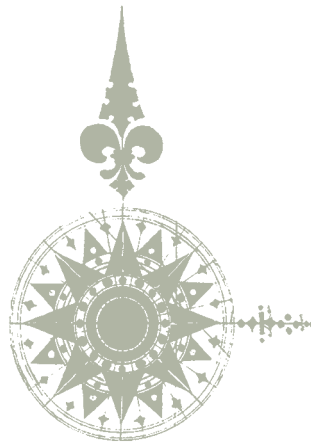


The Timor-Macao Sandalwood Trade and the Asian Discovery of the Great South Land?

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Although connected to ancient trade routes, the eastern or Indonesian archipelago was virtually unknown to ancient Greece and Rome. At the best, in the late Renaissance it was presented in Ptolemy revival atlases as a cluster of islands off the southern extremity of the Eurasian landmass. Known to China and India from an early period as the prime source of coveted sandalwood, the island of Timor (meaning east in Malay), part of the Sunda chain of islands stretching east of Bali, also attracted the attention of the first arriving European traders in Southeast

Asia. By the end of the 17th century, however, Timor emerged at centre-stage of intra-colonial rivalry in the eastern archipelago. In this contest Portugal (and Holland), respectively, were obliged to adapt to local and regional power including overarching Chinese trade networks that made their ventures commercially viable. It is important, then, to consider the way that the European trade with Timor fitted into or, at least, interrupted, age-old Asian tributary and long-distance trading networks radiating out of, variously, India, Java, Malacca, and China. Lying some 500 kilometres off northern Australia, Timor Island would appear to be a jumping-off point for voyages further south, and we seek to know when and how Asian seafarers made this contact. Timor, notably, was touched by the Magellan-Elcano circumnavigation appearing in early travel accounts associated with that journey. Yet the revelation to Europe of *Terra Australis Incognita* by the French Dieppe school of mapmakers, remained allegorical or constrained by classical constructs of the antipodes, at least until the physical discovery, mapping (and naming) of Australia in the 17th and 18th centuries.

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HISTORIOGRAFIA

Setting aside the Iberian contest over the Moluccas, the evolution of Portuguese authority in the eastern archipelago during and after the ‘long’ 17th century, responded to or worked within several important restraints which we heed in the following analysis. As described by Portuguese historian Artur Teodoro de Matos, these are fourfold; first, the confrontation between Portuguese power and that of the Muslims of Macassar in zones over which both claimed nominal sovereignty; second, the threat posed by the Dutch East India Company (VOC); third, internal revolts fomented by the powerful Timorese kingdom of Wehale; and fourth, the actions of an indigenised or creolised group on Timor, notionally loyal to the Portuguese Crown, but in fact acting independently (Matos, 1974: 74-78). To this enumeration, we should also add the long *durée* role of Chinese traders on Timor Island, revived again in the 17th century with the introduction of Macao-based merchant groups. In other words, the Timor-Macao case allows us to interrogate two conflicting civilisational crossover framings of space—and there were many—namely China’s Nanyang, and Portugal’s highly contrived Estado da Índia.

First, this article enters the discussion on world incorporation of peripheral zones, as with Timor, versus its Asian tributary status *vis-à-vis* China. A second section touches upon the sandalwood trade and the Chinese discovery of Timor. A third turns to early Portuguese interest in the sandalwood trade. Fourth, it then engages the Dutch and the sandalwood trade. Fifth, it discusses the Macao connection with the sandalwood trade. Finally, it raises the possibility of an Asian discovery of the Great South Land, versus Portuguese discovery narratives, with special reference to Malacca-based Portuguese cosmographer, Manuel Godinho de Erédia’s *Nusa Antara*, or ‘land inbetween’.

I. WORLD INCORPORATION OR ASIAN TRIBUTARY POWER?

The phenomenon of European expansion, which Timor seems to exemplify, has drawn heated debate between two broad schools of world history. This has been summarised by Frank and Gills (1993) as turning upon 500 years of history or a 5,000-years perspective. The 5,000-year perspective allows for a seamless view of history stretching back to antiquity,

acknowledging that the ‘new world’ was in fact home to a world-system prior to its incorporation in 1492. By contrast, Wallerstein (1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 2004) and others regard capital accumulation over the past 500 years as the motor force of world-system theory and continuous capital accumulation as the *differentia specifica* of the ‘modern world-system’. In the latter view, world empires or tributary systems were dominated by ideological questions as opposed to the economic law of value in the accumulation of capital. For Frank (1993, 1994), the debate is really about continuity versus discontinuity in world history.

For Wallerstein (1989), the East Indies remained external to the European system between 1500 and 1800. The Portuguese did not break ‘the international Asian character of trade’ and only conducted trade on terms established by the Asian nations. In making this claim Wallerstein also finds support in arguments of the pre-war opponent of Eurocentric historiography, J.C. van Leur (1955). Asia, in the Wallersteinean view, therefore remained an ‘external arena’ in a relationship between two zones ‘not within a single division of labour’ involving the trade in luxury goods versus trade in bulk or necessities. According to Wallerstein (1989: 132), ‘luxury exports’ refers to the disposition of socially low-value items at prices far higher than those obtainable for their alternate usages. Such traffic then is only applicable between two separate historical systems holding different measures of social values. Such obviously was the case of prized nutmeg and cloves from the Moluccas, which entered trade chains reaching to Europe, but it was also the case of sandalwood from Timor which entered the ‘external arena’ in India and China via Java or Malacca as a product of luxury consumption in religious ceremonies.

The Wallersteinean view that the East Indies remained outside the European system up until around 1750, and that the Portuguese and Dutch relations with the Asian states were essentially conducted on Asian terms, has been challenged by Victor Lieberman (1990, 1999, 2003, 2009). But while van Leur was correct to signal the maritime outpost character of the trade, Lieberman asserts that even in line with Wallerstein’s other criteria, archipelagic Southeast Asia was already on the way to peripheralisation by 1650 or 1700. Not to burden this discussion with more facts and theory, Lieberman offers the example of the Manila galleon trade which ‘deadened’ Spanish interest in developing

HISTORIOGRAPHY

a native economy. Throughout the archipelago, he offers, the VOC succeeded through 'brutal assaults and sustained naval attacks' where the Portuguese failed in winning monopolies. But the 'historic achievement of the Portuguese', he continues, was to accelerate the political and commercial fragmentation of the western archipelago disrupting and destroying, particularly the integrative thrust of the Malacca Sultanate. The only exception to the rule that local economies were actually contracting, he offers, is the case of Aceh in northern Sumatra.

In this discussion we should not also ignore certain of the assumptions of the school of general crisis of the 17th century, given early voice in French Enlightenment philosopher Voltaire's pioneering global history, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), that uprisings across Europe found their match in India, China and Japan. While there is more than a little coincidence in these events, we cannot ignore the impact even in the Timor-Solor-Flores zone of the consequences of such climactic European events as the Dutch revolt against Spain (1567-1648), the Spanish conquest of Portugal in 1580, the running war by the Dutch against the Iberian powers in South America and the broader Asian region, Portugal's official renewal of war with the Dutch in 1621, and the Portuguese overthrow of Spanish rule in 1640-68 (Parker and Smith, 1978).

But to offer a totally European-determinate view of events of this period would be to seriously underestimate the strength of what can be termed, after Japanese historian Hamashita Takeshi (1994, 1995), the 'tribute trade system'. Asian history writ large, he reminds us, is 'the history of a unified system characterised by internal tribute or tribute-trade relations, with China at the centre'. He sees this regional conception of history as 'the premise' of an understanding of modern Asia. While, to be sure, we cannot ignore, respectively, China's and Japan's varying responses to the new Euro-centric trading patterns, at the same time, we should not neglect the new rising centres of power, namely Islamic Macassar and other regions. While for Frank and Gills (1993), the general distinction between the 500 years and 5,000 years debate continuities, the question which concerns us here is whether Portugal ruptured or accommodated existing Asian maritime trading networks in the eastern archipelago.

II. THE SANDALWOOD TRADE AND THE CHINESE DISCOVERY OF TIMOR

The importance of sandalwood to outsider interest in Timor merits digression. Most studies of Timor agree that early contacts with Timor were linked with sandalwood exploitation. Reaching back 5,000 years, Egyptian, Indian and Chinese texts all mention sandalwood. Writing of the ancient sandalwood trade, the Dutch geographer Ferdinand Ormeling (1956: 96) noted that it bore the character of a thin gold thread linking Timor with Java's coasts and on to India and China. In both these countries the aromatic wood found use in religious and burial ceremonies long before the advent of the Portuguese. Chinese incense sticks offer but one example of the use of sandal in powdered form. It was also the coveted raw material used for the carving of fans and boxes (entering Chinese imperial household collections). Oil extracted from sandal heartwood was also highly valued. As such, sandal entered the circuits of long-distance trade as a luxury or prestige item. Despite the entry of this commodity into a world-market, traditional social relations on Timor was relatively untouched; transactions were mainly with local rulers, and the foreign impact was restricted to the coastal regions.

Dutch scholars have established that, reaching back to Srivijaya (c. 7th to 11th century CE), the Sumatra-based thalassocratic city-state, sandalwood from Timor was transported to the Malacca Straits area and then via the monsoon-controlled trade routes to both India and China. Citing local 'annals', the English East India Company official John Crawfurd (1820: 148-149), observed that, as early as 1332, the Javanese along with Malays frequented Ternate in the Spice Islands as the 'first link in the long commercial chain' reaching from the Moluccas to Europe. There is no question that sandalwood from Timor entered this chain as a commodity of Indian or Arab trade. We also know from such Chinese sources as the 1225 accounts of the Chinese Inspector of Overseas Trade, Chau Ju-Kua (Zhao Rugua 赵汝适) that Timor was regarded as a place rich in sandalwood. Ming dynasty records are more eloquent on the subject, describing Timor as an island covered with the aromatic wood and having at least twelve landing places where Chinese merchants made their landfall (Ormeling, 1956: 96; Ptak 1983). Also, from this time a direct sea route to

HISTORIOGRAFIA

Timor was opened up by Chinese navigators through the Sulu and Celebes (Sulawesi) Seas to the Moluccas (Sakurai, 1997: 11).

From his reading of Chinese sources on this question, Roderich Ptak (1987: 32) has established that the earliest extant Chinese description of Timor is that contained in the *Daoyi zhilue* 島夷志略 (circa 1350): [Timor's] mountains do not grow any other trees but sandalwood which is most abundant. It is traded for silver, iron, cups, cloth from Western countries and colored taffetas. There are altogether twelve localities which are called ports...

