

# **Cultural Exchanges between Japan and Mughal India in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

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## *DRAFT PAPER NOT FOR CITATION*

It does without saying that there were no direct exchanges. As far as I have been able to discover, only one Indian came to Japan during this period, on a Dutch ship, in 1657. Whether he was brought to show the Japanese an Indian person's appearance, or came simply as a ship hand is unsure. He is said to have been a Bengali boy, though his age is not given. He could sing in Japanese, which aroused great interest in the port city of Nagasaki (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 389). Nothing more of him is known.

Other than this isolated case, encounters meant the movement of objects, not people, and again these were mediated by third parties. Given the period, the agents were Europeans and their ships, Portuguese, until their expulsion from Japan in 1638, or Dutch. Note that this paper does not deal with Goa, the Portuguese enclave in India, where cultural exchanges were numerous, and where Jesuits priests came and went. Here we restrict ourselves with Japanese-Mughal contacts. More instances be revealed in the future, but at present we have just a handful. For two large countries this is not a lot, but on the other hand, given that the Japan and India possessed few commonalities and not much mutual awareness, with no direct shipping, the contact is actually quite impressive.

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The first exchange came in at the close of the Sixteenth Century, just outside our period. The Japanese Jesuit mission was large and had an important painting school. Its work constitutes our first example of cultural exchange. At least two paintings entered Mughal lands. The painting school had been opened about 1590 by a Neapolitan Jesuit, Giovanni Niccolo, who arrived in Japan in 1582. From the start, the Jesuits intended his atelier to produce painting for use in Japan, but also to send to other Asian missions. This was partly because the quality of the work was higher than could be produced in many other places, but also because the spreading of paintings offered proof that the Jesuits had succeeded in planting the faith in eve the furthest place on earth. Probably for both those reasons some Japanese works were in Goa. Inn 1598, two were

presented to the Mughal emperor, or Padshah, Akbar the Great (MacLagan, 1932, pp. 225-26). This was during the third Jesuit mission to Lahore. As the first two had not been successes, squandering the Padshah's good will, the third had to be different. An educated and mature priest, Jerome Xavier, about to turn 50, a nobleman of Navarre and grandnephew of Francis Xavier, then serving as rector of the Professed House in Goa, led the entourage.

Akbar was known as an art lover, and Jerome Xavier took examples of Western prints and painting to show him too. The Mughals would have seen such things before as they acquired Western work overland from Italy. They had no objection to pictures on Christian themes, even ones contradicting Islamic belief, such as Crucifixions. The Jesuits mistook Akbar's artistic interest for an awakening desire to convert, and this is where the Japanese paintings fitted in. The European pictures showed doctrines and perhaps the cultural level of Europe, while the Japanese ones made a parallel between India and Japan, showing that Christianity was not only for Europeans, but also embraced by Asians, to their great advantage. Jerome Xavier's job was to push the Padshah into becoming Christian - not a very likely (or very desirable) eventuality.

Our information about the Japanese works comes from a letter sent by Jerome Xavier back to Goa. He refers to giving Akbar 'two exquisite pictures made in Japan.' One is referred to as *Christ*, the other *Ignatius Loyola*, that is, a portrait of the founder of the Jesuit order.

Extant paintings from Niccolo's atelier suggest something of how these works must have looked. A surprising number of survive from the so-called 'Christian Century' (from arrival of the Portuguese in 1542, to the banning of priests in 1614, then the final expulsion of all Iberians from Japan). Although image of Christ can be very varied, there is a clear option for a Japanese-made piece. The Japanese did not favour Crucifixions, which they found too ghoulish. Christ was almost always shown as *Salvator Mundi* (saviour of the world). One well-known extant example, thought to be the work of one of the atelier's new named painters, Jacobo Niwa (about whom little is known) is probably from this period so likely close to that the Padshah received. The artist had access to a print on the subject by Heronymus Wierix, on which he based his composition, which is how the school often worked.

The *Ignatius Loyola* is harder to imagine since there are known portraits of him from this period at all. Ignatius's companion, Nicolas de Bodadilla, is said to have painted his likeness in life, and a death mask was taken on Loyola's decease in 1556, but nothing survives. The Jesuits strongly promoted their

founder's image, both for their missionary work, and also in their on-going campaign for his canonisation. Printed portraits are known to have circulated, though none exists. It is likely one came to Japan and was copied in paint, making it larger and coloured, as with the *Christ*. Most portraits of Ignatius come from after his canonisation, in 1622, most notably the masterpiece by Rubens. Thus, we cannot estimate the appearance of what Akbar received. Come Niccolo school paintings of monks and priests are the nearest we have to a plausible indication.

What Akbar thought of this is not recorded. If the paintings were 'exquisite', he had an eye to appreciate this. He might have been interested in the notion of Japanese conversion, and the hybrid culture resulted from this. He might have preferred some actual Japanese painting, not Christianised. We know the Jesuits gave non-Christian Japanese art to his neighbour and rival, Abbas the Great, Shah of Iran about this time (Gouveia, 1611, pp. 176-177). But none went to India.

Jerome Francis remained at the Mughal court, on and off, for two decades, and he may have offered more Japanese work. He got nowhere with the conversion, and was severely compromised when the deeply anti-Jesuit English arrived about 1610. In 1617 he returned to Goa, where he died.

