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Trade in Japanese Lacquer to Western Europe and the New World

C.1580–1644
As Hidaka has recently noted, the Japanese lacquer traded by the Europeans, unlike the Chinese silk and porcelain discussed in the previous Chapters, appears to have been almost all made to order and mostly after European or Indo-Portuguese shapes. Therefore the structure of this Chapter differs from that of the two previous Chapters. It relies on primary and secondary sources, which contain scattered information relating to the varied types and quantities of lacquer produced in Japan specifically for export to Western Europe and the New World via the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific sea trade routes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹

Japan was renowned throughout Asia for its high quality lacquer, considered by some technically superior than that produced in China and Korea. This was probably due to the fact that Japanese lacquer, called urushi, was decorated using a technique developed by local craftsmen known as makié (sprinkled picture),² which consisted in drawing the decorative motifs with urushi lacquer in colours that contrasted with the polished lacquered surface, and when the urushi was still wet and adhesive it was sprinkled with fine gold or silver particles, which technique was well established by the twelve century. Lacquer, however, was a material unknown in Europe before the Portuguese arrival in Asia at the turn of the fourteenth century.³ Japanese lacquer, as will be shown in the following pages, appears to have been first brought to Europe via the Portuguese trans-Atlantic trade route in the late sixteenth century. Textual evidence of the trade in lacquer by the Iberians is exceedingly rare. Treatises, dictionaries, accounts and letters written by Jesuit missionaries that lived in Japan at the time are of particular importance, as they provide some personal comments praising the beauty and high quality of the urushi lacquer produced for the domestic market and give us an insight on its manufacturing processes and uses in Japan. Moreover, they demonstrate that lacquers were highly appreciated by them and thus were sent as diplomatic gifts to the King of Spain/Portugal and the Pope with the first Japanese embassy that went to Europe in the late sixteenth century.⁴

Textual evidence of the trade by the European trading companies, the VOC and EIC, is more abundant, but still scant. Excerpts from ships registers, probate inventories, accounts and letters written by Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and English merchants, and clerics, provide information regarding the material qualities, decorative techniques and schemes, and sometimes even the purchase price, of the various types of lacquer made to order for the Christian missionaries, Iberians, VOC and EIC servants, as well as private individuals, imported into Western Europe and the New World as merchandise, private consignments or sent as gifts. Moreover, they give an idea of the commercial networks through which the imported lacquers circulated, and the way in which they were specifically used and appreciated within different societies. Visual sources, including paintings and prints, serve to illustrate the models for the European shapes and/or motifs copied by the lacquer craftsmen, as well as to compare the lacquer production for the Japanese domestic market which influenced the decorative style of the hybrid lacquers made to order for the Europeans during the Momoyama and early Edo periods.

A number of extant lacquer objects housed in monasteries and convents, as well as in public and private collections in Japan and the rest of the world, provide tangible evidence of the lacquers made to order for the European market during this period, for both religious and secular use. These lacquer objects are clearly hybrid as they combine local (or Asian) raw materials, construction methods and decorative techniques mostly with shapes of objects brought by the Europeans from Renaissance Europe. They are also combined with shapes and/or decorative styles of objects brought from settlements established earlier in Asia where local workshops produced furniture and smaller objects made to order for them use locally or to be imported into Europe, as well as with European motifs. These pieces also help us visualize the differences between the lacquers made to order for the Iberian market, for both religious and secular use, during the early period of trade in the late sixteenth century, with those made for the Dutch and English markets in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Although out of the scope of this doctoral dissertation, a brief discussion of a small number of extant pieces in lacquer of very high quality with European figures, most probably made for the Japanese domestic market rather than for export, in section 4.1.3 of this Chapter, will serve to illustrate the profound influence that the continuous presence of the Portuguese and their culture exerted on the European daily life and the arts made during the Momoyama and early Edo period for the warrior elite and wealthy merchant class.

