inter-Asian trade, and large quantities of porcelain were also shipped to the Northern Netherlands/Dutch Republic, where it was widely sold.

When the Portuguese were expelled from Japan and the country was closed for all Westerners in 1639 (*sakoku*), with the exception of the Dutch, the VOC was then moved in 1641 to Deshima, a small artificial island in Nagasaki harbor, which had originally been built to house the Portuguese merchants and isolate them from the Japanese population. By then, the VOC had established itself in locations across the Indonesian archipelago. That same year, in 1641, the Dutch captured from the Portuguese the strategic port of Malacca.

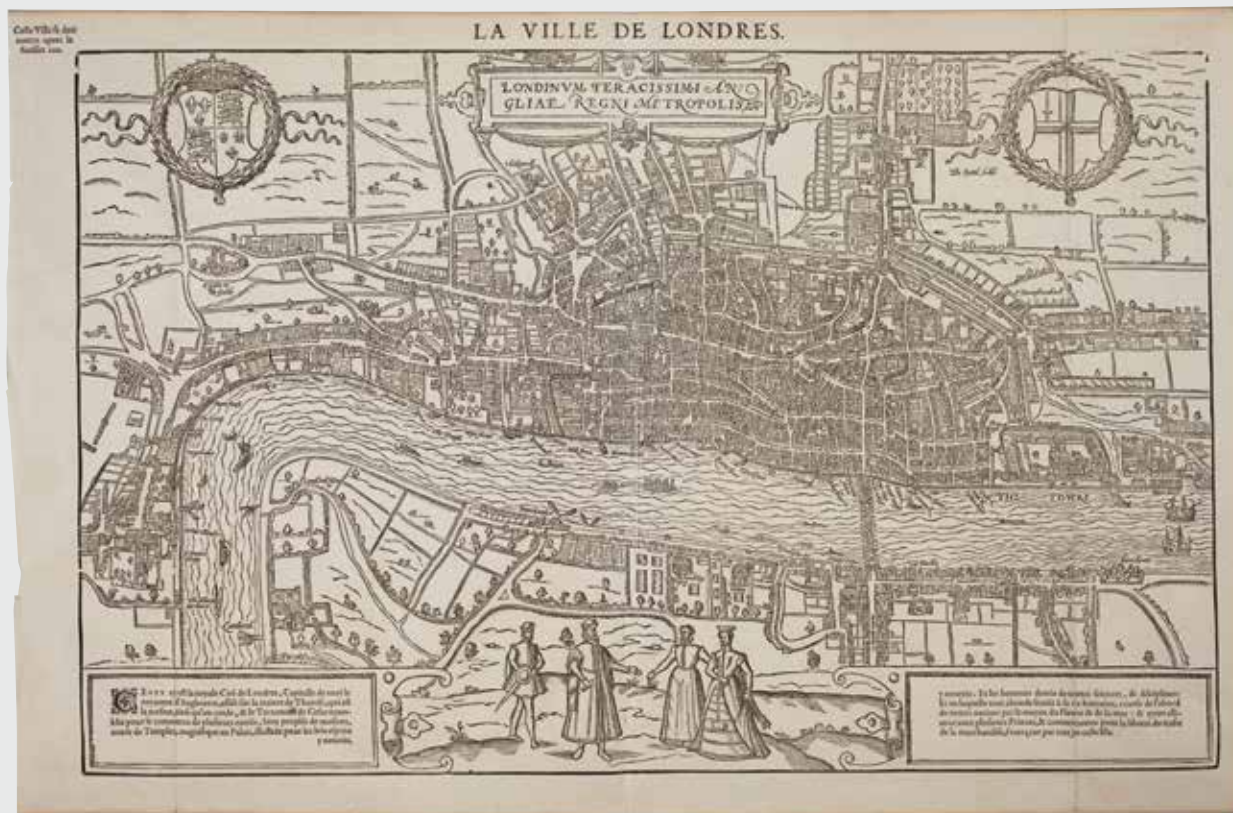


Fig. 1.2.2.1 *La Ville de Londres. Londinium Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis*
François de Belleforest
Paris, 1575
Woodcut, 32cm x 49cm
© Altea Gallery, London



