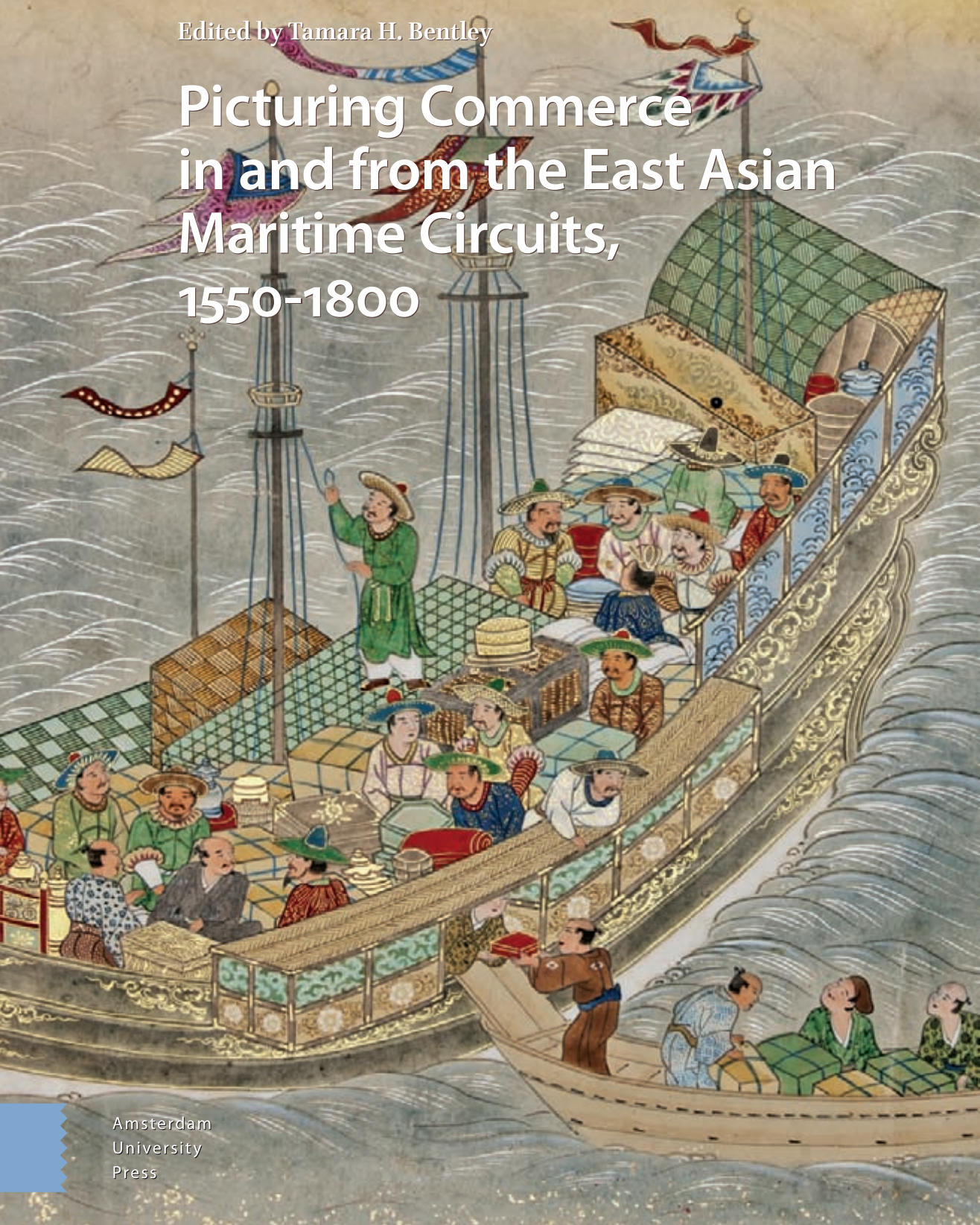


Edited by Tamara H. Bentley

Picturing Commerce in and from the East Asian Maritime Circuits, 1550-1800



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*Edited by
Tamara H. Bentley*

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For Eric, Kristina, and Kai
—T.H.B.

In memory of John E. (Jack) Wills,
for his manifold contributions
—*Picturing Commerce authors*

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- Fig. 10.4 Unknown artist, porcelain sauce tureen, made for the countess of Macclesfield (d. 1779), with overglaze decoration of shield, China. Private collection photo © Christies Images/Bridgeman Images.
- Fig. 10.5 Unknown artist, porcelain service, with overglaze arms of the English East India Company, China, eighteenth century. © Trustees, Victoria and Albert Museum.
- Fig. 10.6 Unknown artist, porcelain teapot, with overglaze enamel design of coat of arms, China, 1755–85. Jingdezhen kilns. Hard-paste porcelain, lime glaze. Courtesy, Winterthur Museum, gift of Leo A. and Doris C. Hodroff, 2001.29.3.

- Fig. 10.7 Unknown artist, porcelain teapot, with overglaze design of cobber's boot and the initials "RP" for "Richard Philcox," China, 1770–75, 4 1/2 × 9 × 4 1/2 in. (11.43 × 22.86 × 11.43 cm). © Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA. Peabody Essex Museum, gift of Mr. Carl L. Crossman in memory of Priscilla Waldo Papin, 1983, E72796. Photo: Dennis Helmar.
- Fig. 10.8 Unknown artist, export porcelain punch bowl, with overglaze enamel design including the arms of the Anti-Gallican Society, China, c. 1750–55. Picture taken from a Hogarth print of the *Gate of Calais*. Jingdezhen kilns. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Basil Ionides Bequest, C.23-1951.

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1. People and things in motion

The view from the East

Tamara H. Bentley

Abstract

For the merchants involved in early modern maritime shipping in Asia, a central feature of daily life was the repeated crossing from one national, ethnic or financial system to another. The objects loaded onto ships also transformed; on arrival at a new location, commodities were repositioned as they entered new spatial and reception contexts. There is a need for interdisciplinary studies combining an understanding of fluctuating trade routes, merchant networks, port cities, and trade goods themselves. Export ceramics, lacquerwares, textiles, and prints are all touched upon. It is argued that the impact of the early modern East Asian trade circuits has been underestimated, and that before 1800 we cannot place a single world economic center of gravity in Europe.

Keywords: early modern trade; East Asian trade routes; hybrid aesthetics; merchant networks; porcelain; textiles

A year ago, despite the dangers of the trip, Naya Sukezaemon had ventured from Sakai, Japan to the Philippines to acquire costly old brown-glazed Chinese tea jars. He was proud to think of his success selling these Luzon jars to collectors and to Toyotomi Hideyoshi—the political and military leader—for the tea ceremony. Now it was 1594, and he was back on the Philippine island of Luzon, acquiring wax for candles and for sealing ships, musk for perfume, and Chinese umbrellas. He knew many other Japanese merchants who used Latinized names when conducting exchanges under the supervision of the Spanish there—any number of them went by Eduardo or Pedro. There was even a Balthazar. He had acquaintances who had received “red seal” authorizations from Hideyoshi to travel as far as Southeast Asia. Little did he know he would eventually end up there himself.¹

1 I have drawn these details regarding Naya Sukezaemon's activities from the fine article on Japanese in Manila in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by Iaccarino. See Iaccarino, “Merchants, Missionaries and Marauders,” esp. p. 166. Iaccarino notes that, after a disagreement with Hideyoshi,

It was in 1769 that Tan Chitqua had first arrived here, in London, on the ship Horsendon, having given up his clay portrait shop near Canton. He had thought he might establish a profitable business here, but somehow it was not the prosperous life he had imagined. The weather was getting him down. Not that he hadn't met with some success—he had made contacts among well-to-do patrons. He had exhibited some of his sculptures at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1770, and met a broad range of artists who belonged to the Academy; several of them had asked with ethnographic curiosity if they could draw or paint his portrait. Strange to have others doing his portrait. How awful, though, when he tried to ship back to China in 1770, and got into those conflicts with the crew—sent back to shore at Kent! And then cooling his heels in London for over a year. The gentleman William Chambers now said he would add an “appendix” to his dissertation on Oriental Gardening relaying Chinese ideas “from the mouth of Chitqua himself”—he seemed to be twisting Chitqua’s words for his own purposes. Fortunate, then, that he would be able to leave London this year, and put these awkward situations behind him. Overwhelmingly, he kept thinking, “it is time to go home.”