⁶ Alice Holt, Rice to Lacquer. Lacquer for the West”, in Alice Holt and Jeffery 2003, p. 216.
⁷ Unless otherwise specified, the Japanese lacquer made for the European market will be referred to as lacquer throughout this doctoral dissertation.

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S.I.A. Porcelain and Lacquer  Trade in Japanese Lacquer
European influence on Japanese Lacquer [4.1]

Lacquer made to order for the Iberian market [4.1.1.1]

When the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier (1506–1552), accompanied by a Portuguese convert called Anjmo and two Jesuit companions, arrived at the port of Kagoshima in the southern part of Kyushu Island in August 1549, he brought with him engravings, paintings and statuettes of the Virgin Mary and Jesus for assistance in preaching and catechising. Christianity spread rapidly among the elite and commoners across the country, which at that time was in civil war (sengoku) under divided rule by local feudal warlords.6 In 1567, the Christian daimyō Omuta Sumitada (1533–1587) wrote to the Jesuit Comte de Torres (1510–1570) offering the port of Nagasaki as a centre of Portuguese trade and Christian activity.7 By 1582, the Italian Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), Visitor of the Society of Jesus to the Asian missions, concluded that there were 150,000 Christians in Japan.8 Three years later, Japan was consecrated as an exclusive area for the Jesuits of the Portuguese Padroado by the brief Ex pastoralis officio issued by Pope Gregory XIII (1572–1585). However, the Jesuit mission in Japan was struggling despite being sponsored by the Portuguese Crown. The Jesuits were isolated from Europe and the Portuguese settlements in Macao, Malacca and Goa, and thus required a regular supply of a variety of religious objects for their devotional practices and evangelical work.9

From an unfinished manuscript by the Portuguese Jesuit João Rodrigues (1561–1633), entitled História da Índia do Japão, we learn that he was captivated by the exotic nature, beauty and intrinsic qualities of lacquer objects, especially its hardness and lustre. The detailed description of the lacquer manufacturing process by João Rodrigues, who was procurador of Nagasaki from 1538 to 1610, reveals that he considered it to be an artistic activity that had something in common with the art of painting. It reads: ‘Throughout the whole kingdom they practise an art which has something in common with painting; this is the art of varnishing, which we call over here urushar from the wood urushi, the varnish made from the gum of a certain tree. They tap the trunk of this tree at a certain time of the year a draw off an excellent gum, that water, however hot it may be, falling on these dishes and bowls does not do any damage, just as if the bowls were made of glazed earthenware. They also varnish the scabbards of katana and daggers, the handles of fans and the sheaths of their blades, and a multitude of other things, and for this reason it is the most universal art of the kingdom because it is used practically in everything. It has a certain affinity to the art of painting because among these craftsmen there are some who give in a special way the finest examples of this kind in the whole world. Using pure gold powder they paint various objects in which they set flowers made of gold and silver leaf and mother-of-pearl. There is nothing more splendid than such things, but they are so costly that only lords and wealthy people can afford them. There is, it is true, a cheaper kind of this work which more or less looks the same, but it is vastly different as regards workmanship, gloss and price; the gentility of the kingdom make much use of this second type. Some escritoires and dishes of this kind were taken to Europe, but they were very inferior to the best sort of this second kind. There are also fakes, which can easily deceive someone who does not know much about it. Although the Chinese have a large variety of gilded things and use a great deal of varnish, they highly admire and value the gilt and varnish work of Japan, for however skilled they may be they cannot equal the Japanese in this art. The tree from which this varnish is taken bears a fruit that the Japanese call a kind of wax and there is great abundance of this in the kingdom.10 Father João Rodrigues was also captivated by the skills of craftsmen who made the wooden objects that were subsequently covered with lacquer, as he states ‘they are such masters of their art, in all kinds of woodcraft, joining, adjusting, and joining wood or boards in such a way that in the manufacture of a chest, or box that it seems to have been crafted without joints, as though it was made from a single block of wood or board’.11 It is clear from these excerpts that the close relations between the daimyō and Father João Rodrigues, the Jesuits, who had an excellent comprehension of the Japanese language and culture and served as trade representative of the shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi and later of the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) until he left Japan in 1610,12 gave him the opportunity to view not only the finest quality of lacquer, but also of the wooden objects produced at the time. The earliest extant lacquer objects displaying European influence, as Kawamura has noted, appear to have been made in order to create the early Momoyama period (1573–1615) for Jesuit missionaries residing in Japan to be used for Christian devotional practices and evangelical work, rather than for export to Western Europe.13