In any case, the *Daoyi zhilue* account is of interest in suggesting, inter alia, direct trade between Timor and China, high profits realised from the sale of sandal, and the presence of possible Javanese, Indian, or Arab traders in Timorese ports as bearers of goods from the west.

While no other Mongol-Yuan or early Ming sources refer to the continuation of direct trade between Timor and China, Ptak (1987: 32) speculates that it could be either accidental, or the rise of Majapahit on Java in the second half of the 14th century may have interrupted the trade routes. Though Chinese documentation on the south seas trade increases exponentially because of maritime activity connected with Zheng He's Ming-era expeditions, there is no hard evidence that his ships directly touched Timor. As Ptak summarises, in the period before Portugal's conquest of Malacca, it is fair to assume that sandalwood was shipped to China by both Chinese and non-Chinese merchants on the main commercial routes running via the Celebes, the Moluccas and the Sulus, before 1400, and via Java and Malacca after 1400.

The importance of the westerly Java Sea route is confirmed by an anonymous Chinese manuscript entitled *Shun feng xiang song* 顺风相送 or 'Fair Winds for Escort', a nautical compendium partly composed about 1430 with additions up until or after 1571. Timor figures as the southern-most destination out of 100 voyages mentioned, albeit connected by the western route across the South China Sea. Sailing instructions for the route from Patani to Timor reveal direct passage off the east coast of the Malay Peninsula, via Tioman, Karimata, south towards Banten on Java, east through the Lesser Sunda Islands, entering the Sapi Strait between Sumbawa and Komodo islands,

continuing east skirting the southern shores of Flores but, with Sumba in sight, direct to the western end of Timor (*Ch'ih-wên*). From here, the Chinese traders chose a course that would take them either to the north or south coast of the island, in the latter case sighting Solor (*Su-lü ta-shan*). The voyage from Banten, after skirting the north coast of Java, followed close to the same itinerary. Besides naming the important harbour of Kupang (*Chü-pang*), the *Shun feng xiang song* indicates five other toponyms on the north coast of Timor visited by Chinese ships. Mills, who has studied this question, identifies these places as Tanjung Sulamu at the entrance of Kupang Bay, Pulau Batek (offshore Oecusse), Wini, and, proceeding eastwards, perhaps Tanjung Tuwak Mesi, Maubara, Loiquiero, and the northeast extremity of Timor. Six places are mentioned on the south coast of Timor; at the end of the Roti Strait, in the vicinity of Noilmina Bay, and Amanubang (Mills 1979: 85). Ptak (1987: 34) believes that the *Shun feng xiang song* is based upon oral accounts of Chinese sailors who visited the area.

Antonio Pigafetta (1669: 141), a scribe aboard the *Victoria*, the sole surviving ship of Magellan's circumnavigation which sojourned in north-central Timor in early 1522, also passed specific comment on Timor's sandalwood trade and the role of Chinese in this trade.

All the sandalwood and wax which is traded by the people of Java and Malacca comes from this place, where we found a junk of Lozzon which had come to trade for sandalwood...and the goods which are commonly taken in trade for the sandal are red cloth, linen, steel, iron and nails.

It can be adduced from this that, by acting as intermediaries, the 'people of Java' delivered up sandal and wax to Malacca thereby connecting Timor with the major arc of Chinese trading-tributary networks in the South China Sea zone. The presence of the 'junk of Lozzon' suggests a resumption of a more direct route to China, albeit via the less favoured eastern route according to prevailing winds and the trading season. We do not know the size of this trading junk, but it could have been considerable. Chinese sea-going junks of the early 1600s were frequently of 400 to 800 tonnes capacity, often carrying crews of up to 500. The point is, however, that China's retreat into isolation after the great maritime voyages of the Ming, coupled with the dramatic irruption of Portuguese sea-power into the

HISTORIOGRAPHY

South China Sea, meant a fundamental shift in the way that trade was conducted, including the trade in sandal, notwithstanding the obligatory accommodation on the part of the Iberian power with local tributary networks.

THE CULTURAL ECOLOGY OF SANDALWOOD

Sandalwood is not unique to Timor or neighbouring islands, but also occurs in certain Pacific island groups, Madagascar, the Malabar Coast of India, and northern Australia, and a host of different varieties occur. Nevertheless, the islands of Java, Timor, Sumba, and Solor were, historically, host to the highest quality sandalwood in demand, namely, *santalum album* L., occurring in both a white and even more esteemed yellow variety. By contrast, the most prevalent occurring sandalwood in India, is *santalum rubrim* or red sandalwood. As Crawford (1820: 421) observed of the Timor variety, the best 'is that nearest the root of the tree; and for this reason, the largest billets are the highest priced'.

In historical times the sources of sandalwood were sufficiently abundant to attract sailing vessels to both the north and south coasts of Timor Island according to season, with the fragrant wood widely dispersed up to 1,300 meters in altitude. European travellers such as the naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (1869: chap XIX) remarked upon the presence of sandal near Dili in 1861, but sandal resources were already being progressively depleted on the island. To some extent, the Portuguese anticipated the depletion of sandalwood as an economic resource and, from the first decades of the 19th century, began to experiment with Arabica coffee, eventually leading to the establishment of large coffee estates. By 1901, the situation was so drastic that Governor Celestino da Silva issued an order prohibiting the cutting of sandalwood in all the central and northern districts of the colony, Oecusse excepted. Because this ban had little effect, prohibition was made total in 1925 (Cinatti 1950: 13-14).

The sustainability of sandalwood on Timor Island can also be viewed as a problem of resources management. Boomgard (2006: 173-174) writes of three models of sandalwood management in reaction to world market demand; the Javanese model, the Sumba model, and the Timor model. Prior to 1500, he writes, Java was also an export centre for sandal but, by the time that European traders entered Asian waters, supplies from Java had dwindled, apparently

from overcutting. Ancient sandal groves were only rediscovered in 1900 after regrowth. In any case, Java was well endowed with multiple resources. In contrast to this 'sell-out' model, stood Sumba, also known to the first Europeans as the 'sandalwood island'. Traditional rulers on Sumba resisted VOC attempts to harvest the sandalwood owing to taboos associated with disturbing ancestral spirits in the forests. But Sumba could afford to keep up this 'abstinence model', at least up until the late 19th century, because it also wielded other resources in demand such as horses and slaves which kept the VOC at bay. By contrast, Timor represented a 'durable supply model' whereby, in the absence of other significant resources, traditional rulers were obliged to husband their resources over a long time. Whereas Java lost out completely, as it appears that no single ruler 'managed' the sandal groves, on Timor 'management by the monarch may have been a solution to the problem'. Boomgard also mentions some other possible cases of resources management by local rulers, such as with sago on northern Sulawesi, sappan wood on Sumbawa, and cassia trees in northern Sumatra. In each case, some kind of consent would have been required from the people to avoid illegal acts. It is of interest as well that, in 1792, the Sultan of Mysore (the so-called sandalwood city of India) declared sandal a 'royal tree', thus paving the way towards state management of the resource.

III. EARLY PORTUGUESE INTEREST IN THE SANDALWOOD TRADE

When Malacca fell into Portuguese hands in 1511, the Iberian traders not only commandeered stocks of sandalwood but learned all the necessary details about its place of origin. Although Timor was not directly visited by the 1511 expedition of António d'Abreu to the Moluccas, the island nevertheless appears on the Francisco Rodrigues map of c.1512 with the notation 'island in the Sunda group where sandalwood grows'. From 1513-1514, both Tomé Pires and Rui de Brito confirm the importance of Timor as a source of sandalwood. Pires indicated that 'our ships go to Timor for sandalwood' and from Malacca it was then dispatched to China. In a famous letter of 6 January 1514, de Brito informed King Manuel of Portugal as to Timor's sandalwood groves. For the years 1513-14, 1518 and 1525, price figures in Pires' writings suggest an even more intimate contact with Timor, or at least

HISTORIOGRAFIA

the small island of Solor which would emerge as a key base in the Portuguese sandalwood trade (Cinatti, 1950: 3-5; Ptak, 1987: 32-33).

The seasonal character of trade, or in Anthony Reid's (1993: 64-65) phrase, 'the seasonality of voyaging' has to be remarked upon, especially as the Solor-Flores-Timor zone is monsoonal and the long distance trade linking the islands to Malacca, Goa and, in a later period, Macao, depended upon the rhythm of the trade winds. Invariably over a long time the Portuguese caravels departed Goa in April or September laying over in Malacca until the end of the year for the southward-blowing monsoon. Some of the cargo of prized Indian fabrics would be traded in Java for Chinese copper coinage in turn exchanged on the journey eastwards for rice and low quality cotton goods in Sumbawa, later to be bartered for spices in Banda and Ternate. As discussed below, some of these subsidiary voyages reached Solor and others touched Timor seeking out sandal, returning to Malacca with the southeast monsoon between May and September. Unquestionably, this seasonality not only ensured the development of entrepôts where traders waited out the changes of winds but, in the case of Solor and Timor, eventually led to permanent settlement by Catholic missionaries and officials.

PIMENTEL'S TIMOR ROTEIROS

The tenor of the above is confirmed by Manuel Pimentel's *Arte de Navegar* (1712) which includes a number of *roteiros* to Timor, respectively Lisbon to Timor, Goa to Timor via the Bali Straits, Goa to Timor via the Sunda Straits, Macao to Solor via Macassar, and return voyages, along with a lengthy description of Timor with respect to navigation, and trading seasons. The change from the prevailing north wind to the south wind, and the names of major ports of call on the south and northern coasts, even recalls Song Chinese knowledge. Larantuca on eastern Flores, Solor, and especially Babau inside Kupang Bay, are noted as critical ports in the Portuguese navigation to Timor.

Of particular interest is the 'Roteiro da viagem de Lisboa para a Ilha de Timor'. As indicated, Babau supplied a sheltered harbour during the change in winds, along with fish, firewood, and fresh water. As explained, the principal locations for lading sandal on the south coast of Timor were only accessible during the months of February, March and April, coinciding

with the prevailing northerly winds. Sailing south and east from Babau these lading 'ports' were, in west-east sequence, Amarrase, Bataemissao, Babico Bayale, Suay (Suai), Boiro, and Caimule, the latter dubbed a region of hills and mountains (consistent with present-day East Timor). But with the change to southerly winds, the season for trading on the north coast commenced running from April to November. Besides Lifau, there were 'many' other sandalwood lading ports on the north coast as far east as Adem, close to the northeast tip of the island.¹ Lifau is described as a beach (not a seat of administration or *fortaleza*), though still an important destination, made all the more difficult by the situation of the maritime danger presented by the small offshore Batuk Island as identified in the *Shun feng xiang song*. As the *roteiro* notes, the former Portuguese *fortalezas* in Kupang and on Solor had already been taken over by the Dutch, allowing us to date this account from the early-mid 1600s (Pimentel, 1712: 422-425).