In 1763, on the way back to the Netherlands after his first long period in China, the Dutchman Andreas Everard van Braam Houckgeest had married in South Africa, to Catharina, the daughter of the Lieutenant Governor of the Cape of Good Hope. Now in 1794, back in China, he reflected on his current life. He was pleased to have commissioned a Chinese portrait of Catharina on glass, with a suitably classical scene at lower left showing female figures gazing anxiously after a departing ship. And that clay portrait of himself that Chitqua had done—nice to have that in the family. Things were going relatively well in Canton, though he wished they could get better trade terms. His suggestion that the VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or Dutch East India Company) send a tribute delegation to the Chinese emperor had thankfully been approved by the Heeren XVII (“Gentlemen Seventeen”) in Amsterdam. The delegation was to arrive in Beijing by January 1795—both sides accepted the vague suggestion that they represented the Dutch “King,” rather than a commercial entity. Perhaps they could persuade the Chinese Emperor, or some high officials there, to make some trade concessions. Unfortunately, Isaac Titsingh, the head agent of the VOC branch at Nagasaki, was set to head the delegation, but Houckgeest would be second in charge. Meantime, why could he not abandon these ideas of eventually heading back to America and starting up a business there?

Sukezaemon was exiled, and seems to have settled in Southeast Asia. Iaccarino, “Merchants, Missionaries and Marauders,” p. 166. The Japanese writer Shigenori Chikamatsu (1695–1778) also composed a brief entry about the enormous amount of money Sukezaemon made, seemingly overnight, selling the Ruson or Luzon jars to patrons such as Hideyoshi.

As the above narratives illustrate, ventures in maritime trade in East Asia in the period 1550–1800, with routes extending east and west from there to span the globe, involved a vast array of intertwined lives. For those active in shipping, or in marketing their wares, a central feature of daily life was the repeated crossing from one national, ethnic, or financial system to another. In the sixteenth century, in a port such as Melaka, Malaysia, many types of ships could be seen, even after the Portuguese took control of the port in 1511. In 1515, when Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires (c. 1465–c. 1524) completed his *Suma Oriental que trata do Mar Roxo até aos Chins* (An account of the East, from the Red Sea up to the Chinese), he was so impressed by the trade in Melaka that he wrote: “whoever is Lord of Melaka has his hand on the throat of Venice.”² By the 1590s one might see large Portuguese ships, smaller Arab dhows, Gujarati and Coromandel Indian ships, Indonesian rigs, Chinese Cantonese and Fujianese vessels, Japanese “red seal” ships, and boats from the Ryukyu islands. The Dutchman Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563–1611) wrote of Melaka in 1595, “It flourishes thanks to an enormous body of merchants [...] through their incessant activity of buying and selling, a very large number of merchants from every part of the East have made Melaka immensely splendid.”³

For individuals such as Naya Sukezaemon, Tan Chitqua, or van Braam Houckgeest, their journeys took them from place to place, and to some degree they became comfortable with living multilingual, code-shifting lives. Alongside these artists and merchants, the objects loaded onto ships transformed as a result of their journeys; on arrival at a new location, trade commodities were repositioned, or even physically altered, as they entered new spatial and reception contexts. See for example a Southern Song (1127–1279 CE) or Yuan dynasty (1279–1368 CE) Chinese shipping jar, which made its way over to Japan by the fifteenth century and was converted into a much treasured tea leaf storage container (see Plate 1). There is an admirable interaction between the vessel’s reddish clay and the casually dispensed variegated olive-brown glaze. In Japan, these jars were considered to best preserve the qualities of tea leaves, and it was presumably this type of vessel that Naya Sukezaemon was seeking to purchase in the Philippines. The example illustrated here was given a name, Chigusa, and utilized by a number of famous Japanese tea practitioners of the Muromachi (1392–1573) and Momoyama (1573–1615) periods; it is now in the collection of the Freer and Sackler Galleries. See also a chalk portrait of Tan Chitqua by Charles Grignion II in the Ashmolean (Fig. 1.1), revealing something of Chitqua’s British contacts. We have as well a clay sculptural portrait by Tan Chitqua, held in the Rijksmuseum, most likely depicting van Braam Houckgeest (see Fig. 7.4). (William Sargent’s chapter in this volume provides more information on Chinese clay portraits.) A Chinese reverse

2 Tomé Pires’ two-volume work is now available in digitized format from the McGill Library. See *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-136385-182> (accessed 13 August 2018).

3 Translated in Boogaart, *Civil and Corrupt Asia*, p. 54.



Fig. 1.1: Charles Grignion II (British, 1753–1804), *Tan-Che-Qua, "Chitqua" (recto)*, Royal Academy 1771. Chalk on paper. Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

painting on glass of van Braam's wife Catharina apparently commissioned by van Braam Houckgeest (Fig. 1.2) shows, in the lower left, a section reproducing a European print of two women gazing after a ship; the anchor to the right of the figure supporting the portrait symbolizes steadfast hope. While in China, this image could reaffirm van Braam Houckgeest's connection to his wife, and her loyal wishes for his safety.⁴

We might consider as well a fanciful Japanese image (illustrated on the book cover) of maritime merchants trading by way of Nagasaki, seemingly including Chinese, Japanese, and Korean merchants, a section of a longer hand scroll dated to the late eighteenth century. Aspects of the Chinese and Korean attire seem to recapitulate the ballooning pants and tall hats of earlier images of the Portuguese in Japan.

4 In the Rijksmuseum, there is another Chinese reverse painting on glass from the late eighteenth century of Catharina van Braam Houckgeest and one of her daughters, Françoise—the pose is reproduced from an engraving by Thomas Burke (1749–1815), itself based upon a painting by German artist Angelika Kaufmann (1741–1807) of Lady Rushout with her daughter Anne, both in classical garb. Like the glass portrait of Catharina van Braam Houckgeest, this glass painting seems to have been commissioned in China by Andreas van Braam Houckgeest, and it remained for some time in the family collection before coming to the Rijksmuseum. See the Rijksmuseum collection website, <http://hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.432501> (accessed 13 August 2018). The mother and daughter painting is Rijksmuseum object no. AK-RAK-2007-6, and is by an anonymous artist, and produced in Canton, China, titled *Portrait of Catharina van Braam Houckgeest, née Van Reede van Oudtschoorn, and her daughter Françoise*, c. 1795.



Fig. 1.2: Unknown artist, *Portrait of Catharina van Braam Houckgeest, China*, c. 1790. Oil painting on glass. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Although more imaginary than documentary, this image nevertheless reinforces the fact that some early modern East Asian trade relationships involved European merchants, while others did not. This volume is an attempt to create a vision of what some aspects of the early modern East Asian trading world looked like—in terms



Fig. 1.3: Unknown artist, Sueyoshi “red seal” ship with foreign pilots and sailors, Japan, c. 1633. A wood-plaque painting from Kiyomizu-dera Temple, Kyoto.

of port-to-port sojourns, merchant’s lives, the cultural impact of innovative goods and ideas, visual and musical hybridities, and the conduct of buying and selling. By combining art history, history, economic history, and ethnomusicology, we attempt to examine shifting trade networks and images of that trade; as well as the aesthetic dimensions of the traded objects themselves.

Perhaps history and art history and music history need not be so much about things that are fixed, or even fully understood. They might be about things in transition, in the process of being negotiated. They might concern instead paths—the paths of boats, and people, and things—that bring us from world to world (see an early seventeenth-century Japanese painting of a red seal ship traveling from Japan to Southeast Asia, Fig. 1.3).

East Asian maritime trade: some key dynamics

As a prelude to the discussions in this book, it is useful to describe the East Asian waters geographically. Figure 1.4 provides a map of some of the shipping routes employed by Chinese, Japanese, and Korean ships in the period 1568 to 1639. (The

European trade routes which in this period intersected with East Asian shipping are not shown on this map.) Hugging the coast of Asia are seas subsidiary to the vast Pacific Ocean. North of the archipelago of Japan we find the Sea of Japan. East of China's Shandong peninsula and west of Korea is located the Yellow Sea. Below that, bordered by Japan's southern Kyushu island and the Ryukyu island chain on the east, and the Southeast China coast down to the region across from Taiwan, we find the East China Sea. In the area south of Taiwan, connecting down all the way to the Melaka strait, we find the South China Sea, bordered by South China, the Philippines, parts of Indonesia, and mainland Southeast Asia. The port of Melaka, on the west coast of the Malaysian peninsula, served as an important extension of the East Asian maritime sphere, since it was strategically placed along the narrow strait connecting the Indian Ocean with the East Asian seas.

Some important ports should be noted. From 1557 to 1887 the Portuguese leased from the Chinese government the trading port of Macau in South China, near current-day Hong Kong.⁵ Key trade ports in China included Ningbo (in Zhejiang province), Quanzhou (also called Fuzhou, in Fujian province), and Guangzhou (also called Canton, in Guangdong province). In Japan, three important ports were Hirado, Hakata (modern Fukuoka), and Nagasaki, all on the southern island of Kyushu. The Japanese island of Tsushima served as an important midway point for Japanese-Korean trade.