11. By the beginning of the seventeenth century there were about 300,000 Christian converts. For this reason, see Kunio Matsuzawa, Kirishitan Kōzōshi no Rinza, Tokyo, 1988, p. 102. An estimate of 100,000 Christians, however, has been given in Bremm, 1997, p. 133.
12. For the demand for religious objects, it is clearly stated in a letter written in 1589 by the Jesuit Luis Fuentes, when he mentions that local Christians immediately set to building churches, altars and other kinds of things to keep at home. Copies of the paintings in the三菱的 Compañía de Jesús, que andar en los Reynos de Japón en su oración, están hechas en esta manera. En otros delos que anteceden, de las de la Compañía de Jesu, que está en los Reynos de Japn escritos en el año de 1549, hasta el de 1571, A: Fray Antonio de la Compañía de Jesus, que andan en los Reynos de Japón, que andan en los Reynos de Japón: Encomendado a oura, 17.000, 160, 162, 164, 166, 168, 170, 172, 174.
13. For more information on the Jesuit missionary strategies and the demand for religious objects in Japan, see Kiichi Matsuda, Kirishitan Shihitsu to Enkōshi (Tokyo, 2013, p. 40).
14. For a brief account on Francis Xavier’s arrival and missionary work in Japan, see Boxer, 1991, p. 255.
15. For more information on the Jesuit missionary strategies and the demand for religious objects in Japan, see Kiichi Matsuda, Kirishitan Shihitsu to Enkōshi (Tokyo, 2013, p. 40).
Nobunaga was named shogun in 1582, and the shogunate moved to Kamakura.

In the Momoyama period, seasonal flowers and plants became the focus of artistic expression. This period is characterized by the rise of ukiyo-e prints, which depicted everyday life and nature in great detail. The use of naturalistic paints, such as lacquer, became prevalent in this period, and the use of gold and silver inlay was common in artistic works.

Lacquer craftsmen working in and around Miyako (present-day Kyoto), the imperial capital of Japan until 1615, made a variety of liturgical objects for the Jesuits in this durable material, which were intended for use in personal devotion and Jesuit churches in Japan, and most probably also for use in their missions in Asia, Europe, and the New World. A few descriptions of the interiors of Jesuit churches in Japan found thus far in textual sources indicate that they had a high altar and religious images (sculptures and paintings), altarpieces and all the necessary liturgical objects. By 1583, the year the Italian Jesuit Giovanni Nicolai or Nicolao (c.1558–1626) arrived in Nagasaki, the Jesuit evangelical work had included the foundation of educational institutions, including a noviciate in Unoi, two Seminars in Atama and St. Paul's College in Fusan.

In order to fully understand the extent of the influence exerted by the missionaries on the liturgical objects made to order for them by the lacquer craftsmen, it is imperative to consider not only the physical and aesthetic qualities of the extant pieces that display an evident European influence, but also the decorative style and manufacturing techniques of the lacquer that was made at workshops in Miyako for the Japanese domestic market at the time. Initially, all the liturgical objects made for the Jesuits were decorated in a new style developed by the local lacquer craftsmen, most probably to speed up the production process and to reduce the cost, which consisted in reducing or omitting the textile layers on the base or edges, and the use of relatively simple lacquer techniques. The exterior black lacquer ground of each object was decorated in makie (gold and/or silver powder) and with rather thick fragments of dense naturalistic compositions of Japanese flowering and fruiting plants, exotic birds, both real and mythical animals, and insects, all within a variety of geometric borders. These liturgical lacquers belong to a group of artistic objects and paintings made to order in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, known as Namban art or Namban-bijutsu.

