

The Relations Between China and Portugal in the Early Sixteenth Century

Some Observations on the Yue Shan Cong Tan

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After the return of Vasco da Gama to Portugal in August 1499 from his epoch-making voyage which opened the sea-route to India round the Cape of Good Hope, many fleets by order of the King were sent to India. Among others, it is very important to mention Pedro Álvares Cabral who, after drifting ashore of Brazil in 1500, built a fortress at Cochin in Southwest India and established a centre of trading in India. In 1505, Afonso de Almeida, on the orders of King Manuel I, was sent to Malacca as Viceroy; the control system grew stronger. In 1510 to 1513, the fleet of Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa, Malacca, and Ormuz. Soon after, the Portuguese established the golden age of trading in Asia.

After Sequeira sailed to Malacca in 1508,¹ the Portuguese tried to normalise diplomatic relations with China. However, the first visit to China was not until 1514, and the first visit by the ambassador was in 1517.² As is well known, the former was Jorge Álvares, the latter was Fernão Peres de Andrade.

From 1514 to 1522, the Portuguese sailed to China with the same purpose. Their visits, however, ended in failure due to the prohibition of foreign trade, and later ambassadors were not sent to China for some years. Up until now, it is not clear why the Portuguese gave up. Perhaps it is because of the outrages committed by Simão de Andrade, which completely destroyed the amicable relations between Portugal and China in 1518, the financial difficulties under the reign of King João III, and the increase of the defence budget. Consequently, from 1523 to 1557 their visits to China

depended on the people who worked in the “Estado da Índia” or sometimes on the Chinese living in Southeast Asia.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE YUE SHAN CONG TAN

There are many Chinese historical sources concerning the Portuguese activities. In particular, I think the most important one is *Yue Shan Cong Tan*. It was written by Li Wen Feng [李文凤] who was appointed government official [云南佾事] in Yün-nan [云南] in 1532.³ According to *Ming Shi* [《明史》], it was made up of ten volumes,⁴ which are now scattered. We can find some quotations from this book only in *Guangdong Tongzhi* [《广东通志》],⁵ *Shu Yu Zhou Zi Lu* [《殊域周咨录》],⁶ and *Tianxia Jun Guo Libing Shu* [《天下郡国利病书》].⁷ However, it was published right after the arrival of the Portuguese in China, and written about the time of their visits or soon after them. Moreover, it gives us vivid descriptions of their lives. So, let's now quote from *Guangdong Tongzhi*.⁸

佛朗机国在爪哇国之南。二国用銃形制同。但佛朗机銃大爪哇銃小。国人用之甚精。小者可击雀。中国人用之稍不戒则击去数指或断一掌一臂。銃制须长若短则去不远。穴须滑若有歪邪带碍则弹不正。惟口莞人造之与口制同。馮造者往口短而无用。嘉靖初佛朗机国遣使来贡。初至行使皆金钱后乃觉之。其人好食小儿云在其国惟国王得食之。臣僚以下不能得也。至是潜市十馀岁小儿食之。每一儿市金钱百文。广之恶少掠小儿竞趋之。所食无算。其法以巨镬煎滚沸汤以铁盛小儿置之镬上蒸之汗尽。乃取出用铁刷刷去苦皮。其儿犹活乃杀而剖其腹去肠胃蒸食之。居二三年儿被掠益众。远近患之。海道汪鏞以兵逐之不肯去反用銃击败我兵。或献计善水者入水凿沈其舟尽擒之。

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Nanban Art screen, late 16th century, rather evocative of the Portuguese navigators and traders activities in the Far East, at the time.
(Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.)



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These contents are as follows. Firstly, the problem of when the cannon [佛郎机銃] was brought to China, secondly, the Portuguese activities in the beginning of Jiajing [嘉靖] period, and thirdly the expulsion of the Portuguese by the *haidao*, Wang Xuan [海道汪鉉]. I will discuss each content.