Many shifting trade routes are described in the course of this volume. In an introductory way, it is significant that, beginning in 1565 and continuing until 1815, the Spanish Manila galleons sailed between Manila (the Philippines) and Acapulco (in modern-day Mexico). Chapters in this volume by Donna Pierce and Angela Schottenhammer particularly elucidate aspects of this interchange.

A few key commodities also deserve introduction. From the 1520s a very productive silver mine was established at Iwami, and in 1542 the Japanese discovered rich deposits of silver at Ikuno;⁶ as a result, an enriching trade exchanging Chinese raw silk for Japanese silver developed. It may have been the proliferation of this trade through a variety of routes, even in spite of a Ming dynasty maritime trade prohibition (in Chinese called a *haijin*), that eventually resulted in the abolition of the *haijin* in 1567. Due in part to an upheaval between two Japanese diplomatic corps in the Chinese port of Ningbo in 1523, the Chinese emperors continued to disallow direct trade between China and Japan even after 1567, when other forms of Chinese maritime trade were sanctioned.

Also in about 1550, a silver deposit was discovered in Mexico, and another in Potosi, in the viceroyalty of Peru (modern-day Bolivia). Although the Spanish did not formalize their Asian base of operations until 1571, in Manila, these developments set them on a course to generate rich exchanges of silver for other Asian commodities such as silk, like the Japanese. The Spanish Manila galleons were critical to this exchange.

5 In 1887 Macau became a Portuguese colony. The colony was returned to China in 1999.

6 See Schottenhammer, "East Asian Maritime World, 1400–1800," p. 36.



Fig. 1.4: Map of some of the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean shipping circuits, 1567–1639. Map by Inspiration Design House, Hong Kong. Note that not all East Asian shipping routes for this period are shown, and the European routes in East Asia are not depicted.

It is significant that from the late sixteenth century through to the end of the Ming in 1644, silver imports from Japan into China exceeded silver imports from the Americas.⁷ In both cases, however, the continuing exchange of silver for Chinese goods

7 As Schottenhammer writes: “The quantity of silver that reached China from Japan at that time [sixteenth century] is said to have been 6–7 times higher than that from Spanish America.” Schottenhammer, “East Asian Maritime World, 1400–1800,” p. 36.

provided critical links in a trade network of increasing global interconnectedness. Since the Chinese economy ran primarily on silver by weight throughout the period covered by this book, 1550 to 1800, and the value of silver in China was higher than in other locations, China has been spoken of at this time as a “silver sink,” driving a considerable amount of world trade due to her nearly insatiable demand for silver.

Apart from the significance of silver, the East Asian maritime world was organized according to some unusual dynamics, worth elucidating. First was the long-standing dominance of China in this region. Maritime trade between China, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia had been very active at least since 600 CE, and the export of Chinese products, including ceramics and copper coins, was central to this activity, as was the Northeast Asian demand for tropical products such as woods and spices. Chinese writers and thinkers articulated a sense that China was a cultural center—calling China “the middle kingdom.” In many cases (though not always) the Chinese emperor insisted on establishing a tribute connection with another country before trade could be conducted. This essentially amounted to foreign delegations traveling to the Chinese court, offering up local products to the Chinese emperor, and accepting a vassal-like relationship to China. In return, the Chinese emperor offered more valuable gifts than he received, and granted the relevant member of the embassy group a ruling title within his home state. These tribute-offering rituals will surface in many contexts in the narratives that follow.

Up until the sixteenth century, Chinese copper coins had been the dominant monetary system in the East Asian trade zone. In fact, in early periods, one of Japan’s major imports from China was Chinese coin. By the later sixteenth century, however, China had transitioned to an economy based primarily on silver, and copper coins were used only for smaller transactions. By the early modern period, other nations in the area developed their own hybrid monetary systems.

The approach taken in this volume

Rather than conceptualizing a Europe/non-Europe binary, we attempt here to construct a model that is multinodal, acknowledging the three-part, four-part, or even more multivalent nature of Asian trade interactions, at times involving European merchants. The scholar Gang Zhao recently flatly stated—in our view correctly—that, although the West did, in the period 1550 to 1800, lay foundations for later global hegemony, “it is an exaggeration to place the West at the center of global history during the early modern period.”⁸ He also asserts: “In maritime Asia [...] Chinese private traders held sway [from 1500 at the start of this period] until the 1820s.”⁹

8 Zhao, *Qing Opening*, p. 4.

9 Zhao, *Qing Opening*, pp. 5–6.

European merchants were constrained by local practices within Asia. In East Asia, through 1800, the Europeans established their trade presence in ports, and the Spanish claimed the Philippines, but otherwise (except for a brief interlude where the Dutch occupied Taiwan) they did not amass land empires there. When necessary, they typically acceded to paying tribute to the rulers in China and Japan. As Joyce Denney says of Edo Japan: “In 1600 the Dutch appeared on the scene [in Japan], followed in 1613 by the English, but Japan’s Asian trading partners—China, Korea, Ryukyu, and Southeast Asia—remained the most important.”¹⁰ No single group could really dominate the many branches of the East Asian maritime sphere, and different groups of merchants, as Gang Zhao puts it, “formed a multipolar network.”¹¹ This is the vision we attempt to bring to light in this volume.

Chinese Ming trade in light of earlier developments

Both Richard von Glahn and James K. Chin provide insightful summaries of the overall trade dynamics in the early modern East Asian circuits following this introduction. Prefatory to these more comprehensive studies, it is useful here to situate some of the key trade developments of the Chinese Ming period (1368–1644 CE) against the backdrop of prior trade configurations in East Asia.

Many scholars assert that the high point of Chinese maritime trade actually took place during the Song and Yuan periods, prior to the “early modern” Ming and Qing (1644–1912 CE) dynasties. We might particularly consider early period Chinese-Southeast Asian trade, and Sino-Japanese trade in this regard.

Sino-Japanese trade was quite active in the first three quarters of the thirteenth century, during the Kamakura period (the Southern Song period in China); and again in the first half of the fourteenth century, during the Kamakura/Muromachi transition, after the late 1200s threat of Mongol invasions of Japan had been extinguished. The flourishing trade in the first half of the fourteenth century occurred before the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China descended into chaos between 1350 and 1368.

Concerning Chinese-Japanese trade during the mid- to latter Muromachi period in Japan, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a number of factors should be considered. First, in 1374, just after the Ming dynasty began in 1368, the first Ming emperor enacted a maritime trade ban (*haijin*), as mentioned above, which prevented Chinese maritime merchants from legitimately embarking on trade voyages from China to Southeast Asia, Japan, or elsewhere. This *haijin* lasted throughout much of the Ming, until 1567. As Angela Schottenhammer and others have made clear, for the first Ming dynasty emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang (the Hongwu emperor) the purpose

10 Denney, “Japan and the Textile Trade,” p. 57.

11 Zhao, *Qing Opening*, p. 5.

of this policy was to support an agrarian-based, egalitarian empire, limiting trade ventures for profit—ventures which in theory exacerbated income inequality. The Hongwu emperor instead envisioned a modest and moral, land-based, self-sufficient populace. Turning his back on the flourishing maritime trade of the Song and Yuan dynasties, the new maritime policy of the first Hongwu emperor constricted Chinese entrepreneurial ventures, and resulted in a wide array of unanticipated effects. First, the official limitations on Chinese trade led to the ascendancy of the Ryukyu island state, which sent ships as far as Indonesia and the Malaysian peninsula, and served as a central exchange point for Southeast Asian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean trade. Second, it led to an upswing in the production of Southeast Asian ceramics, which were during this period exported in some numbers due to the lessening of available Chinese ceramics.¹² Third, it led to an increase in illegitimate smuggling, and piracy, by multi-ethnic Asian seamen in the East China Sea and South China Sea. The prevalence of piracy in turn led to further Chinese skepticism about officially endorsing maritime trade.

There were two important exceptions to the Ming period *haijin*. First was the sanction of tribute trade to China. Foreign trade missions sometimes had 250 or more people, and sometimes 10s of ships; a portion of the cargo was reserved for sale at the port of entry in China; and Chinese goods could be purchased and shipped home in the “tribute” armada. Thus, in this period particularly, the ritual of offering tribute to the Chinese emperor was interwoven with the mechanics of trade. As the Japanese Muromachi-period state headed into chaos between 1470 and 1570, the Sengoku Jidai—“Warring States” period—the central part of the Japanese archipelago was home to vying feudal lords, and a greatly disempowered central shogunate (military governmental administration). As mentioned above, two different Japanese daimyo (enfeoffed lords) actually sent tribute in 1523 to China, leading to a scuffle in the port of Ningbo, China, and an even more restrictive Chinese ban on Chinese-Japanese trade from 1523 forward.