In the Momoyama period, seasonal flowers and plants became the focus of painting compositions, reflecting the Japanese people's keen attentiveness to seasonal aspects of life. The climate of Japan, with its marked differences in temperature and rainfall, is conducive to the growth of a wide variety of plants and flowers throughout the year. The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter each have their own unique characteristics, and this is reflected in the art of the time. The use of naturalistic paints, such as lacquer, became prevalent in this period, and the use of gold and silver inlay was common in artistic works.

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splendor of the screens that adorned the interiors of some of the newly built castles, but also received some as gifts. In 1581, Oda Nobunaga received Father Alessandro Lante (Lantin), a Jesuit missionary, for them were decorated with images of nature similar to those depicted in some of the screens and sliding doors made by Kanō Eitoku and other artists of the Kanō school, or if the lacquer craftsmen incorporated them into their artistic vocabulary to emulate their painting style that had become popular among the feudal warlords. The compositions of such paintings are somewhat crowded, but those seen on the Namban liturgical lacquers are very dense and usually cover the entire surface of the object, a barrier raisa that is contrary to traditional Japanese aesthetics, and most probably the result of multiple influences from Chinese, Indian and Islamic art.26

The use of makie and ornamental inlays in Japanese lacquer can be traced back at least to the late tenth century,27 but it was in the fifteenth century that the Kōmō family of Mikawa, under patronage of the Ashikaga shōguns and the court of the shōgun (emperor), developed a sumptuous type of lacquer with inlays of metal foil and mother-of-pearl on a plain black lacquer ground.28 An enriched inscription with the name Kōmō and a date corresponding to the year 1596, appears on a lacquered door of Hidetsugu’s shrine at Kōdaiji in Kyoto, created by his widow as a mausoleum for her husband and herself.29 The interior of the building known as Spirit House (Misumaya), lavishly decorated in gold and silver on black lacquer, was allegedly decorated with gold and so neat and well fashioned that they seem to reach the acme of horror vacui.30

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Kōmō and other lacquer workshops in Mikawa were producing large quantities of lacquer with a simpler, less time-consuming technique, known as seiheibako, decorating large-scale flowers and autumn grasses executed in flat applications of metallic dust (makie) on a plain black lacquer background, and with details incised by needle drawing (sasumi).31 Kōmō makie decoration was applied on architectural interiors, personal objects, as well as on arms and armour, made for the domestic market. The naturalistic sceneries of the lacquered lacquer made in the late Edo period, as will be shown later, began to change and were made in the so-called Transition style, which imitated the Kōmō makie style in both manufacturing techniques and colour palette.

It is generally accepted that liturgical lacquers were first made in about 1580. According to a letter written in 1577 by Father Luis Fróis, however, Christian funerary objects were already being made by their lacquered wood, including a cofin and a cross.32 Their production must have ended sometime after 1614, when Tokugawa Ieyasu issued an edict that officially banned Christianity.33 Tokugawa shogunate’s fierce determination to destroy Christianity led to the persecution of missionaries and Japanese converts, the confiscation and destruction of religious symbols and the demolition or transformation of churches. A few extant liturgical lacquers, decorated in the so-called Transition style, demonstrate that despite the severity of this persecution, the Jesuits and missionaries of other religious orders (Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans) present in Japan at the time continued to order liturgical lacquers in the early Edo period up to about 1639, when the country was closed to all Europeans (sakoku) with the exception of the Dutch, who were allowed to stay because they did not proselytize the Christian faith.34

The first and Christian order, issued in 1587 by the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1615), was not strictly enforced. By 1615, Hideyoshi proclaimed a more severe edict and removed the use of the Namban Japanese Christians and Franciscan missionaries from Japan. For Spanish, see Murase and Canepa, 2009, pp. 1–10. For information on the Nagasaki mission, see Van der Kooij, 2001.


