

## ABSTRACTS

### The Asian Natural World in *Ragionamenti* by Francesco Carletti (1594-1606)

The reality presented to us by Francesco Carletti in his *Ragionamenti* is global, in the geographical sense of the term, and is unique as it is described by him at a particularly important time in history, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The late fifteen hundreds was an innovative period. Major transformations took place in agriculture and trade, and consequently in social and cultural life. The world view was constantly changing. Observations were now more precise, more scientific and mathematical. The process of journeying, as a multiplication of human experience across geographical space, enriched contact with the other, including other landscapes, civilisations, and foods creating a psychological, interior and personal evolution that was essential for these global 16<sup>th</sup>-century changes. This fitted the global/personal paradox of Carletti. The process led the author to replace his own symbolic imaginary with an objective reality over the course of his journey.

[Author: Elisabetta Colla, pp. 11-29]

### An Herb with Many Virtues. Aloe Succotrina as Seen by Botanists and Travellers from Antiquity to the Modern Age

Since pre-classical antiquity, aloe has been considered to be *materia medica* of paramount importance in the treatment of constipation, infection, inflammation, and internal and external wounds, as well as for head, tooth and stomach aches. This article looks at the major Greco-Roman texts on aloes, written by Pliny and Dioscorides. It then moves on to the appearance of Socotra (*Suqutra*, now the Yemen) aloes within the panorama of medieval Muslim merchants, geographers and physicians. Finally, an analysis is made of the developments involving this substance during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. One issue of the history in question is the recurrent confusion between a certain quality of aloe juice that

has been called *succotrinum* or *succotrimum* since the Middle Ages, and an African botanical species which 18<sup>th</sup> century authors concurred in calling *Aloe succotrina*. In fact, the best aloe succotrina comes from a species identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as *Aloe Perryi*. The medicinal virtues of aloes, either laxative or astringent according to application, have been the object of fierce debate in the modern age. Even today, this genus aloins have not been fully studied due to the large number of species and the chemical complexity of their components.

[Author: Zoltán Biedermann, pp. 30-48]

### "A Verde Folha da Erva Ardente". Betel Chewing in 16<sup>th</sup> Century European Sources

Betel-chewing was a wide spread social habit in Asia when the Portuguese discovered the maritime route to India. As with many other practices considered exotic in Europe, it was the subject of detailed reports by early modern European travellers. Portuguese and other European sources written in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries hold a treasure-trove of information, which has not been properly explored so far, about this aspect of daily life in the Orient.

[Author: Rui Manuel Loureiro, pp. 49-63]

### The Dissemination of Brazilian Tobacco in China. The Mirage of a Market

Macao was traditionally the gateway for Brazilian tobacco into China. With the expansion of cultivation of the plant itself in the Empire, and despite the exponential increase in consumption, this trade never went beyond a modest scale. Nevertheless, at the start of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, first through private initiative, and subsequently exclusively under state supervision, a commercial project was devised in Portugal aimed at introducing into China, on a wide scale, consumption of Brazilian tobacco in powder form (not rapeseed but dry powder tobacco). This kind of tobacco,

of which there was a huge surplus in the Portuguese factories in Lisbon and Oporto, seems to have been reasonably well accepted to begin with, but for reasons specific to the Chinese market, together with poor Portuguese administration, it was far from reaching the expected consumption of the masses. It therefore became a product of the elite and powder tobacco was always present in the "*saguates*" sent by Macao and by the kings of Portugal to the court of Peking where it was very well received. Likewise, the authorities of the Canton acquired annually in Macao, through the respective "*hopu*", a certain quantity of the best powder tobacco, which constituted a tribute from the province of Guangdong to the emperor. The fact that the Macao authorities did not always fully satisfy this supply at times led to a degree of irritation with the Chinese provincial officials.