LOCAL TRANSACTIONS AND POWER ARRANGEMENTS

We have little information on the role of indigenous merchant groups on Timor but we know that control over the sandal trade empowered certain *liurai* or little chiefs over others. We may assume that the sandal trade enabled the more strategic *liurai* to acquire such precious commodities as metals, Chinese ceramics, and other foreign objects including, at a later stage, crude firearms. Essentially, Timor Island remained outside of Hinduised and Islamic influences and lacked a centralised state system. Nevertheless, a ritualised centre on west Timor around the kingdom of Waiwiku-Wehale, may well have been strengthened by its command over external commerce as much as control over allegiances by feuding petty kingdoms (cf. Therik 2004). At least this appeared to be the situation confronting the first arriving Europeans. In an allusion to the political structure on Timor, Pigafetta (1969: 141) wrote that, 'On the other side of the island are four brothers, its kings', naming the kingdoms as Oibich, Lichsana, Suai and Cabanazza (Camanaça). In so doing, he also identified the southern-central region of Timor as the centre of sandalwood and political power.

Oral tradition, scattered colonial records, and anthropology tend to confirm that a semi-mythologised political centre known as Wehale existed at that time, although not all who have studied Timor are in

HISTORIOGRAPHY

agreement as to its potency. Notionally, at least, Wehale stood at the apex of a loose confederation straddling south-central Timor Island exercising spiritual and ritual authority over a number of outer domains. Conversely, it has also been argued that Wehale centrality in the political system was strengthened by the sandalwood trade through the redistribution of wealth to lesser domains (Friedberg, 1978: 163 cited in McWilliam, 2005: 292).² What is better documented is that, in 1642, a Portuguese party under Captain-Major Francisco Fernandes marched from the coast and subdued Wehale. By also rallying allegiance from many domains, the triumphant Portuguese secured sandalwood sources and paved the way for future conquests (Leitão, 1948: 207).

The entry or rather invasion of Timor Island by foreigners obviously challenged age-old power relations between the various *liurai*. Because of the importance of sandalwood to local tribute systems, as McWilliam (2005: 292) ventures, control over the production and trade in sandalwood was to control the polity. He also allows that the converse was true, namely that the holders of effective political power in Timor were well placed to monopolise available sandalwood stocks. We would not argue with his conclusion that the fortunes of Timorese history were bound up with the history of sandalwood politics. Simply, Timor was the historical sandalwood island, although the Dutch also sourced the fragrant wood from Malabar, just as new sources would emerge in the Pacific islands by the 19th century.

With Ende Island off the southern coast of Flores, and Kupang in western Timor, in addition to Solor Island, all fortified by the early 1600s, the Portuguese exercised a primacy against potential European rivals in both the Savu and Flores Sea zone. Hosting substantial Christianised communities, with basic ecclesiastical institution established, and with thriving marketplaces and manufactories to support the seaborne trade, the fortified Portuguese bases in the Lesser Sunda Islands were also capable of a high degree of self-sufficiency and economic autonomy outside of the requirement for cannon and certain specialist trade commodities such as iron goods and cottons. But, with the fall of the Solor fortress to the Dutch in 1613, Larantuka in western Flores emerged as the principal centre of Portuguese influence in the Lesser Sunda Islands. (See Illustration 1) By the 1620s, Larantuka was linked to

Macassar where the Portuguese were also established and, in turn to Macao, especially in the sandalwood trade. Lifau, the future Portuguese capital in Oecusse on north-central Timor had yet to emerge, and it was not until October 1769 that the Portuguese established their capital further east in Dili (See Gunn 1999: chap 5). Even so, by the first decades of the 17th century, Macao-based traders were already favouring Lifau as a port of call for the sandalwood trade and may also have been sojourning on the island awaiting the change of season.

Timor-Macao case allows us to interrogate two conflicting civilizational crossover framings of space – and there were many – namely China’s Nanyang, and Portugal’s highly contrived Estado da India.

IV. THE DUTCH AND THE SANDALWOOD TRADE

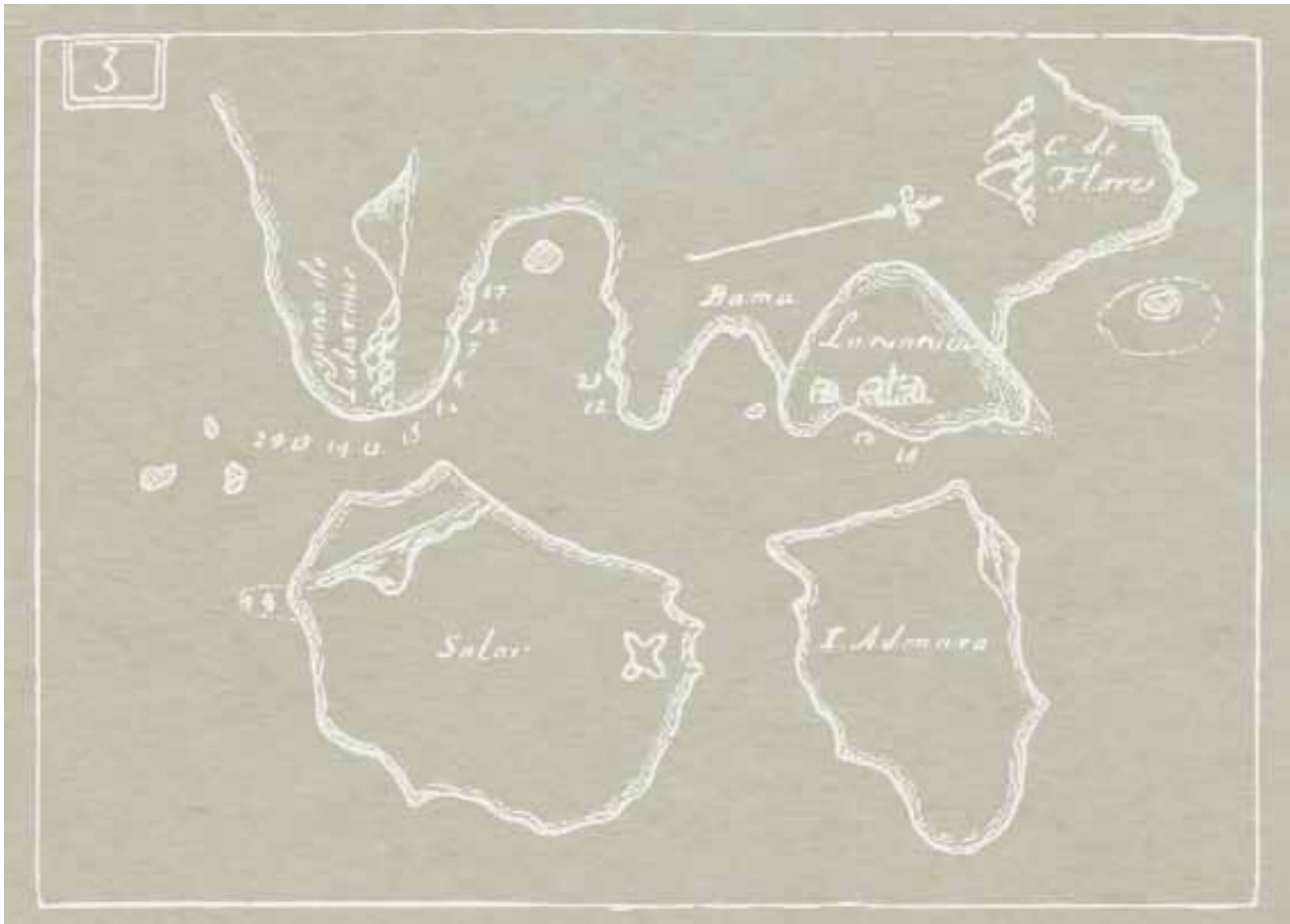
While the Portuguese muscled in on the sandal trade with Timor ahead of European rivals, the Dutch were not far behind. As Jan Huyghen van Linschoten wrote in his *Itinerario*, ‘Timor has whole wildernesses of sandalwood and from thence it is carried to and throughout India, where it is used by Indians, Moors, Heathens and Jews’ (cited in de Matos 1974: 169). According to Linschoten, three species of the aromatic wood grew in Timor, namely red-yellow sandalwood which predominated in the east of the island, otherwise much in demand in India for various medicinal, cosmetic, and religious purposes, a citrono species regarded to be of low quality found in the west of the island, and, in the centre, a yellow variety in high demand in Macao (Matos, 1974: 169). Given this knowledge, it is not so surprising that, in the account of the *Eerste Shipvaart*, the first voyage to the East Indies by the Dutch (1595-97), sandalwood was recommended as an article offering good profits (Ormeling, 1956: 101).

HISTORIOGRAFIA

Neither were the English backward in their knowledge of Timor's sandalwood. John Saris, who resided in Banten, then a major trading port on Java under its sultanate, between 1605 and 1609 prior to setting up English East India Company operations in Hirado in Japan, wrote of Timor that, 'it affords great store of Chindana, by us called white saunders, the greatest logs being accounted best'. Of the trade in sandal (*cedana* in Malay) along with 'great cakes' of wax brought from Timor to Banten by Chinese traders, Saris observed from market prices fetched in Banten that it brought 'great profit' when traded against such items in high demand in Timor as chopping knives, small bugles, porcelain, colored taffaties, and pieces of silver. According to Saris (1941), one of his men actually ventured to Timor with Chinese traders to investigate the trade at first hand, though the English were not successful in following up the sandal trade with Timor at the source.

With good reason, Ormeling (1956: 101) asks, what was Dutch interest in a commodity that had virtually no market in Holland? He explains that, from the beginning, Timor sandalwood provided a means by which the Company could break into the highly attractive trade with China. The failure of Batavia (Jakarta)-based Dutch Governor General Jan Pieterszoon Coen's attempts to seize Macao in (1617-1623, 1627-1629) prompted the Dutch to drive the Chinese, Portuguese, and local Muslim merchants out of the Timor trade, leaving Batavia as the major sandalwood emporium in the East. With this strategy, the status quo of old would re-emerge whereby the Chinese would buy the sandal direct from Java. In fact, however, the Dutch failed to dislodge the Portuguese from Timor and never managed to impose their monopoly. On Timor, the VOC's influence was restricted to Kupang, and environs. Moreover, the Dutch were outmanoeuvred by the Chinese sheltered

Illustration 1: Manuel Pimentel, 1712: the Larantuca (Flores), Solor zone.