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More extensive are interchanges that came later through the Dutch. Our second case study is from a generation later, in 1636. It does not relate to Japanese objects shown in India, nor Indian ones in Japan, but to something different. Two identical presents were commissioned in Amsterdam by the Dutch East India Company (known as the VOC), one to be offered to the Japanese shogun, one to the Indian Padshah. Of interest is the comparative fate of these two sets of object. The principal element of each was a massive chandelier. It did not hang from the ceiling, which was normal, but was mounted on a stand to be positioned on the floor. Accompanying this (at least in Japan, the records for India are less complete) were a dozen sconces, or wall-mounted candlesticks, plus a quantity of candles for use with the gift.

The VOC had first experimented with sending chandeliers to powerful Asian rulers before. In 1613 they had presented a large chandelier to the Ottoman Sultan Ahmed in thanks for his empire's first trade treaty with the Dutch Republic (Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1979, p. 73). A major represent was required, and as Sultan Ahmed was involved with the greatest construction project of his

career at the time, the Dutch surely hoped their lantern would hang there, giving publicity to the Company. They might also have hoped it would also prompt commissions to Amsterdam for similar pieces. The building concerned was the Blue Mosque, properly called the Sultanahmet Mosque, built in Istanbul in 1609 – 1616 to be the sultan's tomb. There is no information about the object after delivery, nor of whether the Ottomans allowed a Christian-made object into such a setting.

It seems more than coincidence that it was when the Japanese began an equally immense temple-shrine-mausoleum complex that the Dutch ordered their first chandelier for Japan. The construction project complete reconfiguration of the formerly-modest grave of the first shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, at Nikkô. Ieyasu had died in 1616, and his grandson, Iemitsu, wanted work ready for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

With perfect timing, the VOC brought the chandelier in 1636. The head of the VOC in Japan, a Frenchman, François Caron, showed the 30-branch affair to the regional lord of Hirado (where the Company was then based), and he greatly approved of it (Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1979, pp. 69-95). No details are recorded, but the object is extant so can be seen to be a typical of chandelier of the type that adorned wealthy Dutch churches, probably at that sent to Istanbul had also been. Japanese Buddhists would have no objections to a Christian-made object. They did, however, have another problem. Japanese buildings lack the high ceilings of churches and mosques. The chandelier could not be suspended. Iemitsu, the shogun, was delighted with his present, and sent the chandelier to Nikkô to be displayed there, but there was no building to accommodate it. He may also have worried about fire risks, Japanese buildings being of wood and earthquakes frequent. He therefore order the chandelier to be placed on the ground, in a prominent position, at Nikkô's main gate, outside the main buildings. For its better protection in the external location, it was set inside an elaborately lacquered and gilded octagonal housing, highly visible, but not usable.

India enters the story two years later. Seeing how much admiration this chandelier had achieved, the VOC commissioned another two more. This time we know the name of the maker, Joost Gerritsz, born in 1598, and one of Amsterdam's most celebrated brass artisans. The Company had learned that Japanese buildings had low ceilings, they asked Gerritsz to set the chandeliers on stands. He devised bases of six volutes with auricular ornaments, supporting six twisted columns with Tuscan capitals. Though impressive in its own way, the result, which is also extant, it must be said, is somewhat odd.

We learn from the records that these two chandeliers arrived at the main Dutch Asian city of Batavia (Jakarta) in June 1639, along with 24 sconces and candles. Anthony van Diemen, the Dutch Governor-General, sent one set to Japan, shipped in separate pieces, and they arrived in 1640 with a craftsman to assemble them and polish the surfaces before presentation. He held the second one back, however, fearing that two sets would make the objects seem less rare. The other would be sent to India. On seeing the chandelier shining in all its glory, François Caron, in Japan was most impressed. He regarded it as unthinkable in Holland, even in a wealthy church, and sumptuous enough for a great ruler, just as the VOC intended. The gift was duly presented to Iemitsu, who delightedly sent it to Nikkô to join the other. Being floor-standing, it could have been placed in a hall, but there was still the risk of fire. He therefore decided to have it positioned outside, on the opposite side of the gate from the gift of 1636. This time it was not given housing. To judge from how it looks today, it was mis-assembled, or ineptly repaired later, because its branches rise from the central orb, whereas they ought to fall, which further adds to the oddity of its appearance. In addition to the 30 arms, there is a candle-holder at the summit. Like the other chandelier, it was never polished so has dulled to a sad mat. The sconces, meanwhile, were screwed to the gorgeously carved outer wall of the complex, below the stairs leading to the main gate. Each sconce has two arms ending in dolphin heads, with counter-scrolls in the form of a leaves, and back plates are in the form of cartouches with auricular ornamentation. 55 candles would be required to fill the chandelier and sconces (plus more for the previous gift, if it had been made usable), but unless shades were also provided, they could not have been lit, since the flames would have immediately blown out.

It is worth adding that two years later, in 1642, Gerritz was commissioned to make some 15 chandeliers for the Old Church in Amsterdam. The building exists, its chandeliers are gone, but the appearance can be told from paintings, such as by Emanuel de Witte. It is immediately apparent how the chandelier at Nikkô had been put together wrongly.

So, what of India? The Dutch made annual gifts to the Japanese court under their trading agreement, but it was not the case with India. The chandelier and sconces for the Padshah were therefore held back until an appropriate moment presented itself, and when they would have maximum effect. This would not occur for some years, by which time the sconces must have gone elsewhere as they are not mentioned.