44. For this opinion, see Hutt, 2004, p. 237. For further information, see Cooper, 1995, pp. 134–135.

45. The first anti-Christian edict, issued in 1567 by the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1615), was not strictly enforced. By 1615, Hideyoshi proclaimed a more severe edict and removed the use of the Namban Japanese Christians and Franciscan missionaries from Japan. For Spanish, see Murase and Canepa, 2009, pp. 1–10. For information on the Nagasaki mission, see Van der Kooij, 2001.

46. The Kakure Kirishitan of Japan: A Study of Their History and Culture (Richmond, 1998).

47. The Dutch presence in Japan and their trade in lacquer will be discussed in section 4.1.2 of this chapter.
Eighteenth-century silver pyx chased on the lid ‘IHS’
Sixteenth century, 1500–1525
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
(acc. No. M.5-1936)
Height: 2.6cm; diameter 7.6cm

A few extant pyxes or Host boxes (seiheibako) of tall, cylindrical shape with a tight-fitting flat lid that is about one third of the total height bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram are found in Japan and Europe (Fig. 4.1.1.1.4). Although small cylindrical lacquer boxes were used in Japanese temples to store incense (cobaco), it is likely that the pyxes discussed here were made to order after European silver and gold models intended to contain the consecrated Hosts used in the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist during the Catholic Mass.

A few extant pyxes are mostly decorated in the Kano style with dense designs of flowering plants, and more rarely with geometric designs. A pyx in the Kanagawa Tōket-ji Temple in Kamakura is decorated on its sides with twisting grape vines, perhaps evoking autumn, or more probably symbolizing the Eucharist. If so, this would be an example of lacquers ordered with motifs that had a profound religious meaning.

A pyx in the three Crucifixion nails piercing the Sacred Heart) within a radiant sunburst, inlaid with dense designs of flowering plants, and more rarely with geometric designs.

The transcription of the original text in Portuguese was done on a letter to the Emperor of China dated 1599, published in Rome in 1584 (Fig. 4.1.1.1.3).

A pyx in the Kanagawa Tōket-ji Temple in Kamakura is decorated on its sides with twisting grape vines, perhaps evoking autumn, or more probably symbolizing the Eucharist.
symbolic meaning in the Catholic liturgy. This latter pax is the only known example kept securely in Japan during the period of persecution. An additional example, formerly housed at Chiddingstone Castle in Kent, suggests that paxes (or at least some of them) originally had an inner tray made of black lacquered wood. The presence of lacquered paxes in Goa in the early seventeenth century is documented by the ‘host box made to order for some of the Holy Oils rather than the Holy Host.

The ‘IHS’ monogram within an oval medallion, sometimes combined with Japanese motifs, such as the ‘godai-syosha’, was often incorporated into the decorative repertoire of lacquer, functioning simply as part of the design. In the late sixteenth century, however, the use of such monograms was no longer considered proper for sacred objects. For this reason, see the ‘IHS’ monogram on the back of a Buddhist altar screen exhibited in the Tokyo National Museum. A ‘host box’ bearing the initials ‘Avé Maria’ was made to hold a relic with an Eastern devotional object in the Church of S. Roque in Lisbon. Printed in the catalogue Patrimonio Nacional (00613189), Length: 49.5cm; width: 29cm. Published in Europália 91 Portugal, 1991, p. 116. The combination of initials related to Christianity and a Japanese family name also occurs on the lacquer masterpiece of a multi-tiered monk (gusei) dating to the late sixteenth/seventeenth century, which now has been re-dedicated as a monogram of the Meiji family sometime before 1928, when the late Empress Teimei abandoned the Christian faith. For a discussion on the ‘IHS’ monogram within a radiant halo, or reserved on a floral or geometric scroll, see Vinhais and Welsh, Namban (2008/1, pp. 254–261, figs. 5 and 7).

Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer were most likely ordered by the Namban boxes of oval form bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram on the lid and related floral decoration have been made to order for the Jesuits to hold the Holy Ola rather than the Holy Host.