Fig. 1.2.2.2 *The Market in Bantam*
Begin ende Voortgangh van de Vereeninghde Nederlandsche geoctroyeerde Oost-Indische Compagnie, published by Isaac Commelin, Amsterdam 1646
Atlas van Stolk (inv. no. 50442-535)

The East India Company (EIC) [1.2.2]

In the early sixteenth century, English merchants traded with Antwerp but some of them traded directly with the Levant in the eastern Mediterranean. Trade with the Levant was resumed when the Levant Company was founded in 1581, initially as a joint-stock company and later becoming a regulated company with a monopoly over English trade in the Ottoman Empire, which primarily imported spices, and cotton wool and yarn.⁷⁴ The remarks made by the German Leopold von Wedel, who travelled to England in 1584–1585, in his dairy stating that ‘Rare objects are not to be seen in England, but it is a fertile country, producing all sorts of corn, but not wine’, indicates that the luxury imported objects that were seen in Germany were not available for sale in England at this time.⁷⁵ As Lack has noted, only a few people in England would have been able to acquire Asian objects before the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603).⁷⁶

At the turn of the sixteenth century, England was still dependent on Italian and Dutch merchants to acquire spices. In 1600, Queen Elizabeth I chartered the Governor and Company of Merchants of London into the East Indies (Fig. 1.2.2.1). This organisation later became known as the East India Company or EIC (hereafter EIC), and was granted a monopoly of trade in all lands touched by the Indian Ocean, from the southern tip of Africa to the Spice Islands for a period of 15 years.⁷⁷ The EIC was founded to compete with the Dutch monopoly on the spice trade. The fleet of 1601, commanded by James Lancaster, went to Asia to set up the first EIC factory at Bantam, to purchase pepper and spices.⁷⁸ Edmund Scott, who stayed at Bantam as one of nine factors from February 1602 to October 1605, described the city as a ‘China towne’, where Chinese merchants residing there dominated the pepper trade (Fig. 1.2.2.2).⁷⁹ This notion is enforced by a letter sent by George Ball in 1617, who describes the English trade at Bantam as ‘most with Chinamen’.⁸⁰

In 1613, the English established a factory in Hirado, but failure to establish good relationships with the ruling *shogun* and continuous problems with the Dutch merchants led to their presence in Japan for only ten years, until 1623. As Lux has noted, William Adams sent a letter on January 1613 observing that on China goods great profit might be made, and recommended English merchants to ‘get the handling or trade with the Chinese’, as the EIC would not need to send money out of England, ‘for there is gold and silver in Japan in abundance’, as well as iron, copper and minerals.⁸¹ From a letter written in December 1613 by Captain John Saris to Richard Cocks, Captain of the EIC factory in Hirado, were lean that the EIC servants in Patani were instructed to ‘procure Chinese wares, and return to Siam’.⁸² The EIC also acquired Chinese goods at Macassar. George Cokayne wrote to Captain Jourdain the following year, in 1614, stating that ‘A junk from China, the first that ever came to this place, with great store of Chinese commodities’.⁸³ Direct trade contacts between China and England began just over two decades later, during the reign of Emperor Chongzhen, when Captain Wedell landed in Canton, in 1637. His mission, however, to establish trade relations failed. From the early establishment of their factories, the EIC traded on credit with the Chinese as a measure to contain the Dutch political and commercial penetration into the region.

74 T. S. Willam, ‘Some Aspects of English Trade with the Levant in the Sixteenth Century’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 70, No. 276 (July 1955), pp. 399–410.