The VOC had good relations with the Mughal court, and had been allowed to open a Dutch house in the main port of Surat, in Gujarat. In 1642, when its head, Cornelis Weylandt, made a visit to Lahore, he took it with him, presumably disassembled and with someone to put it together and polish it (Van Adrichem, 1941, pp. 5-6). It would be the finest gift the Padshah, Shah Jehan, had ever received from any European country (though no match for what the Shahs of Iran sent him). Weylandt says that the Padshah's eldest and favourite son, Prince Daru Shukoh (also written Shiko), viewed the object and was not happy with it. 'Very humiliatingly, unashamed, and mockingly,' wrote Weylandt, 'he shouted very loudly in Hindi in the presence of many people.' So what was his objection? The Prince might have liked the shape, but buy could not countenance a gift for the Padshah of such a common material. 'Of copper!'" he screamed. In the end, the shape overcame the shortcomings of the material, and Weylandt stated that the Dutch were invited to the palace where the chandelier had been prepared with candles, which were lit on their arrival. Shah Jehan then made his grand entry and he expressed delight at the chandelier asking where it had been made and admiring its 'outstanding work.' The Dutch went out, but were informed the Padshah had summoned 'all his wives to view the piece'. The next evening it was lit again. However, Shah Jehan agreed that the material was problematic. He summoned his court craftsmen and ordered them to replicate the chandelier in better metals. Indeed, he wanted no less than four, to give a set, two in gold and two in silver. When these were made, the original was probably melted down. None of the five exists today.

The maker, Gerrit, had died in 1652, so he never knew of the honour done to his work at the Mughal court. He was aware of in Japan however, as was most of Amsterdam. The poet and dramatist Jan Vos wrote on it, expressing scorn at how Gerritz had used his skill for the benefit of distant, pagan monarch, rather than for use in Dutch churches:

'J.G. was unwilling to make a copper crucifix, but was ready enough to make a copper lamp to burn before the Emperor of Japan's idol.'

De Vos composed a verse,

*A hypocrite once refused to make a copper crucifix,  
But now he's making something to blaze before an image of the devil!  
It promises a better price than a crucifix, I reckon.  
Isn't that a very devilish deed, to light a candle for the sake of money?  
(Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1979, p. 93; my translation).*

There is no evidence that Gerrit refused to make crucifixes, but Vos served as Amsterdam's pageantmaster where he was criticised (including in 1659 by the mayor, Dr Nicolas Tulp, famously painted by Rembrandt) for use of pagan gods on the floats and decorations (De Vos, 2018). It seems therefore that De Vos was actually giving 'J.C' covert praise.

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The VOC now had formal trade with the Mughal court, not only on the western side at Surat but also in Bengal, in the east. In 1641 they took Melaka, making Bengal important since voyages were possible from there to Japan without going via Batavia. So it was that Indian-Japanese trade and cultural relations increased. Ships plied the route from Chinsura to Nagasaki, where the Dutch house had relocated (from Hirado), in a passage would only take 10 weeks under normal conditions. Something very interesting happened some years into this new stage in relations in 1653. The new Dutch leader Gabriel Happart, arriving with the Company ships that summer, came with orders to commission a large quantity of Japanese lacquer for Bengal. European elites had valued the lacquer for some time, impressed by its lightness, durability, and the golden designs in *maki-e* that Japanese craftsmen could apply to enliven or particularise objects. Happart needed three sets of items. One were shields. These were to be presented (or perhaps sold) by the Company to the governor (*subhardar*) of Bihar, Nawab Ja'far Khan. The second set were to go to the governor of Bengal, Shah Shuja, and was even better, being a set of shields together with three palanquins, one quite spectacular. Both governors were princes, sons of the padshah, Shah Jehan. Little is known of Nawab Ja'far Khan, but Shah Shuja is a famous person in Indian history, and indeed the history of Myanmar. He had been governor of Bengal since 1644, residing in Dhaka (now capital of Bangladesh). The Mughals had seized Bengal in 1576 and expanded East, taking Dhaka and making their provincial capital in 1608, renaming the city Jahangirabad after the Padshah.

Several European collections have Japanese lacquered shields, copied from wooden templates taken to Japan, but the choice of a palanquin was apt for the Mughals, who set great store by these vehicles. An Englishman, Peter Mundy, in India in 1628-34, recognised this on seeing Shah Jehan in procession. He recorded,

First, there were 20 royal conveyances as *takht-i-rawan*, *palki* [palanquin], and others; then there were a thousand horsemen riding in close rank. This was

followed by 19 or 20 elephants richly decorated and covered with velvet that had the royal insignia. One of the elephants carried an *amari* [housing] that was covered with a canopy of rich cloth and was supported with golden sticks. It was followed by ushers controlling the procession and clearing the way. Then there was the emperor riding on a dark grey horse (Mundy, 1907, p. ???).

The third set of items was very large but more standard. These were some 80 'cabinets, large and small, and the writing boxes,' perhaps like those exported to Europe. Since recipients are not named, these were likely for sale, or for giving to lower officials (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 124).