First, it is not clear about when and how the cannon was brought to China. However, we can see some characteristics of the cannon in *Sancai Tuhui* [《三才图绘》].⁹ "For example, it is made of iron, 5 to 6 [呎] of length, big body and long neck, and it was presented by an interpreter [通事]." In addition, from *Ming Shi Lu* [《明实录》], we know the following: Heru [何儒] had been with the Portuguese and learnt how to make it.¹⁰ Moreover, we can see in *Shu Yu Zhou Zi Lu* that Wang Xuan gave instructions to Heru to get the information on how to make the cannon and the gunpowder, and it became successful with the co-operation of Yang San [杨三] and Dai Ming [戴明].¹¹ The interpreters [通事] in *San Cai Tu Hui* were probably these Chinese people.

We can also understand that Heru was appointed a government official: *Baisha xun jian* [白沙巡檢] for some years during Zheng De [正德] period in *Dongguan Xianzhi* [《东莞县志》].¹² Therefore, I assume that he got a cannon at this time. Zhang Wei Hua [张维华] once suggested that the cannon was already introduced by merchants [闽广商人] before the Portuguese came to China.¹³ According to the quotation from *Fujian Tongzhi* [《福建通志》]¹⁴ when Yan Kun Lun [杨崑崙] attacked Xian-you prefecture [仙遊县] in September 1510 [正德5], the governor, Fan Gui [范珪] ordered the officer Huang Guan [黄琯] to defeat them by means of that cannon. I do not agree with his observation because I can see in *Xian you Xianzhi* [《仙遊县志》] that Fan Gui was appointed in 1512 and Huang Guan was appointed in 1506.¹⁵ Therefore, Fang Gui was not at his post in 1510, so *Fujian Tongzhi* is not correct.

Now, I would like to study this problem through other historical sources. It is clear in *Yang Ming Xiansheng Quanshu* [《阳明先生全书》] that when Ning Wang [宁王朱宸濠] rebelled against the Emperor [武宗] in 1519, his rebellion was suppressed by that cannon.¹⁶ In addition, in *Dengtanbijiu* [《登坛必究》], there is a description of its use in 1527.¹⁷ And we can understand from *Letters from Albuquerque* that the Portuguese had the first contact with the Chi-



D. Vasco da Gama. Extracted from *Livro do Estado da Índia Oriental*, Pedro Barreto de Resende, c. 1636.

nese in July 1511.¹⁸ Moreover, thinking about the Chinese activities in South-sea trade, it seems quite difficult for them to get the cannon. Therefore, it is my contention that the cannon was brought to China during the period from 1514 to 1519.

Second, Li Wen Feng wrote about the Portuguese arrival and behaviour in the beginning of Jiajing period: they bought children at 100 *wen* [文] in cash each, and ate them roasted. In Chinese historical sources, there are the same descriptions in *Ming Shi* and *Ming Shang Cang* [《名山藏》].¹⁹ But all of them were written around the time of 1518, and there are some differences between *Yue Shan Cong Tan* and them.

In *Guangdong Tongzhi*, Qiu Dao Long [丘道隆] who was at the post of Censor, and another Censor, He Ao [何鳌], said the Portuguese were cruel and attacked Malacca some years before. "The Portuguese sent Huo Ze Ya San [火者亚三] to China with a false qualification of the Ambassador of Malacca, they scouted our territories, they bought children and ate them roasted."²⁰ However, as is well known, Huo Ze Ya San as one of the interpreters, came to China in 1517 with Ambassador Tomé Pires. During the following year, he stayed at Canton to pay a visit to the Emperor. So, it is certain that these sentences are the same as the contents of *Ming Shi* and so on. According to *Ming Shi Lu* it is also clear that the government permitted their demonstrations on December the 5th, 1520.²¹

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Therefore, it is somewhat difficult to understand that these sentences in *Yue Shan Cong Tan* indicate the first Portuguese in the beginning of Jiajing period.