75 Cited in Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. II: *A Century of Wonder*, Chicago, 1977, p. 33.

76 *Ibid.*

77 Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Volume III: *A Century of Advance*, Chicago and London, 1993, p. 74.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

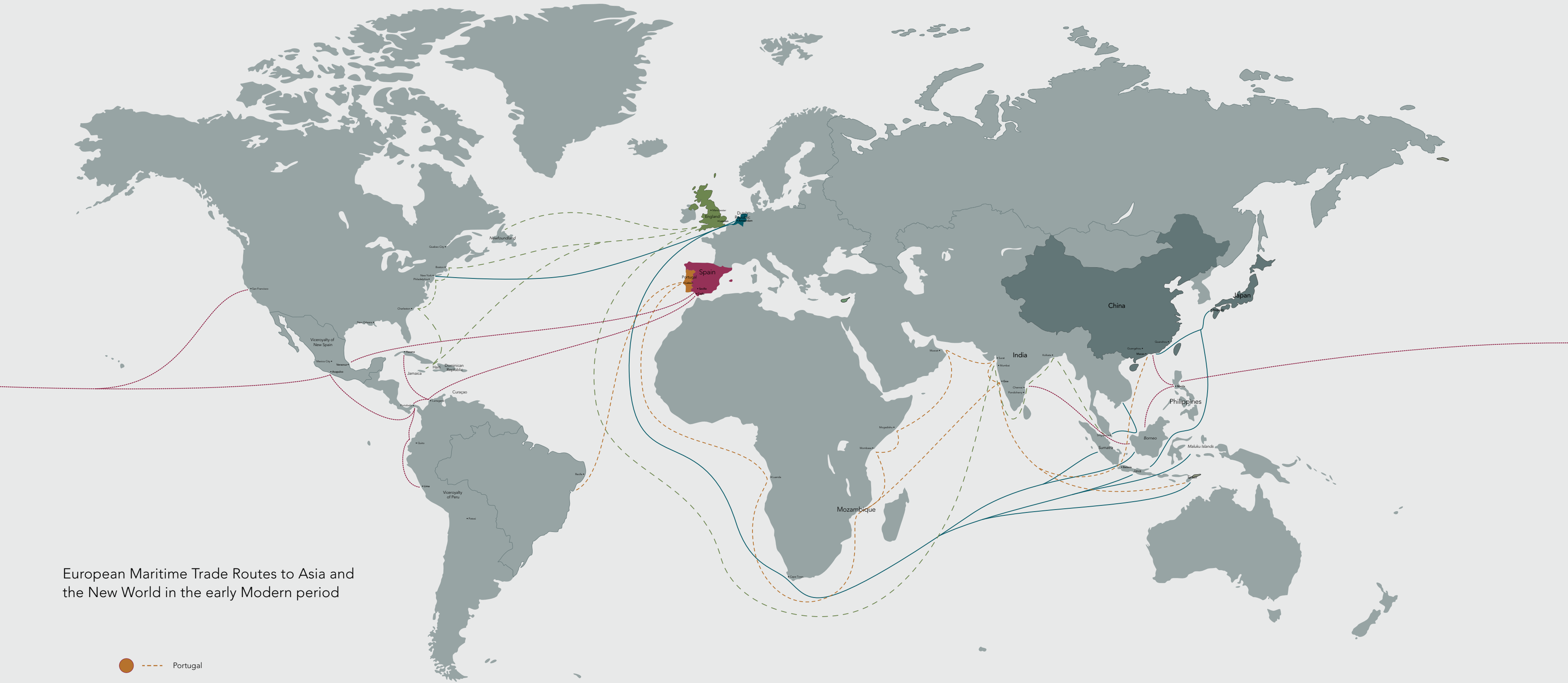
79 Cited in Jonathan E. Lux, *Spelling the Dragon: The Invention of China in Early Modern England*, unpublished PhD. Thesis, Saint Louis University, 2014, p. 173.

80 Cited in *Ibid.*

81 ‘East Indies: December 1612’, CPS, Colonial, Volume 2: 1513–1616, 1864, p. 245. Cited in Lux, 2014, pp. 158–159, note 174.

82 ‘East Indies: December 1613’, CPS, Colonial, Volume 2: 1513–1616, 1864, pp. 264–267.

83 ‘East Indies: October 1615’, CPS, Colonial, Volume 2: 1513–1616, 1864, pp. 430–440.



European Maritime Trade Routes to Asia and the New World in the early Modern period

- Portugal
- Spain
- Northern Netherlands/Dutch Republic
- - - - ● - - - - England