Lacquer was not produced in Nagasaki, so merchants came down from the capital, Kyoto (known to Europeans as Miyako), over 800km. Dutch ships arrived in early summer and left in autumn, so the lacquerers came after that trading cycle was complete, so take orders for export the following autumn. Lacquering is time-consuming, and all the more so when unusual shapes and decorations were demanded. If necessary, the lacquerers would take models or drawings back to Kyoto to work from. The Dutch made an annual trip to Edo (Tokyo) to present the shogun and his entourage with that year's gifts, and this necessarily passed through Kyoto. Discussions could take place, and prototypes viewed and approved. The Dutch could pick up finished commissioned when coming back from Edo, some weeks later, or else items could be sent to Nagasaki over the summer, or at least before autumn.

On 16 November, 1653, Happart asked the Japanese interpreters when the lacquerers could be expected to arrive. He was told they would come the very next day, and indeed they did, twenty men (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 124). Happart showed them for the three palanquins. He stressed 'everything should be made according to the models and written instructions that have been sent.' This was hard because sadly the models had been badly damaged en route, and Happart and the other men did not know what a *takht-i-rawan* (literally, 'moving throne') looked like, admitting, 'we ourselves did not understand everything properly.' He nevertheless said everything must be 'curiously made' and be ready in time for export in about 11 month's time. He did not set the cost, which it would be hard to assess quickly for such unprecedented items, but he promised 'we would pay... at a fair price'. The commission was key to the Company's success in India, and 'the whole afternoon was spent discussing this.' The lacquerers withdrew saying they would draw up estimates over the next day. They did not appear on 19<sup>th</sup>, nor on 20<sup>th</sup> (which was the Moon Festival so a holiday), but on 21<sup>st</sup> they submitted their estimate: 5049 taels for the total full order. 1 tael was 3.5 Dutch guilders, while 4 were 1 English pound. To put



this in perspective, the present given annually to the shogun cost the Company about 4500 (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 288). It is notoriously difficult to put historical prices into modern terms, but 5000 taels was £1250, or very roughly £125,000 today (National Archives, 2018).

Happart thought the quote too much, and he so decided to leave out the largest palanquin, which was so ostentatious he estimated it to be worth about half the whole order, or 2000-2500 taels. The Japanese craftsmen were also worried about this the palanquin, and also the others too, 'because the instructions from the Bengal factory are not sufficiently clear'. Leaving the palanquins to one side, Happart offered 12 taels for best shields, and 8 for others. The lacquerers could not accept this, so discussions broke off for the day. On 22<sup>nd</sup>, the two parties met again. Happart was told the prices were high because 34 lacquerers would be needed to fulfil the order in time, which would mean very little each. They also returned to the palanquins, 'because the objects, in particular the *takht-i-rawan*, were not common objects in Japan and they were extremely difficult to make' (Viallé & Blussé 2005, p. 125). Again, talks were suspended.

On 25<sup>th</sup> Happart said he needed a decision. The lacquerers said they would come the next day, to sort things out, but they did not. On 27<sup>th</sup> a dozen men came, saying they would drop the price to 4620 taels for all items. Happart offered 2235, recording, 'we thought this was a fine bid, but the lacquerers thought it ridiculous.' He therefore raised his offer to 2500, then to 2600 taels. The lacquerers demanded 3500. At last a price of 3000 taels was agreed for the 3 shields, with the palanquins to be determined later, as they could not be made without clearer instructions, and the cabinets and chests also to be decided later on. Before they separated, Happart stressed that the recipients were Muslims, the decorations must not to include human figures.

Apparently the piece were made to everyone's satisfaction. One year on, on 15 November 1654, Happart announced he had taken delivery of the 'lacquerware which we had ordered for Bengal,' that is, the shields and cabinets (Viallé & Blussé 2005, p. 173-73). He inspected the consignment on 18<sup>th</sup>, declaring it 'on the whole fine and well made'. The shield had been decorated as stipulated, but he discovered some of the chests and cabinets, 'had been decorated with human figures, which we had forbidden them explicitly last November.' This was alarming. Happart took a closer look on 22<sup>nd</sup>: 'We again inspected the chests and cabinets we had ordered for Bengal,' but luckily, 'we found that all the objects were without any figures that would displease the Moors.' Only the prices for the shields had been agreed, so the parties now fell to haggling over

the chests. The lacquerers wanted almost 3000 taels for all 80 items, and 'remained adamant on their high price till the evening.' The Dutch offered 1,821 taels, but raised this to 2,000 taels. Happart declared he would go no higher, nor accept one piece without agreement, leaving the craftsmen with 80 items impossible to sell elsewhere. He also pointed out 'time was running out to pack all the goods and ship them.' The tactic was effective 'and after some discussion and calculations and the interpreter's mediation and with their protestations of a meagre profit, we closed the deal.' On 26<sup>th</sup>, 'we packed all the lacquerware we have bought for Bengal.'

Happart's term in Japan was now over, so he sailed out for Batavia while another ship went to Bengal. His replacement was Leonard Winnincx, who had to try again with the three palanquins. Proud of his knowledge of Japanese, though not knowing Mughal court Persian, Winnincx referred to the palanquins as *norimono*.