Moreover, in the Portuguese sources, Barros says Simão d'Andrade was ordered by King Manuel I to visit China, in April 1518, at the time of Lopo Soares. He sailed with three junks belonging to Malacca merchants and four captains: Jorge Botelho, Álvaro Fuzeiro, Jorge Álvares and Francisco Rodrigues. The fleet arrived at Tunmen [屯门] in August.²² After finishing their business at Canton, they sailed to India. When they arrived at Cochín, many wealthy people in Canton were angry to know their children had been stolen. Simão and his men they did not think their behaviour was bad because they thought people in Asia had a tradition of selling their children for money and mortgage.²³

Moreover, it was believed among the Chinese that the Portuguese ate their children roasted.²⁴ From the above mentioned, it became clear that if Simão ate children – they would be Portuguese. Therefore, I think that Li was mistaken.

Now, I will try to further examine the Portuguese in 1522.

Among Chinese sources, *Ming Shi Lu* and *Ming Shi* say that when the Portuguese came to China, they were beaten.²⁵ But *Ming Shi Lu* and *Ming Shi* differ on the year of their arrival. Once, Fujita argued [别都卢] it was Pedro Homem [未见丁甫思多灭儿] but in these sources it was Martim Afonso de Melo Coutinho. Those differences were because of the editor's mistake: he thought that the time of the Emperor's order and the Portuguese arrival was the same.²⁶ There is no doubt about visitors, but I think it is not sufficient to try to know the arrival time only through the Chinese historical sources.

I want to examine this further. João de Barros says the following: the Portuguese fleet left Malacca for China. It consisted of four ships and was commanded by the captain major Martim Afonso de Melo Coutinho, his brothers Vasco Fernandes Coutinho and Diogo de Melo, and Pedro Homem. Martim Afonso was charged by King Manuel I to conclude a treaty of friendship with the Emperor of China. But the Portuguese proposals were rejected and, soon after, a fierce battle was fought between the Chinese and the Portuguese. Pedro Homem was taken prisoner. Martim Afonso tried to take revenge, but, before he could ful-

fil his ambition, the war ended with his defeat; and he sailed back to Malacca where he arrived in October 1522.²⁷ In addition, it is certain that the Imperial Court in China had confirmed the death penalty of Pedro Homem on December 6th in 1522. After he was executed on September 23rd, 1523.²⁸ Therefore, it is clear that Martim Afonso de Melo was in China in 1522.

Third, Yano insisted that the Portuguese appeared in Chinese historical sources: for example, in *Tianxia Jun Guo Libing Shu*, the expulsion was carried out by Wang Xuan and that was against Simão de Andrade.²⁹ Due to their cruel behaviour, the expulsion of the Portuguese by the Chinese seemed to be reasonable. But, there are no Chinese historical sources about the expulsion of Simão by Wang Xuan. We can only understand that when the Portuguese came, the officer of Canton asked for permission of trade, but the proposal was rejected by Li Bu [礼部] in "Ming Shi Lu",³⁰ and Wang Xuan got rid of the Portuguese in 1521 in *Guangzhou Fuzhi* [《广州府志》].³¹ So, it was quite evident that the Portuguese man was not Simão, but a different man.

And then, who came at this time? Concerning this problem, Barros says the following: In the port of Tunmen [屯门] a fleet of Portuguese ships arrived. The fleet consisted of a ship from Portugal, owned by a state officer with the name of Nuno Manuel, with Diogo Calvo as captain, a junk of Jorge Álvares, and several other ships which could not join Simão de Andrade's previous trip because they had arrived late at Malacca. At this time, Vasco Calvo who was the brother of Diogo Calvo, and several Portuguese who continued to live in the city of Canton were arrested.