A second exception to the *haijin* was the practice of licensing foreign trade ships. Beginning in 1383, there was the development in China of an “official certificate” *kanhe* system, licensing foreign ships to conduct trade in Chinese ports. The usage of this system expanded throughout the fifteenth century, until by the sixteenth century there were at least eight foreign countries making use of Chinese *kanhe* licenses, including Japan.¹³

After the 1567 lifting of the Ming dynasty *haijin* (at least until the next *haijin* was enacted, in 1655), some 100 large Chinese ships sailed to Southeast Asia every year.¹⁴ Chinese trading junks also stopped at Manila and Batavia. As Leonard Blussé writes:

12 Schottenhammer, “East Asian Maritime World, 1400–1800,” p. 16.

13 Schottenhammer, “East Asian Maritime World, 1400–1800,” p. 16.

14 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 65. Jansen adds that some of these Chinese ships were equipped with 20,000 tons of cargo space. Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 65.

“[these Chinese ships] brought thousands of pieces of silver back [to China] from Manila as well as tropical products. At Jakarta (which the Dutch renamed Batavia) the Chinese fleet in the early seventeenth century had a total tonnage as large or larger than that of the whole return fleet of the Dutch East India Company.”¹⁵ The Chinese fleet of merchant ships was not a national undertaking, but an independent commercial enterprise sponsored by merchants from Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, or elsewhere in China.¹⁶

European arrivals in the Asian circuits

Although as noted above it would be overstatement to conclude that the Europeans dominated East Asian trade from 1550 to 1800, they did become a significant economic presence, and it is worth outlining their endeavors here.

First the Portuguese and then the Spanish arrived in East Asia from 1514 to 1550. By 1515 the Portuguese controlled Melaka; and by 1557 the Portuguese established a base in Macau¹⁷ and were active in South China Sea trade. The Portuguese had explored the route from Europe, around Africa across the Arabian sea, where they set up their commercial and religious center of operations at Goa on the central west coast of India. After taking Melaka, they extended their trade as far as South China and Nagasaki, Japan. Because Portugal had laid claim to this eastward route to Asia, Spain was obliged to sail west, down South America, through the straits of Magellan, and across the Pacific Ocean to the Philippines. Having taken parts of Central and South America under their control, the Spanish began exporting silver from South America (primarily Potosi) into the Asian circuits, and importing Asian goods back to New Spain; a further leg of the journey brought Asian goods across Central America and shipped them from there back to Europe. Following the establishment of flourishing silver mines in Japan, and the 1567 lifting of the Chinese trade prohibition, in 1571 the Spanish established their East Asian base in Manila, the Philippines; for all three reasons, the vigor of intra-Asian trade and East-West trade expanded greatly. Silver flowed into China both from Spanish New World sources and from Japan, with some economists suggesting that the year 1600 was a high-water mark for silver import into China via the Manila galleons. As noted, at this time, the late Ming period Chinese

15 Blussé, *Strange Company*, pp. 99, 103; cited in Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 65. As Jansen puts it: “The Chinese chain of trading posts throughout Southeast Asia thus served as the basis for Portuguese, Japanese, and Dutch trading activities in the area.” Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 65. Jansen adds: “[European ships] frequently assaulted [Chinese junks] and stole their cargoes [...]” Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 65.

16 A Japanese map of Nagasaki harbor that Jansen examines, for example, shows Dutch ships moored there, as well as two Chinese ships, one labeled “Nanjing” and one labeled “Fujian.” See Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 63, and fig. 4. Of Batavia, Li Qingxin writes: “[These Chinese ships] came to Batavia once a year from Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, and other coastal provinces.” Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 123.

17 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 67.

economy was running on silver by weight, with smaller items ordinarily purchased in copper coins. By 1581, the Chinese government had shifted from taxing the Chinese people in kind to taxing them (in the “single-whip tax”) in silver. The Portuguese started bringing Japanese silver into China, and Chinese raw silk into Japan, a lucrative and relatively short circuit.

In Asia, the Iberians were soon joined by the Dutch. The Netherlandish region (modern-day Belgium and Holland or the Netherlands) revolted against the control of Spain in 1568, and the northern Netherlands successfully established an independent republic. The people of the new Dutch Republic in the main embraced Protestantism. In the late 1500s, as Dutchmen such as Joris van Spilbergen (1568–1620) and Jan Huyghen van Linschoten (1563–1611) captained their own expeditions or shipped out with the Portuguese, they published accounts of their travels, encouraging compatriots to invest in Asian trade.¹⁸ The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) was established in 1602, partly to coordinate Dutch trade enterprises, so that one Dutch merchant would not undercut another by oversupplying the market with any particular product. The Dutch East India Company was not controlled by the Dutch government, but by the Heeren XVII (“Gentlemen Seventeen”)—an early version of the concept of a corporation run by a board. At first, the Dutch set up their center of operations at the port of Bantam, on Java, but by 1617 they had moved their trade center on the island north and east to Batavia. Interfacing with the Dutch, a wide range of ships called at Batavia, including vessels from Melaka, Southeast Asia, Vietnam, China, and Japan.¹⁹ VOC leaders decided in 1689 that they would lessen their attempt to gain a foothold in South China, and focus instead on encouraging, or even forcing, Chinese ships to come to Batavia.²⁰

The British East India Company was chartered in 1600, and they set up a factory in Ayudhya, Thailand, in 1612, and in Hirado, Japan, in 1613. However, as British products did not sell well, the English East India Company president, then at Batavia, ordered both settlements withdrawn in 1623.²¹ British outposts were set up on the coast of India and at Bantam, but a flourishing involvement in East Asia did not begin until they began trading with the Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) maritime empire in the 1660s. The British were able to transition the contacts they initially established with the Zheng empire, for example on islands off the South China coast, to new trade contacts with Qing dynasty officials once the Qing overthrew the Zheng in

18 Linschoten's book was published in Dutch in Amsterdam in 1595–96. One of the texts recounting Spilbergen's voyages, based on his travel records, was published in London in 1625.

19 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 121. Li adds that, for the years 1619 to 1659, the Dutch focused on wresting control of the spice trade from the Portuguese, and securing their trade in Indian textiles. Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 121. Li also argues that, for the time the Dutch were in Taiwan, they were able to effectively re-route business away from Macau and Manila, and interconnect Southeast Asia with Japan. Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 122. This strategic asset ended when Zheng Chenggong took over Taiwan from the Dutch in 1662.

20 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 123.

21 Bassett, “Trade of the English East India Company,” pp. 210–11.

1683. In the 1700s, the British were gradually directed to limit their Chinese trade to the port of Canton, with its regulated export system. By the eighteenth century, tea became a critical export, and by 1773 opium, from Bengal, India, and modern-day Burma, became an important trade good brought by the British into China.

Visual and political dimensions of Japanese foreign trade

As early as the Sui dynasty in China (589–618 CE)—the Asuka period in Japan (552–645 CE)—there had been formal, high-level exchanges between China and Japan. Throughout the Nara period in Japan (710–794 CE), exchange with the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) was very active. In the Heian era (794–1185 CE), the last official Japanese mission to China left in 836, returning in 838; however, there were also large numbers of unofficial merchant ships conducting trade at this time outside the official embassy missions.²² In the Nara and the Heian periods, the Kyushu administrative center of Dazaifu, in modern-day Fukuoka prefecture, was an important location for contact with Tang dynasty and Silla Korean envoys and merchants, and was also associated with ocean-going vessels leaving Japan.²³ A compound called the Kōrokan in Dazaifu housed foreign merchants, and, to some extent, also their wares. By the Muromachi period, the Kyushu port of Hakata, also in modern-day Fukuoka, eclipsed Dazaifu in importance.

What were some of the implications of the ongoing, periodically restructured, China-Japan trade in the fields of painting and ceramics? Chinese Southern Song monochrome ink court paintings made their way into Japan in the Kamakura period and were much valued. These misty, one-corner landscape compositions went on to become a central aesthetic in Japanese painting by Zen monastery painters in the fifteenth century, during the middle Muromachi. As one example of these visual contacts, a Southern Song hand scroll by the Chinese Chan (J: Zen) artist Mu Qi titled “Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang” was prized by Muromachi shogun Yoshimitsu (1356–1408), who asked that the horizontal scroll be cut into eight hanging scrolls, such as could be used during tea ceremonies (see Fig. 1.5). From the start of the sixteenth century, some Japanese painters, such as Sesshu, actually traveled to Ming China and incorporated Zhe school reinventions of Southern Song traditions, creating works that were generally larger in scale and more overtly calligraphic than

²² See Fuqua, “Japanese Missions,” p. 167ff.