Winnincx had been warned by Happart about costs, so came up with a clever idea. Kyoto was not the place where top-level lacquering was undertaken, but other places were not without craftsmen. He therefore considered placing the commission in the mercantile city of Osaka, when he would have to pass before Kyoto on the way to Edo (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 181). As this was new, Winnincx asked permission from the Governor of Nagasaki, Kaishô Masanobu (known to the Dutch as 'Kiemon'). He determined, 'after permission had been granted to notify two or three lacquerers and ask for their quote, which will undoubtedly be exorbitant as usual,' but that did not matter now he had a fall-back position. On November 12<sup>th</sup>, the lacquerers appeared, and 'we were very surprised they came twenty-strong... when we had asked for two or three craftsmen (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 182). The Dutch wanted fewer men so it would be easier to put pressure on them, but the Japanese did not intend to fall into the trap. Winnincx had to make do. Since he had no more information from Bengal, he recorded, 'I proposed to have the three *norimono* made in Japanese fashion' except 'the floors should be made on rattan instead of wood and they would be lined with gold cloth or velvet.' This was easy, so the lacquerers gave an on-the-spot quote. Using best-quality lacquer, they said, the palanquins would cost 1100 taels each. Using middle-quality lacquer, 850, and with the cheapest, 280 taels. 'I almost had a fit,' wrote Winnincx. 'How was it possible to ask such ridiculous prices?' He therefore decided to take the Osaka option, and to have some *norimono* 'brought to our lodging in Osaka [where] we understand very beautiful ones are made there at low prices'. He now specified *women's norimono*, not stated before, perhaps these were more modest in appearance.

The trip to Edo took place just after Western New Year, and in 1655 the Dutch party was in Osaka on 18 January. Winnincx sent for ‘one of best women’s norimono’ (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, pp. 188-9). However, ‘we found it was just covered with matting on the outside and the inside was just bare varnish,’ that is, it was inferior. He was forced to conclude, what anyone could have told him, that the costly type of lacquerware, fit for princes, was only made in Kyoto.

Some days later the Dutch arrived in that city, where they met the lacquerers. The craftsmen dropped their quote to 900 taels. Winnincx offered 250, a huge discrepancy, at which ‘they laughed heartily.’ However, they said they would make all three norimono for 300 taels and these would ‘look all right,’ but only by using cheap lacquer so which Winnincx consented. However, he wanted one to see on return from Edo. The craftsmen said was impossibly fast, indeed, since it was now 10 weeks later than time when orders were generally placed by the Dutch, it would be pretty difficult to have the norimono ready for export in the autumn. Still, they said they could have the work done by October and in better lacquer too, but only for 700 taels each. Winnincx came back with 300; they said 600; he said 400. Finally, though, ‘we took into consideration that these norimono have been ordered two years ago and that they are designated as gifts for the Bengali prince – with whom the company is somewhat at odds at the moment. Thus, we decided to pay the higher price.’ Three palanquins of best quality lacquer would be made for 1500 altogether. Winnincx added, we trust they will keep their promise and deliver a fine and curious work.’ The Governor of Bengal would have to ride in a Japanese-style *norimono*, not an Indian one.

Only one of the three is referred to as having been delivered that autumn. 1655, though perhaps all were and the record is missing (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 222). There is no more information. In all probability it (or they) must have arrived in Bengal in spring 1656 and was contentedly used by Shah Shuja, who may even have liked its exotic form.

What happened to the palanquin(s) in India? Shah Jehan fell gravely ill in 1657, whereupon Shah Shuja claimed the throne. There followed a succession crisis as a younger brother, Aurangzeb, interfered, and being in Lahore, was able to place his father under house arrest and more effectively take the title of Padshah. Fearful of his position, Aurangzeb moved to oust Shah Shuja from his powerbase in Bengal. He sent his general, Iran-born Mir Jumla, to attack Jahangirabad. The next year, he murdered his older brother, Dara Shukoh (the one his found fault with the chandelier), while Mir Jumla defeated Shuja Khan, probably three years after receipt of his palanquin(s). In 1660, Shuja Khan fled

the subcontinent by ship with his wife, Piari Banu Begum, family, and a retinue of over 1000. They were offered sanctuary by King Sanda Thudhamma of Arakan (now Rakhine State in Myanmar), and to this day the route they took is called the Shuja Road. Could this procession have included the deposed governor riding in his Japanese vehicle, perhaps with his wife in another? Shah Shuja was welcomed in the Arakanese capital of Mraku-U, but one theory had it that the King betrayed him, and had him murdered, raping his daughter. Another, less brutal, is that the King was forced to drive the Bengalis out because their huge retinue was threatening to overbalance his court; he married Shah Shuja's daughter to secure her future. At any rate, with Bengal in Aurangzeb's control, he rewarded Mir Jumla with its governorship of Bengal (Subrahmanyam, 1997, p. ???).

That the item (or items), whatever their fate, met approval in Bengal, as is clear from the fact that in 1658, with Shah Shuja still governor, the Dutch leader Zacharias Waerdenaar, received another request for a palanquin from Bengal, this time accompanied with a properly-made model (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. 371). Only one was required, which Waerdenaar referred to as a 'slight, small palanquin,' of 6ft, which is small if the carrying poles are included. The lacquerers quoted 1600 taels. Waerdenaar offered 800. They settled on 1300.

Also arriving from Bengal that year was a gift for the shogun, Iemitsu's son, Ietsuna, and this was the first time Indian items had formed part of the annual shogunal present. In Edo, Waerdenaar was to hand over a Bengali cart shipped over complete, with oxen trained to draw it (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 377).