The Portuguese ships, which had just come from Patani and Siam, were also captured. At the same time, on June 27th, in 1521, another Portuguese captain, with the name of Duarte Coelho, arrived off Tunmen in a junk belonging to some inhabitants of Malacca. After learning of the hostility between the Portuguese and the Chinese, Duarte Coelho might have escaped immediately, had it not been for the love of his friend Jorge Álvares. Realising the great danger, Duarte Coelho proposed a cease-fire, but his proposal was rejected.

On September the 8th, 1521, under the cover of darkness, they set sail. They arrived safely in Malacca towards the end of October.³² Moreover, through other sources, it is clear that Simão de Andrade left China in

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January 1521.³³ Therefore, when the order made by Li Bu became effective in July, Simão had already returned to Malacca. So, it is my contention that the above sources concern Diogo Calvo.

ACTIVITIES OF THE PORTUGUESE IN JIAJING PERIOD (1522-66)

As mentioned above, navigation from 1517 to 1522 was not permitted, and caused some troubles between the two countries. Then, the Portuguese stopped sending missions for a while, after that, they began to come in a private capacity in the Jiajing period. Consequently, it is difficult to confirm their activities, and we can only understand their activities in a figure, which was made up from the Chinese and the Portuguese sources. So, thinking of pirate's [海寇] activities, I will try to explain the Portuguese activities at this time.

First, I will talk about the situation in China at this time, according to Chinese sources. In *Ming Shi Lu* we understand that since 1517, when the Portuguese came, some cases of trouble happened between the Portuguese and the Chinese. The port of Canton was subsequently closed and every foreign ship moved their trading market from Canton to Chang Zhou [漳州].³⁴ Because of this, the Cantonese economy declined. Then, Lin Fu [林富] proposed a remedial measure to open the port of Canton again to foreign ships, except the Portuguese.³⁵ However, in *Chouhai Tu Bian* [《筹海图编》] we can see that Li Guang Tou [李光头] and Xu Dong [许栋], who were pirates, came together with Wo [倭] [who should be read as Portuguese here], and gathered at Shuang Yu [双屿], making it their base.³⁶ So it is clear that the Portuguese [not allowed entering the port] seemed to come to Chang Zhou and Zhe Jiang [浙江] guided by pirates; other foreign ships seldom went to Canton. As many scholars already mentioned, it began in the 1530s to 1540s.³⁷ In "Ribian Tijian" [日本一鑑] we can come to know the following: in 1540, four men [许一, 许二, 许三, 许四] came to the sea of Zhejiang with the Portuguese, and began trading at Changzhou [漳州].³⁸ In 1543, Deng Liao [登辽] attacked the sea area of Fujian, then stayed at Shuangzu with the Portuguese.³⁹ Moreover, Cruz says the Chinese, who were not permitted to come back to China and who lived in Malacca, conspired with the Portuguese and sailed to China. After trading in Canton by

the Portuguese was forbidden, the Chinese invited the Portuguese to Liang-po [双屿].⁴⁰ From these sources, it is clear that the Portuguese were invited to Zhejiang and Changzhou by pirates. Moreover, Couto says in 1542, three Portuguese, António da Mota, Francisco Zeimoto and António Peixoto came to Siam. And there, they decided to begin Chinese trade, which produced great profit at that time, and set sail in a junk with fur and other articles. They passed the big gulf of Hainan [海南] and arrived at Canton. But they were not allowed to enter, so they changed their course to Changzhou. This was after the last time that Fernão Peres brought the letter from King Manuel I and was accepted by the Mandarin. After that, no man with a moustache and big eyes not allowed to enter. This was written in golden letters, put on the entrance at Canton. So, the Portuguese never went to Canton and all the ships changed their way to other points to trade.⁴¹ We can see in *Ming Shi Lu* that when the Portuguese came to Fujian in 1547, He Chiao, *haidao* banished them,⁴² and in "Ribian Yijian", in the same year, He Chiao came from Pahan with pirates, united with the Chinese and attacked Fujian and Zhejiang.⁴³ Therefore, Japanese scholars thought as follows: since an official mission was not sent to China, the arrival of Portuguese was for many times together with pirates, and then they acquired Macao. But I think at that time the Portuguese had already established a seaborne empire in Asia, and had great power, so, they did not always work together with pirates and retired officers [乡绅] until they leased Macao. Retired officers and pirates could gain great profit out of the illicit trade so they had a strong collaboration.