Folding lecterns or mizun (stools) were most likely ordered by the Jesuits for use in the altars of churches in Japan to hold the Holy Bible or texts used during the Catholic Mass. The front panel was usually decorated with a large circular medallion enclosing the ‘IHS’ monogram, sometimes including leafy stems growing from the letter ‘H’ and the Sacred Heart as seen in some paxes. The shape and proportions (ranging from 36 to about 69.5cm in height) were closely related to the doors closed by a latch and pediments of triangular, scalloped or arched shape bearing images and information on the Church of Santiago el Real in Medina del Campo, in Valladolid, Spain. During the Momoyama period, however, the shape and expression of these objects was not restricted to the design of the doors, but also to those of the body of the object.

Another example, formerly found in the Casa Colombo-Museu do Porto Santo in Madeira, Island, was made after fifteenth or sixteenth century European portable triptychs, the ‘IHS’ monogram within a radiant halo, or reserved on a floral or geometric scroll, was not immediately recognizable by the Tokugawa Jesuits. For a discussion on the ‘IHS’ monogram with an Indian seventeenth century carved wooden example in the Church of S. Roque in Lisbon. Printed in the catalogue Patrimonio Nacional (00613189), Length: 49.5cm; width: 29cm. Published in Europália 91 Portugal, 1991, p. 116. The combination of initials related to Christianity and a Japanese family name also occurs on the lacquer masterpiece of a multi-tiered monk (gusei) dating to the late sixteenth/seventeenth century, which now has been re-dedicated as a monogram of the Meiji family sometime before 1928, when the late Empress Teimei abandoned the Christian faith. For a discussion on the ‘IHS’ monogram within a radiant halo, or reserved on a floral or geometric scroll, see Vinhais and Welsh, Namban (2008/1, pp. 254–261, figs. 5 and 7).

The earliest textual evidence of a lectern made in Miyako being sent to Japan dates to 1620. As noted above, the Jesuits were not only sending lacquer objects made for the Holy Ola but were also including them in their collections. The earliest example in the Colégio da Companhia de Jesus in Coimbra, which is described in makie with the ‘IHS’ monogram and the Marian monogram (Avé Maria),0 replacing the heart and crucifixion nails of the Passion, within a floral scroll.2 Oratories (orien) of rectangular form paired with a hinged half-width doors closed by a latch and pediments of triangular, scalloped or arched shape bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram within a radiant halo, or reserved on a floral or geometric ground, were made after fifteenth or sixteenth century European portable triptychs, in which they were influenced by Byzantine icons (Fig. 4.1.1.10a). Their shape and proportions (ranging from 37 to about 69.5cm in height) were closely related to the Indo-Portuguese oratories made in carved wood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their doors were usually decorated with dense naturalistic compositions of flowering trees, animals, birds and insects. As seen in some examples, bird motifs occasionally included peacocks (Fig. 4.1.1.11b), one of the exotic birds brought to Japan by the Portuguese. The so-called ‘daimyō lacquer’ was most likely made to be appreciated by the daimyō and shogun.3 The depiction of the peacocks relates closely to that shown on a six-panel folding screen, one of a pair, painted by Kanō Eitoku’s younger brother, Kano Shōei (1551–1601), in the Osakuma Museum of Art.4 Oratories bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram were also decorated with naturalistic compositions within lobed cartouches on a black lacquer ground (Fig. 4.1.1.11c).

The oratories were ordered by the Jesuits to frame and protect a sacred oil painting, mostly representing the Madonna and Child, the Crucifixion, saints and apostles, printed on wood or copper by semi-official or private workshops in Kyoto. For the Mexican Mission, however, the use of such images was strictly prohibited by the Pope.5

In the 1620s, lacquer lecterns were also found in Goa as mentioned above by the Augustinian Pedro dos Santos mentioned above.6 Oratees bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram were also decorated with naturalistic compositions within lobed cartouches on a black lacquer ground (Fig. 4.1.1.11c).