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From the 1660s there is more documentation about route trading. In 1662 the VOC sent an embassy to Aurangzeb to request wider trading permission, expanding from Surat. Dircq van Adrichem, assistant merchant at the Dutch house there, already in India for ten years, was raised to the level of head merchant, and told in that capacity to lead the entourage. In Delhi, Adrichem was initially only modestly received, and the Mughals officials postponed his encounter with the Padshah several times. He stayed in Delhi for three months, largely at his own expense, but was eventually received by Aurangzeb, within the red railings, but not within the silver-coloured fence. Still, he was presented with an ambassadorial robe of honour (Van Meersbergen, 2017, p. ???). François Bernier, French physician to Prince Shuko Khan, recorded that the Dutch considered the embassy crucial for their future trade with Mughal lands, which explains their finally giving the marvellous chandelier (Ona, 1988, p. 85).

Gifts were presented, and although we do not know what, they seem to have worked, since Van Adrichem's embassy was deemed a success. He was given accorded permission to trade in Patna, Orissa and, most crucially in Bengal, also securing a 1% reduction in custom duties at Surat. The English were alarmed by this demarche, and the head of their Surat house, George Oxenden, wrote to London suggesting it too send a congratulatory embassy, though this did not happen. Surat in the west and Bengal in the east, made a perfect pair, along also with Coromandel, in the south-east (not relevant for this paper). The Dutch had in fact been in Bengal since 1607, and since 1636 at a fairly formal trading post at Chinsura, close to Hugli. Now their status was normalised so that their trade could expand.

In all cases, the sole reason that the Dutch came to Japan was to buy copper, which was the purest known. The Mughals needed it, and paid with cloth. That from Bengal was both cotton, silk, and a mixture, almost all produced in striped patterns that were unknown in Japan. The Dutch collectively called the Bengali textiles *taffachelas gingham*, and following Portuguese usage, they divided goods into three grades: *cabessa* (head), the best, *bargia* (belly), middle, and *pee* ('foot'), the cheapest. The same terms were used for the three qualities of lacquer cited above. In Japan, this Bengali cloth was in competition with similar types from Tonkin, imported both by the VOC, and by the Chinese. Also from Bengal came a rougher cotton cloth called *aromzeen*, after the Portuguese-Iranian port of Ormuz. Several hundred packs of all types were brought.

The VOC could sell 1 picul of Bengali *cabessa* for 225 taels, that is, it fetched some 2 taels per lb. This was barely twice the purchase cost, and sometimes they got only 200, though sometimes 300 (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, pp. 163 & 271). The VOC repeatedly expressed concern that such profit was too meagre to be meaningful. Tonkinese silk routinely fetched 300 taels, and fine Chinese silk over 500.

An early comment on the Bengal cloth trade, from the May 1655, comes from the Governor of Nagasaki. He asked Winninx 'if we were expecting any more ships from Bengal and if the war with England would be a hindrance.' Bengali cloth was liked in Japan, even if prices were not high. Winninx said the war would make little difference, which the governor was glad to hear (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 208).

Some years later, in 1662, the Dutch leader Hendrick Indijck regretted that the alternative of Tonkinese cloth meant 'prices have fallen far short of last year's

profits,' and that the Japanese merchants who bought Bengali silk would face a loss. The Japanese attributed this drop to a decline in quality, with only 'disagreeable and unattractive' *taffachelas gingham* now being available (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 59).

Bengali cloth was a commodity so it had to make a profit, but VOC also used it for low-level gifts, or, in combination with other things, high-level ones. As the VOC groups passed through Osaka on the way to Edo in 1664, for example, the leader Wilhem Volger presented the city governor (*bugyô*) with five pieces of Bengali cloth, and his secretary with two; at Kyoto, he gave the shogunal representative (*shoshidai*) 10 pieces (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, pp. 100-101). This may have been Volger's strategy for stimulating interest, as for the first time the Company had brought a fine Bengali cotton cloth that year called *chelas regattijs*, 'which came as samples.' After some months Volger reported 'low prices for almost all commodities and principally for the Bengali... chelas regattijs and aromzeens.' It was not even to competition, of quality, since Tonkinese silk was selling poorly too (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. 126). The Japanese market was famously fickle. Then next year, 1665, a ship from Bengal caught fire in Nagasaki harbour before being unloaded, and the Company could only salvage 30,500 catties of *cabessa*, 25,00 of *bargia* and 1000 of *pee* (a catty is 600g). Unsalable pieces were given to the crew (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. 154). At least rarity might have raised prices

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We hear no more of palanquins for a while, but Japanese lacquer had been seen by the Bengali elite, and they wanted more. In 1666, another commission for shields was placed, with 90 wanted, their frames completed so that they only required lacquering in Japan. The Governor of Nagasaki, now Inô Masatomo, was so interested in this (not having been in post when the previous shields were made) that he asked for one, still unlacquered, to view. After inspecting it, he sent it to Edo to be seen by the shogun himself (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. 197). Arriving with the shields was a commission for 30 boxes, this time in an Indian shape, using a model provided, and for use with betel (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. 205). When the lacquerers visited the Dutch to take that year's orders, they quoted 14 taels per shield and 8 per box. Volger offered 6 and 3. After several hours, they settled at 8 and 4, 'on condition that they be made of the finest lacquer according to the models.' There is no further word, but presumably the items were made in Kyoto and satisfactorily exported to Bengal in autumn 1667.