Once, Sakuma suggested that the pirates in the Jiajing period traded with the retired officers and merchant princes. They had close connections with one another and gained great profit from illicit trade, that is, they got together for the same purpose.⁴⁴ Therefore, I think the Portuguese, who had a purpose to establish a diplomatic relation since their first visit to China, were on good terms with the pirates for a while but did not work with them all the time. According to *Biyu Zazhi* [《璧余杂集》], it is clear that the Portuguese came four times in 1548, and the Portuguese were described as *fulangji* [佛郎机]. Other people were written as pirate [贼 or 海寇].⁴⁵

Moreover, in *Ao Men Ji Lue* [《澳门纪略》], we can confirm that the Portuguese came and asked

for the lease of Macao to dry their goods in 1553.⁴⁶ As is well known, the lease of Macao was in 1557, the year of 1553 was not a correct description. And, in the letter from Souza dated 15th January in 1556, we can see that in 1554, the Portuguese were allowed to trade in China on condition that they paid tax. After that, Canton was reopened to trade.⁴⁷ Therefore, we can clearly understand that the Portuguese acquired Lang Bai Hao [浪白澳] in 1554 and they had already cut off the connection with pirates. And then, we know that when pirates instigated a rebellion, the government at Canton requested the Portuguese to put it down. After that, the Portuguese were granted the right of settlement in Macao in “the letter presented by people of Macao in 1629.”⁴⁸ Moreover, in Chinese sources, sometime around the lease of Macao, I can see there are some attacks carried out alone by pirates, but it is not mentioned whether the