HISTORIOGRAPHY

under the Portuguese flag at Lifau in Oecusse. As Adriaan van der Velde bewailed in 1614 after its first capture from the Portuguese:

The Chinese offer in exchange such articles as porcelain, beads, gold, etc., which are in great demand on Timor and with which the Dutch cannot compete. In addition they offer the people of Timor more than we do, since all the wares in China are abundant and cheap (Ormeling, 1956: 101).

Even so, having ousted the Portuguese from their stronghold on Solor (1618-1628) following an invasion of 1613, and having taken over the Portuguese fortress on Kupang in 1653, the Dutch were able to exercise a choke on Portuguese shipping attempting to tap lucrative sandalwood groves on the southwest coast of the island. De Roever (1998: 51-52), who consulted VOC archives, reveals that, by successfully controlling the Flores Sea, the Dutch were able to deny access to ships of any nationality to the south coast of Timor during the crucial monsoonal trading season from November until March. Portuguese vessels were therefore restricted to navigating more difficult easterly passages either west or east of Alor Island before accessing the north coast of Timor between Lifau and Dili. The divisioning of the island between Dutch spheres of influence in the west and Portuguese in the east became permanent.

Dominican sources reveal that the profits accruing to Macao-based merchants from the sandalwood trade were high. António Bocarro, the chronicler-in-chief of the Estado da India, also recorded in 1635 that large profits were being made on voyages from Macao to Solor in the sandalwood trade, especially since dues were not paid on what was imported or exported:

Owing to the blockade of the Strait of Singapore by the Hollanders, they can no longer come and go this way, but go direct from Macau in well fitted-out pinnaces, which at arriving at Solor take in some native Christian soldiers, most of whom keep themselves out of their pay, with which they go to the island of Timor, thirty leagues distant from Solor, and there lade sandalwood, never failing to have frequent skirmishes by land and sea with the Hollanders, who likewise go thither to seek the same sandalwood; however the Portuguese always come off best, for since those of Macau

are wealthy and not lacking in artillery, their pinnaces are very well found, whilst the soldiers they take on in Solor are very good, and fight very resolutely against the Dutch (cited in Boxer, 1942: 45-56).

There is no question that the Dutch blockade mentioned by Bocarro actually intensified the Portuguese role in the Southeast Asian trade, even though the mighty four-masted ocean-going caravels, that reached 2,000 tonnes in the case of the Goa-Macao-Japan trade, came to be replaced from 1618 onwards by far smaller and swifter *galiotas* or galliots, *pataxo* or pinnace, *naveta* or Portuguese-rigged junks, *fragata* (frigates), and cargo or dispatch vessels, in the 200 to 400 tonnes range. There is also the sense that, apart from driving import costs upwards, Dutch aggression against European rivals actually redounded in favour of the Chinese merchants who alone acted as intermediaries for Batavia and Dutch-controlled Solor. No less, given the failure of the Dutch to capture Macao or gain direct access to the Chinese mainland, the construction of Fort Zeelandia on Formosa (Taiwan) in 1634 notwithstanding, the VOC were obliged to rely on Chinese traders to carry the precious cargoes to the Chinese markets (Ptak, 1987: 105).

V. MACAO AND THE TIMOR SANDALWOOD TRADE

As one student of Timor's sandalwood trade has written, by the second half of the 16th century, Malacca was overtaken as the preferred sailing route to Timor-Solor by Macassar in the southern Celebes. Malacca, embroiled in war with Aceh and Johor, lost its attractiveness as a commercial centre. Macassar, meanwhile, grew to second in size and rank to Macao from a Portuguese trading perspective, especially after the loss of the Japan trade (Villiers, 1985: 72-73). But, in 1641, a rupture in relations between the Portuguese and Macassar (Tolo) arose over the latter's expedition against Timor (as discussed below). In 1648, the *Estado da India* ordered leading Portuguese trader Francisco Vieira de Figueiredo to reach a new *modus vivendi* with Tolo that would preserve the Portuguese trading position in Macassar, while reserving the Solor-Flores-Timor zone for Portugal and its allies. Eventually, Portuguese trade at Macassar with Manila, India, and Timor became the mainstay for the city of Macao in

HISTORIOGRAFIA

the period between the 1640s and 1660s. But with the Macassar-Dutch treaty of 1660, and the Dutch conquest of Macassar in 1667, the Portuguese once again lost an important ally, market, and emporium in the archipelago (Souza, 1986: 109-111).

Necessarily, both Chinese and Portuguese merchants adapted to the new circumstances. Certainly, the Chinese were well apprised of the importance of Solor in this trade along with all the superior anchorages on the coast of Timor. To the extent that the Chinese engaged in the trade in the decades following the opening of Solor, the Portuguese definitely sought to keep them out (Ptak, 1987: 34). Importantly, as well, the rise of power by a creolised group, the Larantuqueiros, and the eventual abandonment by the Portuguese of Lifau in 1769 in favour of Dili, facilitated Chinese control of the commodity shipped out of Kupang or the small north coast port of Atapupu under only nominal supervision. The geographic and navigational complexity of reaching these islands and ports, as much the spatiality of these miniature archipelagos, is graphically represented in Pimentel's *Arte de Navegar* (1712: 419) in the form of two maps. (See Illustrations 1 and 2)

The role of Chinese, including Macao Chinese, alongside Portuguese in the sandalwood trade with Timor goes back to the Malacca period and only ended when that city succumbed to the long Dutch blockade and eventual siege. According to de Matos (1991: 437), by the end of the 16th century, the Malacca-Timor voyages were auctioned out for the princely sum of 500 cruzados. As Ptak (1987: 34-35) embellishes, while the ratio of Chinese shipments to Portuguese remains unclear, the Portuguese share began to increase after 1600. A letter by the Bishop of Cochin, F. Pedro da Silva, dated 1609, suggests that, while the ordinary price for sandal in Macao was 20 patacas a picul (and with one picul equal to approximately 60 kilograms), during years when little shipping arrived from Timor (via Malacca), the price soured to 150 patacas. Profits increased over the years. According to the estimate of the Dominican Bishop Rangel in 1630, profits on the trade ran at 150 to 200 per cent, aptly earning Timor the reputation of '*ilha do sandalo*'.

According to Matos (1991: 438), until 1638 the sandal trade was carried out by the Royal treasury in Macao, and until 1689 the voyages were carried out by private persons or the Captain-Major on a

voyage assigned for three years. While the trade was not necessarily the monopoly of individuals, it was the monopoly of Macao for the citizens of Macao and at the expense of the Chinese of Canton who traded sandal from Timor with Batavia. It was thus a great loss to the Macao treasury that native rulers carried the trade to Babão in Kupang Bay where it entered the Dutch trade (Crawfurd, 1820: 148-149). The significance of the Timor-Macao trade is confirmed by other sources; notably a Dutch work of 1646 states that 1,000 *bahar* of sandal was taken to Macao annually (with one Malacca *bahar* equalling c. 210 kilograms). But overall, writes Ptak (1987: 35), the Macao-Timor trade was 'favoured by the relative lightness of taxes and dues' and not placed on a strict monopoly basis like the voyages to Japan or the quasi-monopoly status of the Malacca voyages through which the earlier Timor trade had been mediated.

From Macao archival sources we know that in 1689 numerous terms of assent were drawn up by the Macao Senate for Chinese merchants to send ships direct to Batavia, or for the Timor and Solor voyage. In that year five *pautas* or sealed lists were offered by Macao, albeit mandated by the Viceroy of Goa. These were literally vermilion seals embossed with the arms and crown of Portugal. Pedro Vaz de Siqueira was one such individual awarded the Timor voyage in that year for his ship *Rozario*, that would also be used on future occasions (1698) to transport soldiers to Lifau. In 1693, the Convent of São Francisco also won a *pauta do navio*, suggesting a Macao church interest in the trade. The following year the Senate discussed conditions of employment of Malays on the Timor voyages, a possible suggestion that Timorese who had achieved a non-slave or free status also visited the Chinese city, albeit a status that required regulation (*Arquivos de Macau*, 3.^a Série Vol. IX, no. 4, Abril 1968).

Whereas, from 1678 to 1689, the Timor voyages were organised either by the Captain-Major of Macao or by private individuals on a three-year basis, on 20 October 1689 the Senate of Macao passed a new resolution on the sandalwood trade with Timor with specific reference to estimates made by the pilots and merchants. As noted, each of these ships could load 1,800 piculs of sandalwood cargo, allowing a deduction for the benefit of the crew, with one third of the lading allotted to the ship owners, and with the *moradores* receiving the balance (Boxer, 1965: 170). In other

HISTORIOGRAPHY

words, all the stakeholders in the voyage would gain from its success.