²³ The Taiho Code (701 CE) specified that the administrative center of Dazaifu was to oversee the administration of Kyushu, and receive foreign emissaries. See the article on “Dazaifu, Fukuoka” (section titled “History”), in *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dazaifu,Fukuoka>. As Douglas Fuqua puts it: “the Tang court sought to administer its own maritime trade, which had begun to flourish in the Guangzhou district in the first half of the eighth century, by sending a customs official to the [Guangzhou] region. The Japanese must have been aware of this because they too attempted to administer their own trade with foreign merchants [at Dazaifu].” Fuqua, “Japanese Missions,” pp. 167–68.



Fig. 1.5: Mu Qi (Chinese, 1210?–1269?), *Fishing Village at Sunset*. Section of a long hand scroll, probably originally the *Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang*, thirteenth century. Ink on paper, mounted as a hanging scroll, h. 33.0 × w. 112.6 cm. Former collection of Shogun Yoshimitsu, Nezu Museum, Tokyo.

typical Song styles. Sixteenth-century Japanese painters also absorbed the bird-and-flower compositions of Ming dynasty court artists such as Lu Ji and Bian Wenjin.

In the Muromachi, Momoyama, and early Edo periods we also find extensive connections between China, Japan, and Korea in the field of ceramics. Chinese Song dynasty celadons and white wares were both highly valued within Muromachi collecting practices. Among the *karamono* (Chinese things) collected, the oilspot-glaze and rabbit's-fur-glaze tea bowls utilizing a dark-brown clay produced in Fujian (in China called *jian* ware) were even more desirable than other Chinese wares. Called *temmoku* ware in Japan, these brown-glazed bowls were considered ideal for bringing out the green of the powdered matcha tea used in tea ceremonies, at least in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As the Muromachi period ended and the Momoyama period began in 1573, Chinese Southern Song *temmoku* tea bowls were gradually replaced by Korean tea bowls and Japanese raku-ware tea bowls, which more clearly exemplified the Momoyama-period *wabi* (rugged, hermit-like) tea aesthetic.

The Momoyama period was a turning point in a variety of ways. In the years 1592–1598, the second Momoyama military leader, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, attempted several times, unsuccessfully, to invade Korea, which set back Japan-Korea relations for a time. Also, beginning with Hideyoshi's administration, the Japanese government began to intervene more actively in international trade, seeking government profits. The Japanese system of red seal ships (*shuinjō*) was established,²⁴ which allowed licensed Japanese ships to sail as far as Southeast Asia, a system which continued in the Edo period under Tokugawa Ieyasu, up until the 1630s.²⁵

24 Jansen states that the first *shuinjō*, red seal authorization, was issued by Hideyoshi in 1592, the same year he invaded Korea. Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 66.

25 As Jansen puts it: “[In the late sixteenth century] [p]rivate shipping ventures sponsored by Japanese feudal lords and wealthy temples began to participate in the trading network established by Chinese ships in Southeast Asia.” Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 66.

It was in the years just before 1600 that Japanese daimyo Ōtomo Sōrin, with his fiefdom in Kyushu including Hakata, received red seal licenses to trade with both Southeast Asia and Korea, an enterprise which Hiroko Nishida examines in this volume. Nishida also provides a nuanced description of the rise of interest in Korean tea bowls in Japan in the late sixteenth century.

By the Momoyama period, the active involvement of the Portuguese and Spanish in East Asian trade by way of ports such as Macau, Manila, and Nagasaki created new routes, new aesthetic interfaces, and new points of conflict. The Spanish Manila galleons further compounded the expansion of Chinese and Japanese shipping in the late sixteenth century.

The Portuguese and Spanish merchants also brought Catholic missionaries to Asia with them. The Jesuits in particular set up a mission in Nagasaki Japan, teaching Japanese Christian converts Western-style methods for rendering religious subjects. The Jesuits also gifted books of maps and mechanisms of scientific learning to Japanese elites. On the European side, written accounts show the European fascination with Japanese aesthetics. For example, Iberian Catholics participated in some Japanese tea ceremonies, and remarked on the sophisticated Japanese taste for “plain” or rugged simplicity.

As a result of the many forms of international exchange noted above, diverse visual forms of hybridity become evident in late Ming China and early Edo Japan in the first part of the seventeenth century. The complex interchange of goods in maritime East Asia in the time period just before and after 1600 can be illustrated with a few examples. The “patio process” technology for refining silver through the use of mercury was conveyed by Spaniards to the Japanese, and consequently both Japan and New Spain attempted to import cheap Chinese mercury, to the extent that their governments allowed, as discussed in Angela Schottenhammer’s chapter in this volume. Japanese folding screens and Chinese silks, Asian cottons, and porcelains were shipped, by way of the Spanish galleon trade, into New Spain and South America; records concerning these goods in New Spain and imagery illustrating the impact of Asian goods in the Spanish colonies are considered in Donna Pierce’s chapter in this volume. Jesuits in China brought keyboards to the Chinese court and taught others how to play them; British merchants in India also brought keyboards, and facilitated musical exchanges in a variety of settings. (See Victoria Lindsay Levine’s chapter in this volume for a rich description of the global circulation of keyboard instruments and keyboard music.) For a period of time in the late sixteenth century, Japanese merchants, some ostensibly Christianized and many having taken Spanish names, would arrive in Manila to trade Japanese goods such as silver, copper, and sulfur for Chinese commodities and Philippine goods such as honey, deerskins, and civet cats, who secreted a musk-like fragrance. These are just a few examples of the complexity of these multipart trade dynamics.

After the third Edo-period shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, enacted a series of expulsion edicts in the 1630s, the Iberians were forbidden from trading with Japan and expelled. By now the Dutch had arrived to take up that trade. For the remainder of the Edo period, until 1868, Japan remained “selectively closed,” continuing trade with the Ryukyus, China, and Korea, as well as, in a rather limited way, the Dutch, but closed to trade with other powers.

Although Chinese merchants calling at Japan had been active earlier at Hirado and Hakata, among other port locations, they were restricted to Nagasaki in 1635. Despite the 1640s political transition from the Ming dynasty to the Qing dynasty in China, in 1640 seventy-four Chinese ships came to Nagasaki, and in 1641 ninety-seven Chinese ships came.²⁶ After the Qing dynasty takeover of Taiwan from the Zheng regime in 1683, and the lifting of the Qing dynasty *haijin* (the second *haijin*) in 1684, direct trade with China intensified. In 1688, a full 193 Chinese ships arrived in Nagasaki.²⁷ A Chinese residential quarter was established in Nagasaki in 1689. According to Marius Jansen, in that quarter’s first year the Chinese housed there numbered 4,888, dwarfing the Dutch Deshima establishment.²⁸ Due to the Japanese laws of 1685 and 1715 limiting the export of bullion,²⁹ this Chinese trade over time constricted. In 1720, for example, there were only twenty Chinese ships at Nagasaki; in 1791, there were only ten.³⁰ As Marius Jansen has described, there were late seventeenth-century temples in Nagasaki for Chinese sailors and merchants linked to three “place-based” associations: one covering Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Jiangxi, called “Nanjing,” and two more for sailors and merchants from Fuzhou, Fujian, and Zhangzhou-Quanzhou. Later there was also one for Chinese from Guangzhou (Canton).³¹ In addition, there were hereditary positions as “translators” in Nagasaki; some for the Dutch and many more for the “Chinese”—which actually included translating for a number of other ethnic groups such as the Southeast Asians.³²

As had been evident in earlier Japanese exchanges with the Iberians and the Jesuits, European sciences, especially optics, mapping, astronomy, anatomy, and mathematics, were of great interest to the Japanese. Now provided by way of the Dutch, printed books or scientific instruments useful to such studies seemed to symbolize, in some way, the Western orientation. Meanwhile, European and New World elite culture, even middle-class culture, was transformed by Asian commodities such as porcelain, silk, printed cottons, wallpaper, folding fans, folding screens, tea, and lacquerware.

26 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 89.

27 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 88.

28 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 87.

29 First in 1685, and then again in 1715, the Japanese restricted the export of bullion. In the 1720s, the Shogun encouraged domestic Japanese production of silk and foodstuffs.

30 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 88.

31 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 88.

32 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, pp. 87–88.