pirates invited the Portuguese. Therefore, it is my contention that the Portuguese kept good relations with pirates till 1540s, but after that, and for their primary purpose of establishing the diplomatic relations, they cut ties with pirates and obtained the right of settlement in Macao.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It was fortunate for Portugal to be able to lease Macao, and monopolise the market in Asia by linking from there with Malacca and Goa, until the Dutch occupied Malacca in 1641. On the other hand, it affected China in changing the traditional diplomatic tribute system. Moreover, after the Portuguese came to China, other Europeans, Dutch and English began to visit. Therefore, I think that the Portuguese visit to China is very important. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 *Alguns Documentos do Archivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, acerca das navegações e conquistas Portuguezas*. Lisboa, 1892. pp. 194-195. In Japan, this sentence was translated by Yosimoto Okamoto. cf. *Júrokuseiki nichíō kótusi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1936), p. 66.
- 2 Fukuda Kazunori, “seitoku nenkan ni okeru porutogarujin no chūgoku raikō” in *Senriyama bungaku ronshū*, no. 23 (May 1980).
- 3 《广西通志》明林富修 明黄佐等纂 嘉靖十一年刊本，卷10，《明清进士题名碑录索引》。
- 4 《明史》清张廷玉等修 雍正十三年 卷98 芸文志。
- 5 《广东通志》明谈恺修 明黄佐等纂 嘉靖三十九年刊，卷66之下，cf. 37b-38a.
- 6 《殊域周咨录》明严从简撰 明万历十一年刊本 卷 9.
- 7 《天下郡国利病书》明顾炎武撰 崇祯十二年刊 交址西南夷。
- 8 Op. cit. 《广东通志》。
- 9 《三才图会》明王圻撰 万历三十七年刊本，器用 8 卷。
- 10 《明实录》(国立北平图书馆红格钞本影印本) 世宗实录卷154，嘉靖 12 年 9 月丁卯。
- 11 Op. cit. 《殊域周咨录》 卷 9.
- 12 《东莞县志》清陈伯陶纂 宣统三年刊 卷 41.
- 13 张维华，《明史佛郎机吕宋和兰意大利亚四传》(台北，1934 ed.)，p. 31.
- 14 重纂《福建通志》清陈寿祺等修 同治七年刊本 卷267，cf. 10b.
- 15 《仙遊县志》明林有年修 嘉靖十七年刊本 卷 2.
- 16 《阳明先生全书》明王守仁撰 卷 24，cf. 20b-21b.
- 17 《登坛必究》明王鸣鹤辑 万历27年刊 奏疏 卷 1.
- 18 Okamoto, op. cit. p. 69.
- 19 《明史》卷 325，《名山藏》明何乔远撰 明崇祯十三年刊本 王亨记 1.
- 20 Op. cit. 《广东通志》。
- 21 Op. cit. 《明实录》武宗实录 卷 194. 正德 15 年 12 月。
- 22 Barros, João de. *Décadas da Ásia* (1552-1615 ed.), Dec. III Liv. VI. cap. I. p. 2.
- 23 Ibid. Dec. III. Liv. VI. cap. II. pp. 16-17.
- 24 Ibid. Dec. III. Liv. VI. cap. I. p. 14.
- 25 Op. cit. 《明实录》武宗实录 卷24. 嘉靖2年3月 《明史》卷 325.
- 26 Fujita Toyohachi, “porutogarujin makao senkyo ni itaru made no shomondai” (*Tōyō gakuō*, 8-1, January. 1918).
- 27 Barros. Dec. III. Liv. VIII. cap. V. pp. 281-288.
- 28 Donald, Ferguson. *Letters from Portuguese Captive in Canton* (Bombay, 1902). pp. 112-113.
- 29 Yano Jinichi. “porutogarujin sina torai tenmatu” – 《葡萄牙人支那渡来顛末》(*Tōa keizai kenkyū* 5-4, 1923).
- 30 Op. cit. 《明实录》世宗实录 卷 4 正德 16 年7月。
- 31 《广州府志》清史澄等修光绪 5 年刊 卷 107.
- 32 Barros. Dec. III. Liv. VI. cap. II. pp. 18-23.
- 33 Ibid. Dec. III. Liv. V. cap. I.
- 34 Op. cit. 《明实录》世宗实录 卷 106 嘉靖8年10月。
- 35 Op. cit. 《天下郡国利病书》 卷 120. There is no description about the year of his proposal in this sentence, but it is clear that his proposal is in 1529, according to *Ming Shi Lu*.
- 36 《筹海图编》明郑若曾 明天启4年刊 卷 5 浙江倭变纪。
- 37 Okamoto, Fujita, Yano. op. cit.
- 38 《日本一鉴》明郑舜功撰 穷河话海 卷 6 海市。
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Cruz, Gaspar da. *Tratado em que se contam muito poy estenso as cousas da China, com suas particularidades, e assi do Reyno d’Ormuz*. Lisboa, 1829. pp. 139-140. Okamoto, op. cit. p. 116.
- 41 Couto, Diogo de. Dec. V. Liv. VII. cap. XII. pp. 262-263.
- 42 Op. cit. 《明实录》世宗实录 卷 330 嘉靖 26 年11月。
- 43 Op. cit. 《日本一鉴》。
- 44 Sakuma Sigeo. “Kasei kaikousikou-Ōchoku wo meguru shomondai” in *Hosi bakase taikan kinen chūgokusi* 《嘉靖海寇史考·王直诸问题》 星博士官纪念中国史论, 1977.
- 45 《暨餘集》明朱纨撰 万历 15 年刊 卷 5 六报 海捷音事。
- 46 《澳门纪略》清印光任·张汝霖撰 清乾隆 16 年刊。
- 47 I used the sentences translated by Okamoto. p. 249.
- 48 Ibid. p. 266.