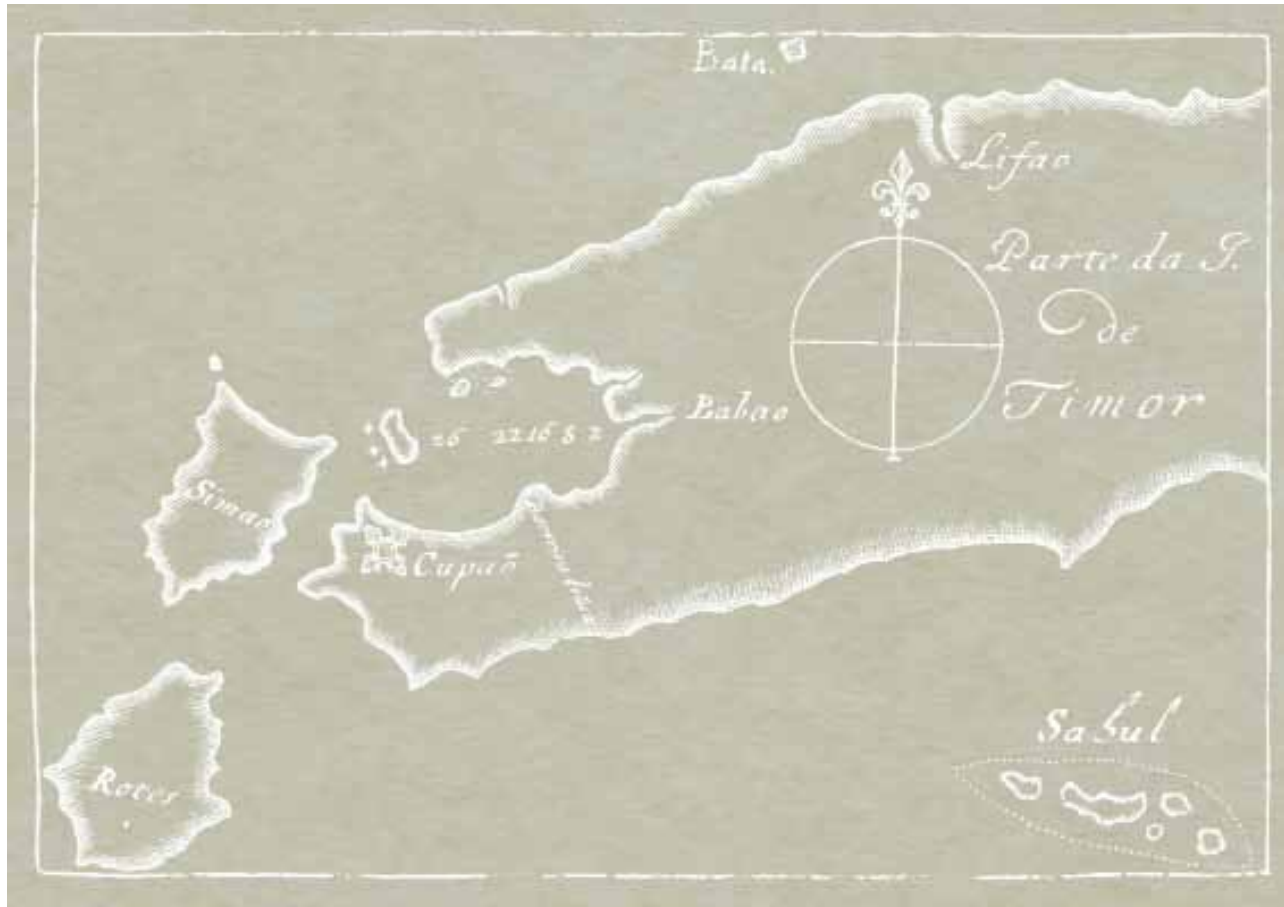
In practice, one or two ships departed Macao each year according to the monsoon laden with cargoes of refined gold, ivory, iron, cloth and silk. Having arrived on the north coast of Timor at the ports of Citrena, Lifau, Dili, Hera, and Tolecão, the ships would load their cargo of sandal, along with wax, tortoiseshell, cinnamon and slaves. Each ship would carry between 1,800-2,000 sandalwood 'peaks'. Whenever possible the ships would call in at Batavia trading cloth against rice needed for the Lifau garrison. Occasionally the ship would call in at Malacca, Madura, Bali, Larantuca and other local ports (Matos, 1991: 439).

From about 1695, the Senate in Macao organised a system of trade with Timor and Solor that would continue with minor modifications for nearly a century. As Boxer (1965: 57-58) describes it, every year one, two, or three small ships left Macao annually for Timor,

sometimes stopping in Batavia, sometimes direct. One third of the cargo space was reserved for the ship owner, the remaining two-thirds being distributed proportionately among the citizens of Macao, from the Captain-General, to widows and orphans. All ship owners in Macao were given a turn in this trade according to the system of *pautas* arranged between the Senate and Goa (Souza, 1986: 185).

Just as the Timor and Solor trade in sandalwood, gold, beeswax, and slaves, became the principal economic resource for Macao during the 18th century, so the organisation of this trade fundamentally altered local social and political organisation in Timor. According to Souza (1986: 183), the Portuguese country traders from Macao successfully minimised the VOC and Chinese penetration of the Timor market throughout the 1670s and into the 1690s. Attempts by the Crown to impose its authority upon the local and *mestiço* population did not seriously disturb the

Illustration 2: Manuel Pimentel, 1712: western Timor Island, Roti, with Sabul.



HISTORIOGRAFIA

preferential supply of sandalwood to Portuguese country-trader shipping from Macao at that time. While competition did arise from Chinese junks sailing from Batavia to Lifau, the Portuguese country traders were still able to corner superior grades of sandal as well as the largest quantities bound for the Chinese market. Even so, the quantities of sandal reaching the market, according to a VOC report of 1690, were in decline by that year.

Yet, from the account of Alexander Hamilton published in 1727, the rebellion by Lifau (1688-1703) practically ruined the Macao trade, exhausting men, money and ships (cited in Boxer 1948: 186-187). There is truth in this account believed to have been sourced from the former Portuguese Governor of Lifau, António Coelho de Guerreiro as, in 1705, owing to the inability of the city to pay the annual ground rent to the Chinese authorities, the Macao Senate offered the collateral for the Timor voyage deposited in the church of St. Pauls (*Arquivos de Macau*, 3.^a Série Vol. IX, no. 4, Abril 1968).

The role of Chinese, including Macao Chinese, alongside Portuguese in the sandalwood trade with Timor goes back to the Malacca period and only ended when that city succumbed to the long Dutch blockade and eventual siege.

While the Crown was satisfied to accept the submission in 1708 of Domingo da Costa, the most important rebel leader, winning by diplomacy what they could not achieve by arms, support from the country traders lessened to the degree that Governor Coelho de Guerreiro failed to stop over-cutting of sandal and competition from owners of Chinese junks. By the 1710s, as Souza (1986: 105) writes, the Batavia market had assumed greater importance for Macao's country traders at Timor's expense. Despite appeals for aid from Macao in the 1720s in the face of another rebellion, the

Macao Senate determined the Timor trade unprofitable given Crown administrative mismanagement including the imposition of custom's duties. Upon the insistence of the Crown, Macao continued to send only one of its ships on an annual basis for the rest of the period.

Writing of Macao, Ljungstedt (1836: 9) observed that, while profit from the sandalwood trade had greatly fallen off, the Macao Senate was nevertheless moved in 1720 to cut the poorer merchants out of the trade, a measure in any case overthrown by the court of Goa. In a possible retort to Goa, in December 1723 the Macao Senate complained to King João V (r. 1706-1770) over the imposition of new laws and an alteration in the price of sandal by the Governor of Timor (António de Albuquerque Coelho)—doubtless at the behest of the *Estado da Índia*—pleading a fall in commerce at the expense of the people of Macao. The Crown upheld the petition from the Macao Senate ordering Goa to protect the sandal trade and to fall in line (Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Macau Cx. 3 no. 14, December 26, 1723).

In any case, under a 1723 edict by Qing Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1723-1736) lifting the prohibition on Chinese entering foreign trade and the participation by Chinese merchants in the triangular Timor-Batavia-Canton trade, the voyage from Macao to Timor became unprofitable. Ljungstedt (1836: 97) remarks that a yearly vessel dispatched from Macao to Timor was reduced to conveying soldiers, officers, exiles, and ammunition, while loading government paper, treasure, etc., to be remitted by way of Macao to Goa.

From a Dutch perspective, the VOC sandalwood trade came to an end during the 18th century. In 1752, following successive losses, the Company decided to waive its monopoly and allow anyone to cut sandalwood who was willing to pay one third commission. In the event, the trade passed completely into the hands of the Chinese who remained in control for more than a century (Ormeling, 1956: 102). The question remains, what then did the Dutch get out of it? According to a French account (Raynal, 1782: 225-226), not much! Every year one or two sloops would call in to Kupang from Batavia bringing varieties of cloth (coarse linen) and making the return journey with wax, tortoise shell, sandal, and 'cadiang', a kind of bean used on board Dutch vessels to vary the diet. No particular gain and no particular loss was incurred by the Dutch establishment or, in the words of the author, '*la recette égale la dépense*' (the profits just answer the expenses).

VI. THE ASIAN DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT SOUTH LAND?

Given that the northern coast of the continent of Australia lies but 500 kilometres south of Timor, the question has been raised in many circles as to pre-European contact with the 'Great South Land', or *Terra Australis Incognita*. Here, of course we may assume an Australian aboriginal priority. An anthropological connection between Timor and Australia's northern coast, has also been suggested by some as with a shared Totem culture between Timor and the Tiwi of Melville Island (King, 1963: 167 citing anthropologist Charles Mountford). Rather, we are alert to assertions made of a Chinese 'discovery' of Australia in both Chinese and European language writing. While the possibility cannot be dismissed, as of the present the evidence is thin (with no document or chronicle accounts; no wreck sites, and no archaeological evidence) (cf. Wei, 1960; Menzies, 2002).³ Even where the evidence is stronger for the Zheng He voyages 郑和, Timor much less Australia, is absent from cartographic or written accounts relating to those episodes. But it is compelling that, as mentioned, from Song times Chinese developed a toponymy of Timor including the south coast. In mid-Ming, Pigafetta witnessed the 'junk of Luzon' off Oecusse. Obviously, the Chinese could have reconnoitred the northern Australian coast, if they had cause.

But what motive? I find it easier to dismiss motive than to make a case for Chinese contact, at least in the absence of firm evidence. From Song-Yuan times, Chinese interest in mounting long-distance voyages was invariably connected with trade and with an eye to cementing tributary relations. The Chinese dealt with polities, whether it was Brunei on the island of Borneo; Palembang on Sumatra; or the Islamic polities on the Swahili coast of Africa in the case of the fourth Zheng He voyage of 1413-15. Notably, aboriginal Taiwan was avoided by Chinese seafarers until the Pax Hollandica was established. Timor was also an inhospitable shore, but trade was there, provisioning in the form of game and fruits was there and, we can believe, trading networks linking Timor with Java and further west were well-established with local power holders even before Chinese junks sailed these waters. As hunter-gatherers ruled over by chiefdoms, Timorese were hardly candidates for Chinese tributary status though,

as suggested, the trade itself may have facilitated the rise of the 14th century Wehale or Belu kingdom in south central Timor. If the European experience was anything to go by, the shores of Australia were downright inhospitable and the natives were not welcoming. But, even if landings were made, Australia was outside of established Arab and other Asian trading networks.⁴ There was no prior established trade mechanism and neither were there identifiable polities above the level of nomadic hunter-gathers.

Timorese and prehistoric migrations or contacts with aboriginal Australians aside, a more convincing candidate for the first pre-European contact of Australia would be the Macassans, a blanket term which includes Bugis and other ethnolinguistic groups from southern Celebes (Sulawesi). Rather than trading per se, the Macassans fished and collected marine products, including pearls and turtle shells but especially *bêche de mer* (*trepang* in Malay), highly esteemed in Chinese marketplaces. Archaeological research at Macassan sites in northern Australia has revealed that they did bring some trade items including iron, pottery and glass. Besides marine products, they also returned to Sulawesi with some Australian sandalwood (McKnight, 1975). Having mastered dowel-type boat construction, their *prauh layer* (sailing vessels) were capable of long sea-going voyages, at least running with the wind. Typically, they would sail south with the onset of the north-west monsoon, crossing the dangerous reef-strewn Flores Sea, passing the Wetar Strait, before coasting the easterly tip of Timor en route to the seasonal fishing grounds in Australia. They returned in May with the south-east monsoon.