Fig. 1.6: Unknown artist, plate with “IHS” design, China, 1522–66, 4 1/8 × 20 5/8 in. (10.478 × 52.388 cm). Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

Some of the complexities of trade dynamics: ceramics

The massive production of blue-and-white porcelains in China was centered at the kiln site of Jingdezhen.³³ Beginning in the early 1500s, the Portuguese and Spanish brought blue-and-white porcelains to Europe, some of which came from Jingdezhen. As Arturo Giraldez points out: “In the 1540s, the Lisbon elite were drinking tea from Ming porcelain services and placing special orders for [Chinese] porcelain with Portuguese decorations.”³⁴ A porcelain plate in the Peabody Essex Museum, dated between 1520 and 1540, with bespoke, and incompletely understood, “IHS” Jesuit insignias spaced alternately along the central border, is an early example of Jingdezhen Chinese ware commissioned by Portuguese patrons (Fig. 1.6).³⁵

Tracing the early modern export trade in ceramics from China and Japan to points elsewhere, we discover complexities easily overlooked, such as (1) the nature of shipped cargoes, with multiple layers of side-by-side goods packed onto ocean-going ships, the choices of export goods and the percentages of different goods varying over time; (2) the fact that some East Asian ceramics carried on European ships, at

33 As Arturo Giraldez points out, Jesuit Xavier d’Entrecolles recorded that in the first half of the 1700s there were about 3,000 kilns at Jingdezhen. Giraldez, *Age of Trade*, p. 37.

34 Giraldez, *Age of Trade*, p. 37.

times the majority, were destined for ports within Asia, rather than being directed towards the European market; (3) the reality that the Japanese and Chinese porcelain industries competed with each other for foreign markets in sophisticated ways, borrowing from each other; (4) the multiplicity of production points in China, such that not all Chinese porcelains were from Jingdezhen, or were not entirely from Jingdezhen, as sometimes undecorated forms from Jingdezhen were painted and glazed in the Canton region, and the corollary reality that there were probably twelve different kiln sites in Arita Japan during the high point of their production, from 1675 to 1720, leading to a degree of variability in these wares that is greater than we might assume; (5) the fact that East Asian made-to-order porcelains were in fact, in some cases, European designed though Asian produced, thereby muddying the distinction between cultural production from one area and another; and (6) the realization that a very large portion of the conveyance of Chinese porcelains to the Dutch Republic, for example, took place by way of VOC employee private trade, rather than through the official channels of VOC trade and auction. In other words, the “under-the-radar” trade in porcelains was probably considerable. Stacey Pierson’s chapter in this book considers the aesthetic gray area of Chinese porcelains produced to British specifications—at times even coming to symbolize British identity.

While considering porcelain export, it is useful to understand the reception of Chinese porcelain in Japan. As noted above, although Chinese celadons, white wares, and brown-glazed *jian* (J: temmoku) wares had been greatly appreciated in Japan in the Muromachi and Momoyama periods, we find also by the Momoyama and early Edo that some Japanese collectors amassed large numbers of Chinese blue-and-white tableware for entertaining.³⁶ Tokugawa Ieyasu (d. 1616), for example, apparently had thousands of relatively pedestrian blue-and-white wares in his collection. Interestingly, in about 1600 some Chinese craftsmen mimicked the mountain-form small dishes originally made popular by the Japanese tea master Oribe (d. 1615) to market back to Japan.³⁷ Stacey Pierson has noted the above instances, further adding that the Chinese “Oribe-style” wares were not produced at the dominant Jingdezhen kilns, but more likely in Fujian as Swatow or Zhangzhou ware.³⁸ Taking into account

35 As Karina Corrigan explains in the *Asia in Amsterdam* catalogue illustrating this work, this is one of the first surviving Chinese porcelain pieces displaying a European motif. Karina Corrigan, catalogue entry, in Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, p. 79; Corrigan also cites Sargent, *Treasures of Chinese Export Ceramics*, pp. 49–50. Of the IHS logo, Corrigan writes: “This monogram for Jesus Christ, used as early as the third century, represents the first three letters of his name in Greek, Iesous. When transcribed into Latin, IES became IHS.” Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, p. 79.

36 See Stacey Pierson’s note that the death inventory for Tokugawa Ieyasu (d. 1616) reveals a collection of Chinese blue and white cups, bowls, and plates in the thousands. Rather than being collected individually as outstanding items Pierson argues that blue-and-white wares were mainly purchased in this context as large sets for entertaining. Pierson, *From Object to Concept*, p. 35.

37 Pierson, *From Object to Concept*, p. 35.

38 Pierson, *From Object to Concept*, p. 35.

the examples offered above, the multidimensionality of Chinese porcelain production and exchange becomes clear.

As Japanese buyers began to appreciate Chinese blue-and-white porcelains between about 1610 and 1620 in the Arita area of Kyushu an indigenous Japanese industry developed to produce blue-and-white porcelain for domestic consumption. (Marius Jansen notes that Korean craftsmen captured during the invasion of Korea in the late sixteenth century were instrumental in starting up this industry.)³⁹ With setbacks to the Chinese export-ceramic trade during the Ming/Qing transition in the 1640s, Japanese merchants began shipping these Arita porcelains to world markets.

It is fascinating to learn that, in a porcelain order sent to Japan in 1659 by the VOC Heeren XVII leadership in Amsterdam, 5,748 pieces were ordered for Holland, whereas 50,952 pieces were ordered for sale mainly in the markets of Mocha and India.⁴⁰ Mirroring the complexity of Chinese production and shipping, the multinodal nature of Dutch VOC trade is also apparent.

As noted above, beginning in 1689, the VOC leadership in Asia decided to focus on bringing Chinese merchant ships to Batavia, rather than attempting to navigate the ports of South China. (Li Qingxin argues that in this period there were probably about twenty-four large Chinese ships each year calling at Batavia.)⁴¹ At the same time, from about 1675 to 1720, the Japanese Arita kilns were at a high point for export porcelain production. Thus, the Dutch were well situated to acquire porcelains from Chinese merchants coming to Batavia and to acquire them from Japanese kilns, negotiating from their base on the island of Deshima off the port of Nagasaki. Due to the multifaceted commerce of the VOC, and also due to Chinese-Japanese porcelain competition in the seventeenth century, it can be hard to tell whether blue-and-white porcelains pictured in Dutch still lives of the Golden Age reference Chinese or Japanese wares. A Dutch painting datable to 1656 by Jan Jansz. van de Velde, titled *Still Life with Goblet and Fruit*, seems to show a *kraak* Chinese porcelain bowl with panels of alternating motifs (Fig. 1.7).⁴² However, we also have evidence that the VOC ordered special porcelain flasks for holding oils from the Arita porcelain kilns in 1686. (For a similar set of Arita porcelain flasks commissioned by the VOC see Fig. 1.8.)⁴³ The Dutch multifaceted trade in porcelains continued in the eighteenth century.⁴⁴

39 Jansen, *Making of Modern Japan*, p. 70.

40 Pierson, *From Object to Concept*, p. 13.

41 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 123.

42 This painting is illustrated and discussed in Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, pp. 274–75.

43 For more information on these Japanese Arita-ware porcelain oil flasks, and the other set dated 1680–1700, see Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, p. 112.

44 Arturo Giraldez writes: “Dutch East India Company ceramic exports are an example of the immense capacity of China’s manufacturing. During the fifty-five years between 1602 and 1657, the company brought to Europe more than 3 million pieces of Chinese pottery, in addition to several million pieces trans-shipped at Batavia for re-export to Southeast Asia, India, and Persia. From 1729 to 1734, another 4.5 million items were imported, and finally the Dutch exported 42.5 million pieces between 1730 and 1789.” Giraldez, *Age of Trade*, 37.



Fig. 1.7: Jan Jansz van de Velde (Dutch, 1619/1620–1662), *Still Life with Goblet and Fruit*, 1656. Oil on canvas, h. 37.5 × w. 34.9 cm (14 3/4 × 13 3/4 in.). Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The contours of the eighteenth-century trade in East Asian porcelains can tell us a good deal about that larger era. As the Japanese Edo shogunate enacted restrictions on trade beginning in 1685, due to their attempt to lessen the outward flow of precious metals—first gold and silver, then copper—other forms of trade were constricted and ultimately choked off as well. For example, by the 1730s, the export of Japanese porcelain by way of official VOC orders had just about concluded. However, the Arita kilns continued to produce porcelains for domestic consumption, increasingly with overglaze enamel designs. At times, these wares even folded in images of the Dutch “foreigners,” who were possibly understood as “ebisu” (auspicious outsiders), and whose presence was associated with the arrival of “treasure ships,” and could therefore function as auspicious motifs in Japan.⁴⁵ It is possible also that some Arita-ware images of

At the end of these comments, Giraldez cites Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, pp. 174–75; and Deng, *Chinese Maritime Activities*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ This is asserted in Yasumasa, “*Hollandisme*,” p. 153. Dutch “foreigners” may have functioned as auspicious motifs in this way, although the small number of Dutch in Japan rarely made it inland, except when they ventured on tribute missions to Edo (modern-day Tokyo).