In 1668, the then-Dutch leader, Constantin Ranst, refers to placing another commission in Edo, not Kyoto, for another 30 boxes, now referred to as 'lacquered cabinets for Bengal.' This large order had come even before the shields and betel boxes could have been delivered to their Indian clients. Volger also had another commission from Surat, meaning from the main Mughal court, and this is the only time I have found such a case. Aurangzeb, or members of his circle, wanted 'a ream of paper sprinkled with gold,' and had provided a sample (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, pp. 256-57). Ranst called 100 sheets tat a 'ream' (though normally it was 480), so the order was not large, but then, the paper was extremely precious. It cost of 8 mas per sheet, where 10 mas = 1 tael, so that we can calculate the order at 80 taels, or in English terms, £20 for the ream, which means some 2 shillings per sheet, astonishingly costly for paper. Ranst found it 'exorbitantly expensive.' The Dutch trips to Edo now took place in early summer, not New Year, so there was no time to have the paper produced by autumn. It would have to leave in 1669, arriving in Surat, via Batavia, some time in 1670. So too with the 30 boxes for Bengal. Ranst also had a commission from Surat for 20 reams of ordinary paper, plus a similar quantity of this to be retained in Batavia, 'according to the Surat sample.' These were routine, at 8 taels per ream, producible more quickly, and so probably exported that season.

Ranst left Japan that autumn, but shortly after returning to the Company base at Batavia, he was appointed to run the Dutch house in Bengal, a position he would hold until 1672 (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, p. ix n. 38). Clearly the Company wanted improved levels of coordination between Japanese and Bengal in supply and demand, and business knowledge.

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Replacing Ranst in 1668 was Daniel Six. As expected, the lacquerers soon came, 'in answer to our summons' (Viallé & Blussé, 2012, pp. 284-85). Six again had models sent from Bengal, and he wanted two lacquered pieces produced from each, that is, four items, not many, but these were very special. One, again, was a palanquin, the other an 'elephant house,' or howdah - an *amari* to the Mughals. The four items had to be made 'curiously of suitable Japanese light wood and lacquered with back medium-quality,' that is, he a lower grade of lacquer was necessary to keep the price for such a commission reasonable. The decoration was to be 'foliage of gold, called *tsou* by the Japanese.' It is not clear what *tsou* (probably *tsû* in modern romanisation) is supposed to mean. When Six enquired the price, the lacquerers considered before concluding 'they could not make the elephant house for less than 1450

taels and the palanquin for less than 1050 taels.’ The two howdahs and two palanquins would come to 5000 taels, 20% more than the value of the shogun’s annual present. Six was horrified and thought the price ‘exceeded all bounds.’ He made as if to terminate the meeting, but the interpreters interposed, asking him to make an offer. Six suggested 700 for the howdah and 500 for a palanquin, that is, half the asking prices rounded down. The lacquerers said they could do the job for this, or even less, ‘but in that case the quality of the lacquer would be commensurate with the price,’ and the items would not be as good previous items made for the Company. They suggested compromising at 1255 for each howdah and 850 for each palanquin, using good lacquer. Six shot back with 800 for each *amari* and 550 for each palanquin. This was rejected. The discussion went on for hours with ‘much useless talk’. Now it was the lacquerers who stood up to go. Again the interpreters interposed, warning that a contract had to be agreed there and then, as permission would not be given for the lacquerers to visit the Dutch compound a second time. After more haggling, all agreed on 900 for each howdah and 650 for each palanquin, or 3100 taels in total. A contract was signed for items ‘made of fine black lacquer with curious foliage of fine gold, similar to the pieces which have been ordered before.’ The four sumptuous lacquered items must have left Nagasaki in autumn 1669, In the *Gooiland* (in North Holland), bound for Bengal a cargo worth 0.5m guilders, since the Dutch record understatedly refers to it as taking ‘small things for Bengal’ (Viallé & Blussé, 2005, p. 314).

After the objects given to Nawab Ja’far Khan, and even more to Shah Shuja a dozen years previously, it was not possible to speculate on specific Bengali recipients of commissions placed. The pieces must have gone to members of the elite, as presents or as purchases, but no more can said. Which an order at this price, however, we can venture a view. The items could have been for the Padshah, Aurangzeb, but if so the commission would have come via Surat, whereas these are referred to as for Bengal. I propose that the recipient was again Bengal’s governor, Shaista Khan. The victorious Mir Jumla had not held the post long, and probably did not expect to, since it was reserved for someone of royal blood. In 1664, Aurangzeb replaced him with his uncle and confident. Mirza Abu Talib, better known as Shaistra Khan. Shaista Khan expanded Mughal power into the Chittagong area, then under control of the Portuguese, who held it with support from King Sanda Thudhamma. The Dutch lent Shaista Khan support for an assault on the strategic Chittagong island of Sandwip (pronounced ‘shondip’), a client sultanate of Arakan. Sandwip fell to in 1665, and the whole Chittagong area the next year.



Shaista Khan was allowed much freedom by his uncle. He greatly beautified Jahangirabad, and the Shaista Khan Mosque survives, much altered, in what were his palace grounds. By the time the howdahs and palanquins were commissioned, Jahanirabad had become one of the richest cities in Asia, with a population of some million. It is as fascinating to think of the new Prince-governor riding around his precincts in a Japanese-made palanquin, and around his city in a Japanese-made howdah, made in proper Mughal shapes, given that there were two, riding accompanied, as to imagine the remoter likelihood of Shah Shuja and wife riding their Japanese-style palanquins into exile, and then around Mrauk-U.