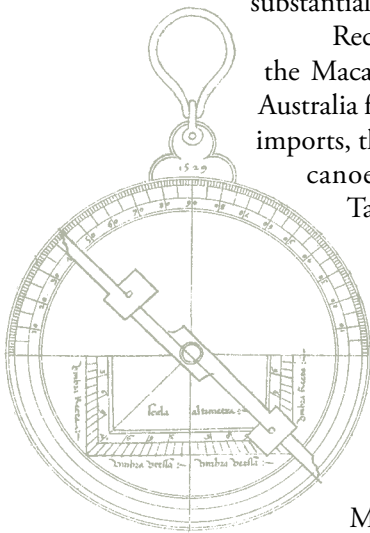
Although Timor Island remained outside of the Javanese-centred Majapahit empire that touched Sumbawa, Sumba, and Flores in the 13th to 15th centuries, and while Islam did not attract converts on Timor as it did on Solor Island, Muslim traders were nevertheless attracted to the sandalwood trade. Given the lack of documentary evidence, this is a very understudied area, but an Islamic push was made on Timor by Macassans in the mid-17th century. Macassan traders were also involved in the sandalwood, wax and slave trade and, undoubtedly, established several temporary trading villages on Timor. Such is also suggested in the name of Pante Macassar (*pantai* meaning beach in Malay), a settlement several kilometers from Lifau and a toponym that has endured

HISTORIOGRAFIA

in Oecusse down until the present. Dominican sources reveal that, in 1640-1641, the year the Portuguese were expelled from Macassar, Karrlikio, the Muslim Sultan of Tolo in the Celebes, attacked the Portuguese position at Larantuca and then raided the coast of Timor with a flotilla of sailing vessels and between 6,000 to 7,000 men in an unsuccessful attempt to wrest control of the lucrative trade from the Portuguese. Over a three-month period, Karrlikio's men heaped 'ravages and rapine' upon Timor while also forcing (temporary) conversions (de Freycinet, 1825: 529-530).

We do not know exactly when the first Macassan vessels reached Timor, much less Australia but, as with Karrlikio's 'invasion' of Timor in the 1640s, it most likely came after conversion to Islam some time in the early 1600s, and it came at a time when Chinese traders had re-entered the Macassar marketplace, at least. Stated another way, without the Chinese demand for *trepang*, the enterprise would not have been worth the commercial risk. There is no special evidence suggesting such voyages occurred prior to that general era. But, by 1722, Macassan and Buginese skippers were sailing to Timor, Solor, and surrounding areas without Dutch knowledge, just as the VOC, entrenched in Macassar from 1669, sought to regulate their activities by issuing trade passes (Knaap and Sutherland, 2004: 24). In 1847-1848, a party of armed Buginese slave-raiders arriving in the Lautem area of East Timor resisted expulsion for four months until the Portuguese could raise a major force (Pélissier, 1996: 25). In any case, unlike the Chinese maritime experience, the evidence of the Macassan presence in northern Australia is substantial.

Recent studies have documented the Macassan impact upon aboriginal Australia from genetic mixing, language imports, the introduction of the dugout canoes, plant introductions (the Tamarind tree), and even such unwanted transfers as with cholera infections. Famously, English navigator Mathew Flinders encountered a fleet of Macassan vessels off Arnhem Land in present-day Australia's Northern Territory in 1803. The Macassan fleets ranged widely



from the Kimberly region to the Gulf of Carpentaria, sojourning for the season in temporary dwellings. In Arnhem Land they developed close links with the Yolngu people who collaborated in the diving, fishing, and preparation of the dried and smoked *trepang*.

By gathering in a range of tropical and marine products, especially *trepang*, the Macassan and Buginese trade also entered regional Chinese trading networks, including the Chinese junk trade. We know less about this mechanism but, presumably, the marine products including a variety of shells were traded at Macassar and other regional ports, especially Singapore after its foundation. Because this was an organised and capitalised venture, especially in fitting out the vessels and in the recruitment of labour, we would not be surprised if both Macassans and Chinese merchants were involved in raising the capital and extending the credit. Macassans continued their seasonal arrivals in Timor down until recent times.⁵

VII. PORTUGUESE DISCOVERY NARRATIVES

Another literature speculates as to the Portuguese 'discovery' of Australia. Proponents of this view have looked to interpretations of European maps, notably the 16th century Dieppe world map rendition of a hitherto unknown southern land, said to be partly based upon secret Portuguese information. Alternatively, they have sought confirmation in the discovery of exotic woods, coins, and objects, in various locations in Australia, and have examined archival materials (McIntyre, 1977; Fitzgerald, 1984; Pearson, 2005).⁶

Again, we may ask, having sailed to the end of the known world, why did the Portuguese stop at Timor? To answer this question, I am tempted to replay a version of the argument that applies to the Chinese case, namely, following the Arab navigators almost everywhere once they entered the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese retraced the known lines of trade, and usually with an Arab or Malay pilot on board. No doubt, if Arab trade routes had reached Australia, lured by a known trade commodity, then the Portuguese were bound to follow. In fact, Portuguese ships departing Goa or Macao for Timor were highly irregular, and frequently arriving in poor condition after a long and difficult navigation through the straits. Invariably bringing or relieving governors and reinforcing beleaguered garrisons, the Timor voyages were simply not equipped



Illustration 3: Nicholas Vallard: [Supposed Eastern Coast of Australia] Dieppe, 1574 (1856).

or provisioned, much less sanctioned for further hazardous explorations.

THE DIEPPE SCHOOL AND LA TERRE AUSTRALE

Dieppe mapmakers gave special attention to a large land mass variously entitled '*Jave la Grande*' or '*La Terre Australe*', located between the Indonesian archipelago and Antarctica. Strictly, '*La Terre Australe*' should not be conflated with Dieppe school renditions of '*Jave-la-Grande*'. According to Richardson (1996: 24), '*Jave-la-Grande*' is actually a French translation of '*Iaua Maior*', the way the Portuguese knew Java following Marco Polo. On the other hand, '*La Terre Australe*' carries Ptolemaic associations of an Antarctic-like continent. In fact, the two terms appear to be used interchangeably. Another version is '*La Terre Australe connue*', the title of a utopian novel by Gabriel de Foigny, published in 1676.

Binot Paulmier, sieur de Gonneville, French navigator of the early 16th century, was also part of the

myth-making about the great southern land. In 1505 he returned to France claiming to have discovered the 'great Austral land', which he also called the 'Indies Meridionale'. Although disproven (as he actually sailed westward to Brazil), his ideas would also be revived through the centuries, at least spurring further French expeditions to the Pacific. Information derived from the journey to Sumatra by the Parmentier brothers also fed into Dieppe maps, as with the work of Jean Rotz, '*Indes Orientales*' (1542). Notably, to the south of '*Petit Java*', he indicates a continent, 'the lande of Java' or '*Jave-la-Grande*'. In fact, the Rotz map with its depiction of an Australia-like continent south of Java has generated more heat than light in discussions of the European 'discovery' of Australia.

As Richardson (2004) summarises, especially over the last half-century or so, great confusion has arisen among a number of writers (e.g. McIntyre, Wei, Menzies), because of claims that the large landmass of '*Jave-la-Grande*' immediately south of the

HISTORIOGRAFIA

Illustration 4: Guillaume Le Testu, *Jave la Grande*, in *Cosmographie Universelle*, 1555/56. Bibliothèque du Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, DLZ 14, Vincennes. Note that North (as with the Moluccas) is to the left.



HISTORIOGRAPHY

Indonesian archipelago and partially attached to it, is really a misplaced depiction of Australia, supposedly discovered by the Portuguese in the 1520s. Such holds as well for the anonymously-produced Atlas of Nicolas Vallard (1547), also highly derivative of Portuguese cartography. As displayed in Illustration 3, a facsimile of a chart from Vallard's manuscript sea atlas (1547) showing *Jave-la-Grande's* east coast, the image fails to meet a minimum culture test, as with the faux depictions of an Asian prince on horseback sheltered by a yellow umbrella.⁷ As Richardson (2004: 9) demonstrates, the Vallard depiction, derived from the Parmentier brothers, does not represent the coast of Australia.

The French navigator and explorer Guillaume Le Testu (c.1509-1573), also representative of the Dieppe school, produced a 56-map atlas. Preserved in the Bibliothèque du Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre in Vincennes (Paris), it can be examined online.⁸ Maps 30-41 of Le Testu's *Cosmographie Universelle* (1556) are dedicated to *La Terre Australe*. This is represented as an enormous continent surrounded by an Antarctic sea, 'like a spherical dome with uneven edges'. Other maps are complementary. As French map historian Albert-Marie-Ferdinand Anthiaume (1916: 103) commented, there are scarcely any other Norman mappamondes of the 16th century that dedicate such attention to this zone. His maps were used by future colonists heading to the Americas. As Le Testu adds in a marginal note:

Aulcuns portugais allans aux Indes furent par contrariété de temps transportés fort Su du cap de Bonne esperance. Lesquelz firent raport que ils avoient eu quelque cognoissance de ceste Terre. Toutefois pour navoir esté descouverte aultrement Iay seullement icy notée ny voullant adiouter Foy [Certain Portuguese going to the Indies were, by adverse weather conditions, carried far south of the Cape of Good Hope. Certain reported some knowledge of this land. Nevertheless, it not having been otherwise discovered, I have merely noted it here, not willing to add credence to it] (Le Testu, 2014).