[Author: Arlindo Manuel Caldeira, pp. 64-81]

### "Seduced by the Thirst for Knowledge". Engelbert Kaempfer's Scientific Activities in Safavid Persia (1683-1688)

From 1683 to 1693 the German doctor and naturalist Engelbert Kaempfer went on a remarkable journey from Sweden through Muscovy and Persia, to India, Ceylon, Java, Siam and Japan. A man of great energy, Kaempfer used every available opportunity to record observations that correspond to our modern-day disciplines of cartography, botany, biology, ethnography, archaeology, architectural history, and medicine. This study examines Kaempfer's scientific activities while in Safavid Persia from 1683-1688. During his stay, he made sketches of cities and archaeological sites, corrected the observations of previous European travelers to Persia, and made numerous discoveries relating to Persian flora and fauna. In his magnum opus, the *Amoenitatum exoticarum politico-physico-mediarum fasciculi V* (1712), the author emphasizes the fact that the material contained

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in his work does not simply rehash previous information culled from other travel accounts or books on natural history or science. Instead, Kaempfer recounts his own eyewitness experiences from his travels. Certain passages from his writings are examined, in order to illustrate his way of thinking, how he describes and approaches certain problems, and the conclusions he draws from his work.

[Author: Elio Brancaforte, pp. 82-99]

### **Beyond the Borders of Europe. Engelbert Kaempfer's Medical Research and Treatments**

The Westphalian physician Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716) is best known for his description of Japan, with its focus on the religions, customs, and socio-political conditions of the then secluded island nation. The medical research conducted on his decade-long travels served to obtain his doctorate on his return to Europe and was published in his *Amoenitates exoticae* of 1712. His writings on medicine have been translated and discussed, but little work has been done on Kaempfer's actual practice of medicine and what it required and meant to be a physician in his age, two topics approached in this article. Attention is drawn to the wide gap in learning and status between a physician and a surgeon at that time, and how his employment as surgeon with the Dutch East India Company led to differences between Kaempfer's own and the Company's expectations, ultimately shaping the course of his travels. His medical examinations and treatments are analysed, especially with regard to Persia and India, and his reliance on the works of Hippocrates and Galen is discussed. His detailed and unpublished *Concilium medicum* (medical advice) written in a classical style with a description, diagnosis, prognosis and treatment of the illness suffered by the Dutch Governor at Quilon is examined, along with Kaempfer's attitude and account of "intoxicants" he encountered on his journey through Persia, such as coffee, opium and nicotine. [Author: Beatrice M. Bodart-Bailey, pp. 100-120]

### **Chinese Drugs Used in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Portuguese Medicine**

Over the centuries, generally unacknowledged travellers have transported the widest variety of products, some of them medicinal in nature, from East to West and vice-versa, whether by sea or via the inland corridors of Asia, thereby enriching man's cultural heritage. This article demonstrates the use of a number of products from the wealth of Chinese pharmacopoeia in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese medicine some of these are still used by many traditional doctors in the East.

[Author: Ana Maria Amaro, pp. 121-136]

### **Flora's Apostles in the East Indies. Natural History, Carl Linnaeus and Swedish Travel to Asia in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

This essay examines knowledge of Asia accumulated through Swedish travel to the East in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was when Sweden entered the European scientific limelight through the work of Carl Linnaeus, who in the 1730s proposed a new system for classifying the natural world. This was also when there was close contact between Sweden and Asia and China in particular, through the activities of the Swedish East India Company. In order to acquire first hand information of the flora and fauna of the East, Linnaeus arranged for his own students to travel on board the Swedish East India Company ships. Linnaeus himself was convinced that economic progress and the advancement of science were closely linked, and he encouraged his students to report on every aspect of Chinese and Asian society. These men therefore brought back a wealth of information, not only on the natural world, but on subjects such as agriculture, manufacturing and trade. In Sweden, reporting from Asia was also eagerly promoted and financially supported by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, of which Linnaeus was a founding member. Travel journals, specimens and collections of natural history found their way to the archives and collections of the Academy throughout the century. Swedish contact with Asia has attracted little scholarly attention outside Sweden,

since much of this material has not been published or translated. This article therefore aims to outline Swedish travel to Asia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and to present a bibliographical overview of little known publications and archival material concerned with the Far East in the Swedish language.

[Author: Christina Granroth, pp. 137-156]