Information on Jahangirabad during the period, and especially about the foreign element there, is available in the writings of two travellers. One, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, was a close friend of Mir Jumla and a gem dealer. He left India in 1668 in worry over the succession wars, taking with him a massive diamond he had acquired and selling it to Louis XIV for 120,000 livres (Tavernier: 1925, Smithsonian Institution, 2018). This is just too early to report news of any Japanese howdahs or palanquins. Second was Niccolao Manucci, a Venetian, who lived most of his life in India, also serving Prince Dara Shukoh; he stayed in India after the murder, had wrote profoundly about the period of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, but had no close dealings with Shah Shuja and does not mention his palanquins (Manucci, 1990).

A fine painting of the Dutch premises, made in 1665 by Hendrick van Schuylenburgh, gives a precise appearance. The year after this, Shaista Khan offered the Dutch a location in Jahangirabad itself, where there was already a Portuguese presence. The VOC house opened in 1666, and Tavernier says it had a beautiful warehouse. François Bernier, the physician to Dara Shukoh, though not in Bengal, says that when he left India on the murder of his patron, the Dutch had entirely monopolised export of Bengali cloth, much of it going to Japan (Bernier, 1989, p. ???). Again, this is frustratingly just too early for the commission under discussion as he also left India on Prince Dara Shukoh.

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Six's successor Dutch head in Japan was François de Haese (or Haze). He was at once presented with another order of shields and boxes for Bengal. Those sent in 1666 had met with such success that a follow-up demand had come. The number of items is not stated, and the shields were probably as before, but this time the boxes were different. They were not or for betel, but for writing instruments. When the lacquers came late in the year, they quoted 14 taels per

shield, and 9 per box. They admitted it was a lot for the latter, but inevitably ‘since they have never made such writing cases before.’ Lacquer writing boxes were routine elite household items in Japan, but the shape would be different. De Haese expostulated at the price, as the Dutch always did, thinking the quote ‘shameless.’ The meeting ended ‘without anything having been achieved,’ and this time it really did end (Viallé & Blussé 2005, p. 320).

Without agreement, De Haese would have wait and try and reopen negotiations when he was in Kyoto. Absurdly the model for the boxes had been mislaid. De Haese found himself unable to explain what was required, so ‘this will have to wait until we are in Miyako,’ by which time the model should have turned up, which meant he might as well defer commissioning the shields too.

Next spring, 1670, as De Haese was preparing to lead the group via Osaka and Kyoto to Edo, he was told that the Governor of Nagasaki, Kôno Michisada, could not allow him to cross country with shields (Viallé & Blussé 2005, p.327). They constituted weaponry, which the Dutch were not allowed to carry outside their premises in Nagasaki. De Haese was livid as this would mean waiting for the next winter’s visit of the lacquerers when his successor would embarrassingly have to back down. This would result in more costs and a year’s delay. Then, unexpectedly, the lacquerers came back. Michisada may have been embarrassed, and the lacquerers might not have wanted De Haese arguing over their heads in Kyoto. The craftsmen announced a lower quote of 7.5 taels per shield, which was very reasonable as it was less than Volger had paid for the previous consignment. The lacquers, of course, were not debarred from carrying the shields to Kyoto, so De Haese accepted with alacrity, only stipulating that the items should be in equally fine lacquer as those made before, even though the price was lower. The writing box model had been located, so the lacquerers took it to Kyoto too, where they agreed to produce a prototype which De Haese could inspect there, and finalise the price.

De Haese passed through Kyoto, but there is no mention of meeting lacquers. This is not surprising since protocol required post-haste travel to meet the shogun and offer his present. It was on the way back that the Dutch had time for business and also sightseeing. De Haese called the lacquers to his lodging, recording that ‘none of the shields we ordered was ready,’ which is also unsurprising, given how late they had been taken to the workshops. He was also shown for inspection what he calls a ‘lacquered ink container,’ which must mean the prototype of the writing box. The lacquers said they could produce more for 6 taels each Since the betel boxes had cost 4. De Haese thought this too much, ‘and for this reason we could not reach an agreement’ (Viallé &

Blussé 2005, 337). A larger problem was the lost and then rediscovered model. Perhaps it was not a proper model, but only improvised, At any rate, it was inadequate and the resulting lacquered item ‘did not meet the requirements of Bengal.’

It seems that no special items went to Bengal that autumn. De Haese himself left, going to Batavia, and before long would follow Ransst to become head of the VOC station in Bengal.

From rather later we have an extant list of ‘goods to serve as gifts’ intended to ‘gain the affection from the rulers and lesser regents in the province on Bengal (Viallé, ???, p. 311). It is dated May 1687, and the VOC may have been thinking ahead. We do not know the date of his birth, but history tells that the governor, Shaista Khan, died the next year. Among items on the full-page is are on group that seems to be Japanese. Third on the list, after cloth and gilded leather, are ‘five pairs of ordinary [i.e. paper] painted screens, no landscapes, but with depictions of large naked women, and charming creatures, painted nonchalantly for enjoyment and not covered with modesty.’ So Happart did not need to worry about what the ‘Moors’ might think about the poses, or even nudity of figures, on the Japanese boxes. The English were the first to take eroticised nudes to the Mughals, and had given several to the Padshah Jahangir, Aurangzeb’s grandfather, in 1614, bought by the English East India Company in France, but probably painted in Venice. Thereafter similar works were offered to many Asian rulers, Muslims among them. If indeed these were Japanese, however, that would be a unique case.

## CONCLUSION TO FOLLOW

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