From inspection, Le Testu's rendition of *India Intra Ganges* (Fol. 28v '*Asie. Mer de Inde Orientale de Ceylon et Sumatra*'), from *Cosmographie Universelle*, is an improvement upon Ptolemy, allowing for a sea route to India, but still the Malay Peninsula takes classic

form. As presented in map Folio 32v titled '*Terres Australes. Grande et Petite Java, au sud des Moluccas*', the Moluccas are indicated as a point of reference but *Terres Australes* appears as a wildly fictitious land with images of leopard-like animals, middle-eastern kings, and an archer. (See Illustration 4) In another note, Le Testu adds:

The present Figure contains a part of Jave la Grande [Java Major], which is situated in the southern part in the Temperate Zone. The inhabitants of it are Idolaters, ignorant of God, and in it grows Nutmeg with Cloves, and several other kinds of fruits and spices... This is La Grand Jave [Java Major], and La Petite Jave [Java Minor] in which there are eight Kingdoms. The men of these two Countries are Idolaters and wicked. Several manner of spices grow in these two Regions, such as Nutmeg, Cloves, and other spices... This Land is part of the so-called Terra Australis, to us Unknown, so that which is marked herein is only from Imagination and uncertain opinion; for some say that La Grand Jave [Java Major] which is the eastern Coast of it is the same land of which the western Coast forms the Strait of Magellan, and that all of this land is joined together... This Part is the same Land of the south called Austral, which has never yet been discovered, for there is no account of anyone having yet found it, and therefore nothing has been remarked of it but from Imagination. I have not been able to describe any of its resources, and for this reason I leave speaking further of it until more ample discovery has been made, and as much as I have written and annotated names to several of its capes this has only been to align the pieces depicted herein to the views of others and also so that those who navigate there be on their guard when they are of opinion that they are approaching the said Land... This piece is a part of the Southland or Terra Australis, from Imagination situated under the Frigid Zone, for as much as some are of the opinion that the Land of the Strait of Magellan and La Grande Java [Java Major] are joined together. This is not yet known for certain, and for this Reason I am unable to describe its Resources (Le Testu, 2014).⁹

It is known that Le Testu participated in Atlantic voyages, but his information on the Orient was entirely

HISTORIOGRAFIA

derivative and fanciful. Rather than confirming a precocious Portuguese discovery of Australia, his version actually adds weight to the fictitious imagining of the unknown continent. As I see it, for want of empirical information, the Dieppe school mixed up Ptolemaic stereotypes of an elongated Golden Peninsula with little understood renditions of Marco Polo's smaller and larger Java thus creating a southern land almost by default. To cite Richardson (2004: 5), 'There is not a single surviving Portuguese map or chart which contains any coastal outlines obviously resembling those of Australia until about 1630, when details from the first Dutch charts of parts of it leaked out. There are no surviving Portuguese charts really resembling those of *Jave-la-Grande's* east and west coasts, either in that position, or anywhere else. Nor is there any other surviving evidence that the Portuguese reached Australia before the well-documented arrival of the Dutch in 1606'. Still, we wish to examine scant Portuguese cartographic-navigational evidence relating to an Australian 'discovery' on its own terms.

MANUEL GODINHO DE ERÉDIA'S AUSTRALIA

Setting aside the possibility of an accidental Portuguese arrival on the coast of Australia, we comb the evidence for a planned reconnaissance, say, lured by the prospect of gold. Even setting aside the question of secrecy, the efforts of Malacca-based cartographer, Manuel Godinho de [H]Erédia, to actually 'discover' *Terra Australis* place him in a special category. Born of a Portuguese father and a Buginese mother and Jesuit-trained at an early age in Malacca and Goa, Erédia had a good understanding of classical European learning, as well as European navigational-cartographic conventions and knowledge. Additionally, he was a beneficiary of Asian maritime lore acquired from his base in Malacca. However, he was also credulous in his beliefs as to sources of gold and other myths.

As Erédia described in his 'Report on the Golden Chersonese' (1597-1600), 'The Golden Chersonese or Golden Peninsula, is a part of the continental mainland of *India extra Ganges*; it commences in the narrow Isthmus of Tanaçaram [Tenasserim] in eleven or twelve degrees of North latitude, and then extends towards the Equator till it comes to an end, terminating in the Promontory called formerly Maleucolone, and now Singapura or Ujonrana, which is situated in exactly one degree of latitude'. As he pointed out, the Peninsula was

celebrated by Curtius, Strabo, Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and others, especially on account of its gold mines. 'So Ptolemy in his Geography, in his eleventh Table of Asia calls it the name of Golden Chersonese or Golden Peninsula', or the same as a 'quasi-island of gold' (Mills, 1997: 224). Erédia duly enters a rich description of Sumatra, its kingdoms and especially its pepper and gold ports. Having unpacked Taprobana and Sumatra, in a similar vein Erédia clarifies the confusion entered by Marco Polo in rendering Borneo as Lesser Java (Mills, 1997: 245). But, guided by local informants, Erédia also looked south.

Dating back to the late 19th century, scholars have staked and lost their reputations on interpreting Erédia, as with Englishman, R.H. Major, curator of maps in the British museum who, in the late 17th century, first embraced Erédia's 'discoveries' and then rejected them. But the stakes were also raised by the 1946 'discovery' in the Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro of his *Luca Antara* map executed in 1602 and titled '*Nova tavoa hydrographica do mar de novas terras do sul*'. While Java and the Lesser Sunda Islands including Timor are well represented on this map, including their approximate latitudes (although lacking longitude), a series of misshapen islands lying between 12-20 degrees south definitely suggest a 'great south land'. A small subsidiary scholarship has emerged relating to this map; whether or not Erédia was playing out an elaborate hoax to throw rival Holland off course, or whether *Luca (Nuca) Antara* (Malay language for land between the islands) and islands of gold can be correlated with real places in northern Australia, namely, Bathurst and Melville Islands, respectively (Richardson, 1995; 2004; Peters, 2003).

Even lesser known is '*Java Maior e Nuca Antara*', also in the Biblioteca Nacional do Brasil collection, catalogued as 1630, but bearing an inscription revealing that, in 1602, 'cosmographer' Manuel Godinho de Erédia was commissioned by Viceroy Aires de Saldanha, sometime captain of the Malacca fortress (d. 1605), to produce a map of Nusa Antara. A relatively simple map representing the southern tip of Sumatra, Java and the Sunda Islands eastward to Sumbawa, also noting a number of topoi, it highlights a continent-sized south land some 10° south of Java and the Sunda archipelago. As the inscription notes, this ranges to 15° south. Although unadorned, the Nuca Antara of this map does offer a convincing depiction of islands south of

HISTORIOGRAPHY

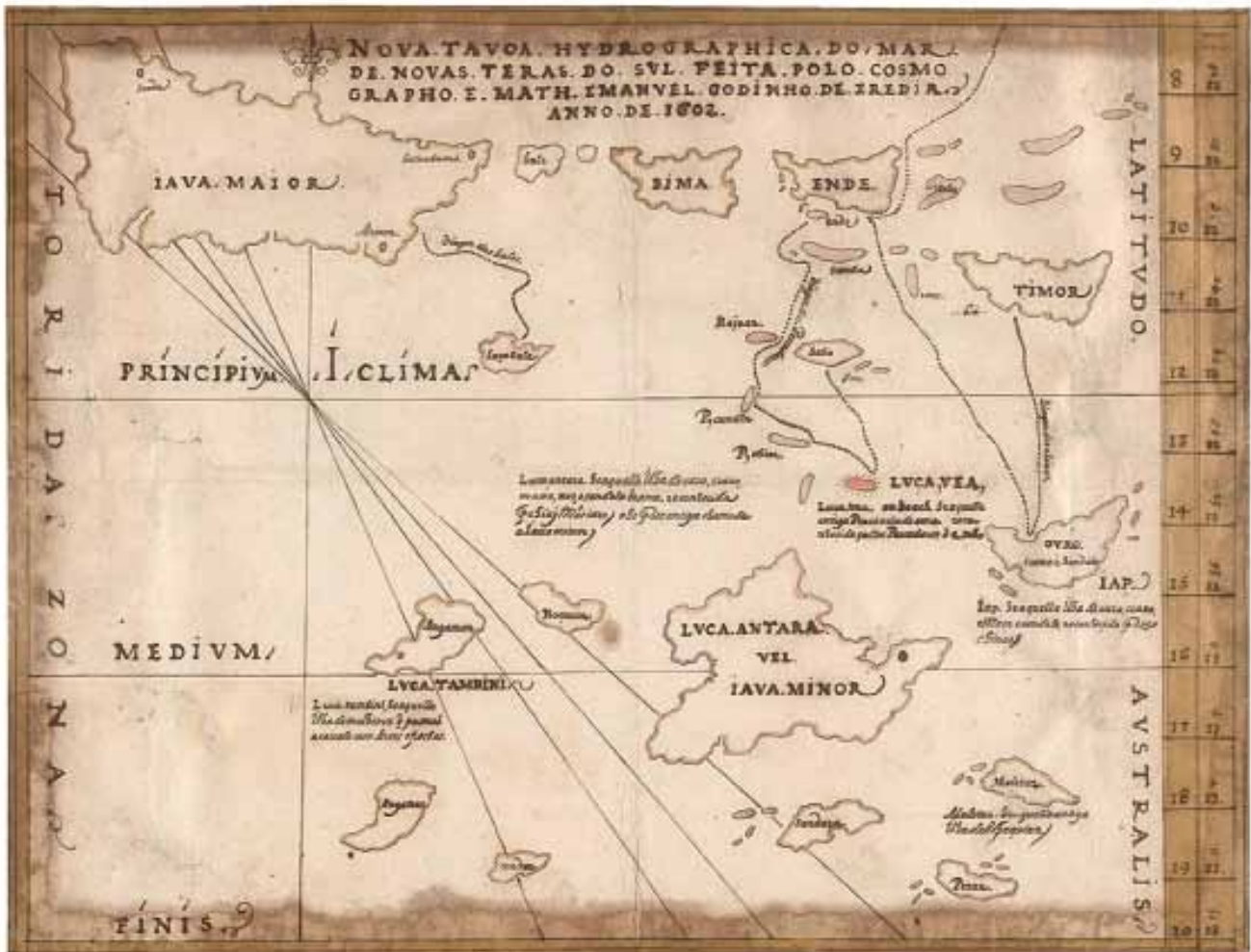


Illustration 5: Manuel Godinho de Erédia, Nuca Antara, 1602.

Timor, offering a possible assemblage of information concerning northern Australia. [See Illustration 5]

Fanciful evocations of a southerly Nuca Antara and/or a 'sea of gold' leading to an island of gold are also replete in Erédia's 'Report on the Golden Chersonese'. Although Erédia sought to correct Ptolemy where appropriate (as with the true location of Sumatra/Tabrobana), he was also credulous as to the presence of gold and gold mines, as in Timor, where he was convinced that gold rivalled sandalwood as a source of riches for local kings. Specifically, he relates stories of an island of gold south of Timor visited by fishermen from Solor blown off course returning back to Ende. In 1599, via a letter to Viceroy (of Goa) Francisco da Gama, Erédia sought approval to venture to Timor, Ende, or Savu with a view to verifying his 'discovery' (cf. Mills, 1979: 254-255).¹⁰

In 1620, letters were exchanged between the King of Portugal and the Viceroy of India (Portuguese Goa) regarding Erédia's proposal for a voyage of 'discovery' to the 'great south land' (National Library of Australia MS4406). But nothing came of such a proposal, in any case pre-empted by the arrival of Dutch fleets in the archipelago, thus raising the risks for the Portuguese. One maritime route on Erédia's *Nuca Antara* map leads southwards from Ende, the small island off the south coast of Flores fortified by the Portuguese (1595-1605), linking up with Timor on a return journey (or vice versa) suggesting an albeit unrecorded Portuguese mission. Another route, possibly originating in Macassar, passes the Flores-Solor Straits area, also leading south. Parallel south-leading tracks are marked as *'pescadores'* or fishermen, undoubtedly the real pioneer navigators of these seas.