Fig. 1.8: Unknown artist, cellaret with nine porcelain bottles, Japan, c. 1680–c. 1700. Wooden case made in Indonesia. Kakiemon porcelain flasks from Arita Japan, h. 36 × dia. 33 × w. 27 × l. 25.5 cm. Inscription on bottom of the bottles: VOC (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, Dutch East India Company). Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Dutchmen borrowed these motifs from Chinese Jingdezhen-porcelain imagery, akin to the way European porcelains picked up Chinese figural images from Asian porcelain.⁴⁶ (See Fig. 1.9 for an example of an Arita-ware porcelain cup of the late eighteenth century picturing Dutch figures.)⁴⁷ Oka Yasumasa refers to the fascination with Dutchmen in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Japan as a *Hollandisme* trend.⁴⁸

It is important to note that, following the second round of Japanese trade constrictions in 1715—constrictions which applied to both the Chinese and the Dutch in Nagasaki—the downward trend in the Japanese export porcelain trade was in fact part of a larger pattern of dwindling trade with Japan. Another factor in the decline of Japanese export porcelain, as Oliver Impey points out, is that the Chinese porcelain was cheaper. We should also note that more foreign powers were trading through China during the eighteenth century than through Japan. This turn away from trade was an intentional development on the part of the Edo-period shogunate; Japan was encouraged to become more self-sufficient beginning in the 1720s, supporting her own silk production and silk finishing manufacturers, as well as developing her own capacity in rice-growing and foodstuffs.

46 Yasumasa, “*Hollandisme*,” p. 153.

47 These two cups are illustrated in Shirahara, *Japan Envisions the West*, p. 152. See the fascinating discussion of Shinto messenger demons/foreigner spirits *namahage* and powerful foreign spirits *ebisu* in Japanese culture, and the conflation of these folk spirits with foreigners such as the Tartars, the Portuguese, and the Dutch. Yasumasa, “*Hollandisme*,” pp. 153–55.

48 Yasumasa, “*Hollandisme*,” p. 150.



Fig. 1.9: Unknown artist, covered bowls with polychrome Nanban decoration of Dutch figures and ships, Japan, late eighteenth to early nineteenth century. Enameled and gilt porcelain (Arita ware), h. 8 × dia. 11.8 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Recent scholarship has shed considerable light on the process of producing and selling porcelain through the port of Canton in South China. By 1720, Chinese merchants formed the first Co-Hong association. Although this association was shortly thereafter disbanded, by the 1750s the Co-Hong structure was formalized. There were about fifteen Hong merchants in Canton, and each incoming ship needed to be linked with a specific Hong merchant, who acted as guarantor for the transactions and also for the actions of the Europeans.⁴⁹ One section of Canton was designated as the “foreigners” concession, and there was a street there, called “New” street or “China” street, for the showcasing of wares, among them ceramic wares.⁵⁰ There were also merchants outside the Co-Hong system who sold ceramics to European merchants on a more ad hoc basis, along with other goods. Orders could be placed for specific porcelain shapes from the inland kiln site of Jingdezhen. (One contemporary diarist said he saw thousands of kilns working at Jingdezhen.) Also, unpainted Jingdezhen wares could be shipped to Canton and painted in to-order designs by workshops there. The porcelain trade was known to be very competitive, since fashions for particular designs changed quickly.⁵¹ See Plate 2 for a late eighteenth-century Chinese painting of the European factories in Canton.

Although some records indicate that the large-scale import of blue-and-white porcelains into Europe meant that these ceramics were affordable to middle-class Dutch buyers by about 1610,⁵² Dutch trade in Chinese porcelain continued in the eighteenth century. The VOC ship *Geldermalsen*, for example, which sank on the way to the Dutch Republic in 1752, was apparently carrying 239,000 pieces of Chinese

49 Van Dyke and Mok, *Images of the Canton Factories 1760–1822*, p. 160.

50 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 172.

51 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 173.

52 Corrigan et al., *Asia in Amsterdam*, p. 142.

porcelain, and 687,000 pounds of Chinese tea.⁵³ In 1753, five large merchant ships of varying nationalities (British, French, Dutch, and Danish) collectively brought 1 million pieces of Chinese export porcelain to Europe.⁵⁴ Much of the Chinese export porcelain in the period 1573 to 1800 is termed *kraak* porcelain; these are most often blue-and-white bowls or plates with segmented panels radiating from the center, each panel with a motif—often repeated alternating motifs panel to panel. (These were not designed to be consumed by the domestic Chinese market.)

European craftsmen developed a close analogue to Chinese porcelain by about 1700. Gradually, suitable import substitutions for Chinese wares developed in Delft in the Dutch Republic; in Meissen, Germany; and in Staffordshire, England.

In Canton it is interesting to see that, as Paul A. Van Dyke has demonstrated, ceramics were definitely used by foreign East India companies as ballast for their ships. In spite of their dual function as trade goods and ballast, the overall weight of tea in eighteenth-century cargoes greatly exceeded that of ceramics, generally assuming an 8:1 ratio.⁵⁵ Van Dyke also shows that some porcelain merchants catered to a specific groups of foreigners. Interestingly, one Canton porcelain dealer, Lisconjon, is known to have invested in the Chinese junk trade to Southeast Asia, which ships in turn provided the Sago palm sugar he needed to pack inside the empty porcelain export vessels.⁵⁶ Sales in Chinese porcelains began to decline in the mid- to late 1780s.⁵⁷ English East India Company official porcelain shipments ended in the 1790s.⁵⁸ At the same time, more Spanish ships began arriving in the 1780s and 90s.⁵⁹ As the East India companies waned in the late 1700s, private commerce by smaller ships escalated, along with an associated preference for more individualized, sometimes higher-end, porcelain commissions.⁶⁰

Some of the complexities of trade dynamics: prints

East Asian prints and European prints both circulated internationally and facilitated the transmission of a wide range of imagery from one culture to another. Chinese print culture was based on the use of carved wooden blocks (xylography). Both the textual component of Chinese books and the illustrations could be cut into the

53 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 167.

54 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 167.

55 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, pp. 126–27.

56 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 168.

57 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 169.

58 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 169.

59 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 170. It is worth noting that Van Dyke's chapter 3 concerning the Spanish trade seems to contradict Giraldez where he describes the end of the Spanish galleon trade in about 1825.

60 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 170.

same woodblock, allowing for the replication of highly individualized calligraphy, among other features. In the expansive economic environment of Wanli-period China (1572–1620), publishers sought increasingly sophisticated illustrations to enhance the sales of their books. Some of these prints traveled to Japan and impacted painting compositions there. Chinese “how to paint” printed books were very influential in both Japan and Korea in terms of transmitting specific painted brushwork and compositional elements.⁶¹

During the “Christian Century” in Japan, when the Portuguese and Spanish were trading and preaching Christianity there from about 1539 to 1639, the Iberians brought printed products from Catholic Flanders and the northern Netherlands for instruction and for gifts. These included globes and printed world maps. As scholars have previously pointed out, some portions of a Willem Blaeu wall map were reinvented in anonymous Japanese screens such as the Suntory Museum of Art’s *Foreign Emperors and Kings*, dated to the 1610s.⁶² Bird’s-eye city views from Braun and Hogenberg’s *Civitates orbis terrarum* were also transposed onto Japanese screens.⁶³ During this period as well, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci brought illustrations for Nadal’s *Life of Christ* to China, which were copied and included in the 1606 Chinese printed book *Chengshi moyuan*.⁶⁴

In Europe, Johan Nieuhof’s (1618–72) illustrated *Het gezantschap der Neerlandt-sche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den Grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (The embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, emperor of China), published in Amsterdam in 1665, was very influential in conveying imagery about Chinese customs and entertainments. The frontispiece, for example, has clearly been translated onto a Delftware blue-and-white jar, and a Chinoiserie image on a Delft plaque is derived from another of the text’s plates.⁶⁵ In addition, a set of tapestries from the court of Louis XIV, titled the *Emperor of China* series, drew upon illustrations from the Nieuhof text for tapestry sections (see Fig. 1.10 for the frontispiece to Nieuhof’s text and Plate 3 for a tapestry from the *Emperor of China* series titled “Audience of the Emperor”). Another influential printed source in Europe was William Chambers’ book on Oriental designs, published in 1772. Since large paintings were hard to move, printed images and porcelain imagery could often serve more readily to bring visual traditions together.

61 For more information on this topic see Park, *Art by the Book*.

62 Both of these are illustrated in Shirahara, *Japan Envisions the West*, pp. 58–59.

63 These are both illustrated in Shirahara, *Japan Envisions the West*, pp. 64–65.

64 For these illustrations, and an in-depth examination of the Chinese treatment of the prints, see Spence, *Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*.

65 For this porcelain image, alongside several of Nieuhof’s prints, see Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, pp. 323–26.



Fig. 1.10: Johannes Nieuhof, frontispiece of the English version of *The Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China*. Originally published in Amsterdam in 1665. Digital Library for the Decorative Arts and Material Culture, University of Wisconsin Libraries.