HISTORIOGRAFIA

We might also surmise that Erédia gleaned such data from Malay including distant Macassan or Buginese informants arriving in Malacca. One track south from Timor labeled ‘*Viagem dos Sinas*’, or Chinese voyages, terminates at an island cryptically named IAP and misleadingly labeled *Ouro* (gold) (*ciano e sandale*) (between 14° and 15° south).

In any case, Dutch knowledge of the discoveries was fast catching up with that of the Iberians as with Linschoten’s *Discourse* (Latin edition), including the map drawn by Dutch trade advocate, Petrus Plancius, in turn sourced to Portuguese cartographic knowledge, namely, *Insulae Moluccae celeberrimae sunt ob Maximam aromatum copiam quam totum terrarum orbem mittunt* (1598). Noua Guinea is acknowledged in Latin as ‘*Partem autem esse continentis Australis magnitudo probabile facit*’ (likely part of a continent the size of Australia), literally announcing Australia. In fact, by 1606, with the voyage of Willem Janszoon, the Dutch had already sent an exploratory mission from Batavia to the Cape York-Gulf of Carpentaria area of northern Australia and, over the following decades, a procession of Dutch ships had careened on the west coast of Australia. Yet it would appear from Erédia’s writings that he was already au fait with the Dutch discoveries (cf. Mills, 1979: 254-255).

For some observers, as with Richardson (1995: 313; 1996: 32), Erédia’s maps are a ‘confused amalgam of information’ culled from Mercator or Gastaldi worldmaps, contributing nothing to the discovery of Australia. My own position is that Erédia assembled the best possible intelligence of his time from local sources—both garbled and real—matched by the best traditions of Portuguese cartography of that age, bequeathing in the *Nuca Antara* map a riddle that can be read as objective statement (Peters) or as exploratory-imaginative (most of the literature). Frank Urban (2009) is undoubtedly justified in summarising that, ‘Although open to interpretation, Erédia’s map and articles provide some collaborative evidence that the Portuguese knew of voyages by Indonesians to one or more islands south of Timor before Dutch exploration commenced’.

MANUEL PIMENTEL’S *ARTE DE NAVEGAR*

It is intriguing that, as revealed by Pimentel (1712: 423) in his *A arte de navegar*, from the early 17th century, the Portuguese were well aware of the southern

Indian Ocean route from the Cape of Good Hope to Australia (Terra Nova), albeit with Timor as destination. As adverted, ‘*Mas deve se advertir, que a distancia desde o Cão de Boa Esperencia até a Terra Nova não he tanta quanta mostram os Cartas*’ (But it should be noticed that the distance from the Cape of Good Hope until Terra Nova is not much revealed on the charts), setting aside unknown and adverse ocean currents. As alerted (and as well-known to the Dutch from the 1610s), the reef-strewn coast of Terra Nova at 27° south was perilous, especially if approached at night. Riding the southerly or southeasterly winds at 22° latitude was optimum before turning to Timor Island (Babao) at 11° 5’. As an alternative to the Malacca Straits, Portuguese navigators setting out from Goa also coursed west of Sumatra, coasting south of Java at 7°-8° latitude south, prior to entering the Java Sea via the Sunda or Bali Straits. In his ‘Report on the Golden Chersonese’, penned between 1597-1600, Erédia (Mills, 1997) specifically mentions a number of such Portuguese voyages on the Indian Ocean side of Sumatra, including that of António Dias Sumatra, the first by a Portuguese navigator (a reference to the shipwreck of the *nau S. Paulo* in 1561). That of António Rodrigues de Luna, was another. As with VOC vessels blown off course, the possibility of a Portuguese sighting and/or wreck on the northern or western Australian coast cannot be precluded. But this is not known, and, if it happened, as Pimentel’s *roteiro* alerts, it should not happen again.

Pimentel’s (1712: 419) cartographic representation of Sabul, a cluster of five small islets, sited south of south-central Timor surrounded by a line suggesting shoals, also offers an intriguing indication of further Portuguese knowledge of the Timor Sea and beyond. But his is a 17th century map, also revealing knowledge of Holland Nova or Australia. Moreover, the name ‘Sahul’ or ‘Sahoel’ meaning shoal, appeared on 17th century Dutch maps in reference to a submerged sandbank between Australia and Timor, and there are several. On his 1803 map, Mathew Flinders noted the ‘Great Sahul Shoal’ frequented by Macassan trepanners whom he encountered. Today the name Sahul is lent to the broader Australian continental shelf.

CONCLUSION

Serving over the centuries as a milch cow for Timorese and foreign traders alike, the sandalwood

HISTORIOGRAPHY

trade eventually went into steady decline, not so much because of vulnerability to foreign competition or world market conditions, although that also occurred towards the end, but because of overcutting. Indeed, there is a sense that the sandal trade was counter-cyclical to the down trend in the classic spice trade beginning with the Dutch seizure of Banda in 1621. In fact, the sandal trade continued to surge in the 17th and 18th centuries, with demand outstripping supply. Connected up with Macao, there is also reason to believe that sandalwood was a commodity which rescued the Macao treasury from utter penury after the collapse of the Japan trade.

However, and this is important, unlike the case of trade in spices in the Moluccas, Timor's sandal fluidly entered the circuits of Chinese trade on largely non-European terms, as mentioned, a commodity of which neither the Portuguese or Dutch ever gained a monopoly. A periphery to Europe and vaguely conceived by Ptolemy and classical authors as a source of spices, the eastern archipelago, as with Timor Island, was not only touched by Chinese voyages but fluidly fitted in with China's own historical sense of the Nanyang or southern world region.

From our discussion of Chinese trading networks reaching to Timor it is clear that, from an early period, the island was deeply enmeshed in a wider commodity chain network outside of European knowledge, much less participation. Even so, we know next to nothing as to how the impingement of outsiders might have altered domestic power relations on the island. But, by the closing decades of the 16th century, it is clear that the Portuguese had not only displaced Asian trading rivals in the Flores-Solor-Timor zone but, through the work

of Catholic missions, quickly established themselves as the dominant ideological/civilisational force in a zone hitherto untouched by the great religions. Established as a Portuguese Crown monopoly, the Solor voyages and the sandal trade ineluctably welded Solor and Timor into a Portuguese-dominated East Asian maritime trading network.

Whether local fishermen from the Lesser Sunda group or even Chinese junks blown off course, Asians undoubtedly preceded Europeans into the Timor Sea zone. We do not discount Chinese knowledge of an antipodes just as their commercial intelligence brooked no equal from Song times on, if not earlier. Erédia imaginatively constructed a 'great south land' prior to the first Dutch voyages seemingly outside of Ptolemaic constructs and based upon some local empirical knowledge—and that was important—but in the absence of more concrete evidence as to a specific Portuguese voyage, we would have to agree that, with the notable exception of the western travelling Spanish expedition of Pedro Fernandes de Queirós of 1605-1606 leading to the discovery by Luis Vaz de Torres of the strait that bears his name, it was the Dutch who first explored and mapped significant parts of the Australian coastline. Having said that, it was generation upon generation of Macassans, from around the mid-1700s practically down until their expulsion in the early 20th century, who came to know the inhospitable northern coastline of Australia best. They also seem to have had a happier association with its indigenous peoples as well, although not entirely. If this theory is correct then the European 'discovery' of Australia was actually an Asian revelation. **RC**

HISTORIOGRAFIA

NOTES

- 1 By way of comparison, in his 'Report on the Golden Chersonese' written between 1597-1600, Malacca-based cosmographer Manuel Godinho de Erédia noted the major sandalwood ports on the northern coast of Timor as, Mena, Ceruião, Assan, Batugade and Adem. Those of the south included Camanaça, Boro, Serrin, Samoro, Fotere, Limomaçin, Batamean and Amenaban (Mills, 1997: 253).
- 2 Erédia also names Camanaça as the dominating 'empire' on the south side of the island also linking control over sandalwood (and gold) trade as enriching the various kingdoms (Mills, 1997: 253).
- 3 For scholarly refutation of Menzies' claims, see W.A.R. Richardson, 'Gavin Menzies' cartographic fiction: The Case of the Chinese "Discovery" of Australia' (2004).
- 4 A direct Arab contact with northern Australia was indeed suggested with the discovery in 1944 on the Northern Territory's Wessel Islands of five coins dated back to the twelfth century, identified with the medieval sultanate of Kilwa. Lying off the 'Swahili coast', the Kilwa Sultanate tapped gold from Sofala, and entered the Indian Ocean trade ranging to Persia and India.
- 5 Acting as an interpreter for Food and Agriculture Organization experts in remote Biaco on the south coast of East Timor in February 2000 (that is, several months after the expulsion of Indonesian occupiers by United Nations peacekeepers), the author was told that, during the Indonesian interregnum in East Timor (1976-1999), small flotillas of Macassan sailing *prauhs* arrived annually to collect turtle shells and marine products.
- 6 A recent artifact discovery is that of an antique cannon, 'the Dundee swivel gun', found southwest of Darwin in 2010. Scientifically tested, it is confirmed to be made of metal sourced from the Coto Laizquez mine in Andalusia in Spain. Even so, if the original gunmetal had been melted down and recast, as was local practice in maritime Southeast Asia, then the cannon could still be plausibly of Macassan provenance (anon, 2013).
- 7 Outside of the present discussion, the Vallard map has been the object of much discussion in connection with the 'discovery' of Australia since the late 19th century. See Australasian Hydrographic Society (AHS) website 2014.
- 8 <http://expositions.bnf.fr/marine/livres/Testu/index.htm>.
- 9 The English translation from the French appears on this website, but the original can also be read off the atlas. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guillaume_Le_Testu#cite_ref-11.
- 10 Essentially Mills has offered a translation and lengthy annotation of a French version of the original Portuguese manuscript done by Léon Janssen (*Malaca, l'Inde méridionale et le Cathay: manuscrit original autographe de Godinho de Erédia*, 1882) in turn sourced to a mss in the Bibliothèque Royale in Brussels.

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