Some of the complexities of trade dynamics: lacquerwares

As we have seen above, by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, export competition between China and Japan led to “export substitutions”—one country venturing into the export market previously held by the other. This happened in lacquerware as well as in porcelain. For example, Chinese artisans began to produce lacquerware folding screens for domestic and European consumption, partly drawing upon depictions of Europeans seen in earlier Japanese Nanban (“southern barbarian”) imagery. This topic is covered in Tamara H. Bentley’s chapter on Chinese lacquer screens of Europeans hunting. Japanese lacquerware was held by Europeans to be the finest, but sometimes the price made it prohibitive for the East India Companies to carry. In New Spain, artisans seeking to reproduce the look of lacquerwares sometimes utilized the secretions of the scale insect to create a similar, polished surface, mixing Asian technologies with South American native Indian technologies.

Some of the complexities of trade dynamics: textiles

As in the Indian Ocean region, textiles were central to much of East Asian trade. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, silk from China, exchanged for the silver of Japan, was an important source of wealth for merchants of many nations.⁶⁶ Since direct trade between the two countries was outlawed in Ming China—even after the 1567 lifting of the Chinese maritime ban—Chinese merchants brought textiles to Japan illegally; Chinese and Japanese merchants exchanged goods in Hôï An, Vietnam; and Chinese merchants sold silks to businessmen in Macau, who traded it by various routes to Japan, sometimes directly on Portuguese ships prior to 1639. (From the 1570s to 1617 the Portuguese sent one large carrack each year to Nagasaki, carrying a rich cargo of Chinese silk.)⁶⁷ From the 1590s to the mid-1630s, Japanese red seal ships also brought silver and other goods to Manila, Vietnam, or other third-party locations to trade for textiles and other items.

Much of the need for silk among Europeans was met by the silk textiles of the Safavids of Iran and the Ottomans based in Turkey. Printed cottons from India were also a central trade item carried into early modern Europe. Among the Europeans trading in Chinese textiles, the Spanish reserved a high percentage of their cargoes for Chinese raw and finished silk, lessening the amount of space for porcelain and

66 As Joyce Denney writes, most of the Chinese silk exported to Japan was raw: “By far the largest portion of Japan’s silk trade with China in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was in reeled silk (silk filaments wound directly from several cocoons into skeins), neither dyed nor woven.” Denney, “Japan and the Textile Trade,” p. 317, n 1.

67 Denney, “Japan and the Textile Trade,” p. 57.



Fig. 1.11: Unknown artists, silk bedcover, China, produced in Guangdong or Fujian province, 1680–1720. Silk embroidered with silk and metal-wrapped threads. Without fringe, h. 119 1/4 × w. 91 1/4 × dia. 1/8 in. (302.895 × 231.775 × 0.381 cm). Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

tea.⁶⁸ The Spanish collaborated with the Portuguese, and shipped a high percentage of these textile cargoes from Macau to Manila, and thence on Spanish ships to New Spain, South America, and Europe. As modern scholar Li Qingxin notes:

68 As Paul A. Van Dyke notes: “[The model of emphasizing first tea and secondly porcelain] was not necessarily true for private ships trading in China or for the Spanish ships [...] the Spaniards often did not purchase tea. Silk was their main export, so those ships would have been loaded differently.” Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 127.

At around 1608, the amount of goods the Spanish purchased in Macau and shipped to Manila valued at around 200,000 pesos, of which silk knit products accounted for 95% of the total. From 1619 to 1631, the Spanish through Guangdong and Macau shipped to the Philippines raw silk yarns and silk fabric valued at 1.5 million pesos every year. These silk products were largely reshipped for sale in the Americas and Europe.⁶⁹

One example of a finished Chinese silk product, likely exported on the ships of Catholic Portuguese and Spanish merchants, is a bedcover from a South Chinese workshop (probably from Guangdong or Fujian) dated about 1680–1720 (see Fig. 1.11).⁷⁰ The hybrid imagery drawn out in embroidery depicts putti figures in the four outer corners, Asian lions chasing flaming pearls at the inner corners, and at the center an image of a pelican piercing its own breast to feed its young, a symbol of Christ.

England imported considerable amounts of both Indian printed cottons and Chinese silks. The international trade in textiles was significantly impacted by the Calico Acts in England in 1700 and 1721. These disallowed the import of a wide variety of cotton textiles into England—which, to bolster domestic industry, struck particularly at the worldwide distribution of Indian cotton textiles. Since these laws did not apply in the American colonies, Indian textiles continued to be imported there. As for silk, in 1723 in Canton, China, a “silk workers guild” was established, although merchants of porcelain and other commodities could also join.⁷¹ They sold two types of silk: Nanking (higher end) and Canton (lower end and lower price).⁷² Raw silk was also purchased, and sold by weight.⁷³ New duties were assessed on Chinese export silks in the 1770s to 1790s, and the prices correspondingly rose, dampening sales.⁷⁴

Modeling the early modern economic engine

The sum total of all the exchanges described above—ship to ship, purveyor to consumer, and production shop to domestic display—is a new form of global interconnectedness. To what extent is this early modern globalization forged by Europeans? This large-scale question belongs to economic history, and directs us to recently pervasive models of the early modern economy, such as those advocated by Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein. These two influential authors centered their discussion on the developing stages of the leap forward to capitalism in Europe. In these

69 Li, *Maritime Silk Road*, p. 120.

70 This silk bedcover is illustrated and discussed in Corrigan *et al.*, *Asia in Amsterdam*, p. 87.

71 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 172.

72 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 173.

73 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 173.

74 Van Dyke, *Merchants of Canton and Macau*, p. 206.

models, international trade was, to some extent, not very important, and the trade of Asians was treated as peripheral to the central drama of the unfolding modern European world.⁷⁵ In our view, however, certain “counter-indications” are apparent, which should be treated as significant. For example, how do we deal with the fact that so much of the wealth infused into Europe derived, broadly speaking, from trade with Asia? And, given that, what do we make of the fact that early modern European and Asian enterprises were so often wrapped up together? (One case would be that of Dutch merchants investing in Chinese Hokkien shipping ventures, as covered in James K. Chin’s chapter. Another case would be that of the British attempting to set up a factory on Taiwan in conjunction with the Zheng maritime empire administered from there.) In addition, we should also note that French shipping in Asia or other parts of the world pre-1800 was never very strong, and that Dutch profits from Asia-based trade dropped off in the eighteenth century, while Chinese shipping to Southeast Asia and other parts of Asia remained significant. The development of the canton system in China in the middle eighteenth century was surely important, and the escalation of British trade at this time is particularly notable. Still, it is not clear that, in the years before 1800, the British strongly felt they had the upper hand in Chinese trade ventures. Taking these parameters into account, to what extent could we argue, as some recent scholars have done, for economic “interactive emergences” prior to 1800, born of multilateral trade interactions, rather than a European-dominated economic revolution?⁷⁶

Both Braudel and Wallerstein posited that there was, at any given time, a single economic core, the magnetic “center” of the overall world system. In the period under review in this book, both authors suggest that that single center moved from southern Europe to northern Europe. However, the eighteenth century provides a good example of a time period without any single dominating core. Japan had partly closed itself to the outside world, but Chinese, Dutch and Korean trade still proceeded with Japan. China had resumed trade with Southeast Asia, and Chinese merchants prevailed there over European traders. The British were gradually linking products exported out of greater India (most especially opium) to products they could trade for silver in China, although much of this opium trade was at first private, rather than above-board English East India Company trading. The British found an ever-expanding market for tea in Europe sufficient to fund ongoing Europe-China trade ventures. In fact, by the middle eighteenth century, a variety of nations were trading through Canton: Britain, the Dutch Republic, France, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia. China was still a relatively thriving and vast land empire under the Qing dynasty Qianlong

75 As Wallerstein states, “[...]in the period 1763–1815] in the intracore struggle, the United Provinces, which did best by far initially, was eventually undercut by English and French competition.” See Immanuel Wallerstein, “Struggle in the Core—Phase III: 1763–1815,” in Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System III*, p. 59.

76 Andrade and Hang, *Sea Rovers*, p. 22; for the term “interactive emergences” they cite Wills, introduction to *China and Maritime Europe, 1500–1800*.

emperor; and Jesuits remained in the Forbidden City, sending reports home about China, until the rites controversy and other difficulties closed out that enterprise in about 1760. The Dutch VOC was dissolved in 1799, and the Chinese Qianlong emperor died the same year.

If we locate ourselves in Asia in 1750 looking forward, it would strain credulity to predict that Britain would come to compromise China's power, or that the Dutch VOC would close up shop. (It would also be very hard to feel that the entire world economy was centered on British-French rivalry in this century, as Wallerstein argues.) From the Asian perspective, it would be impossible to sense any single center for the world economy, in fact, and that is precisely the point.

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