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Fig. 4.1.1.8 Namban lectern (shokendai)
Momoyama period (1573–1615)
Late sixteenth/early seventeenth century
Length: 35.5 cm; width: 31.5 cm
Church of Santiago el Real, Medina del Campo

Fig. 4.1.1.9 Lacquered and gilded wood lectern
Goa or Southeast Asia
Sixteenth/seventeenth century
Length: 47 cm; width: 27 cm
Mário Roque Collection
Fig. 4.1.1.10a. Namban oratory (seigan)
Momoyama period (1573–1615)
Late sixteenth century
Height: 69.5cm; width: 44cm; depth: 9cm
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Opposite page
Fig. 4.1.1.10b. Namban oratory (seigan) (detail)
Fig. 6.1.1.1. Namban oratory (unique)
Momoyama period (1573–1615)
Late sixteenth/seventeenth century
Height: 65.1 cm; width: 37.8 cm; depth: 7.8 cm
Museu do Oriente, Lisbon (inv. no. FO/0637)

Fig. 4.1.1.1.2 Six-panel folding screen, one of a pair (detail right-hand side screen)
Kanō Naizen (1570–1616)
Momoyama period (1573–1615)
Height: 154.5 cm; width: 363.2 cm (each screen)
Kobe City Museum, Kobe
lecterns and oval boxes made to order bearing no Christian iconography are more rare.

The interior of the doors of two of these oratories, now housed in the Kyoto National Museum and the Tsiukumi City Collection, are decorated with a design of twining grape vines, as noted earlier probably symbolizing the Eucharist, which relates closely to that seen in the pyx bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram in the Kanazawa Takan-ji Temple discussed above. At this point it is important to mention that the oratory in the Kyoto National Museum, and that in the Tsiukumi City Collection, are believed to have originally been shipped to New Spain and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, respectively, via Manila. A few of these oratories of shallow triangular shape surmounted by a low, arched pediment bearing no Christian iconography were made in the early Edo period, probably in 1630–1635, with a distinctive flat gold and silver hiramakie style.

A Momoyama example, dating to c.1580–1620, is known with a slightly convex horizontal panel, instead of a pediment (Fig. 4.1.1.1.14). The overhanging pediment and a base with a drawer. Two of them have arrived to Europe via the Spanish trade route to the New World. These objects included writing boxes that combined a traditional Japanese shape and decorative lacquer techniques with the ‘IHS’ monogram. An example of low, square shape with a flat lid in the Namban Bankun in Osaka, dating to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, is finely decorated in gold and silver nashiji, hiramakie and takamakie. Its delicate and simple decoration is Japanese in style. Finely decorated lacquer writing boxes, or szuribako, were used in Japan to hold an inkstone, water dropper, brushes and other writing implements from as early as the twelfth century. A detailed description of such boxes and their use in Jienai textual sources. A document published in Jienai no ÀÁ, mentions that when a guest receives a letter or another business document which requires a quick reply he asks for appropriate apparatus to write with. In a place in the same room it is customary to have a beautiful box, enamelled (decorated) with gold and silver roses on very richly adorned lacquer and it contained all the instruments necessary for writing ... the box was divided into five partitions inside; in the central, larger one is the inkwell, in the other compartments there is a small gilt copper disk with water to fill the inkwell, there are quills to write with and ink and a small knife for cutting, rather than scissors, often eaten by the Japanese in the Edo period.

shogunate. Four extant oratories of this type have been recorded thus far. Two of them bear a Christian cross with fish-like arms,* and the other two bear a single or a pair of confronted dogs, which symbolizer the Holy Spirit (Fig. 4.1.1.1.13). In addition there are a few oratories, lecterns and oval boxes most probably intended to hold the Holy Host or Holy Oils, which bear no Christian iconography at all. It seems reasonable to believe that the Jesuits ordered some of these liturgical lacquers after the anti-Christian edict of 1597, which caused the execution of missionaries for preaching Christianity.

Examples of such oratories are known with triangular, arched or scalloped pediments, mostly decorated in Namban style. A few other Momoyama oratories, dating to c.1590–1620, are known with a slightly convex horizontal panel, instead of a pediment (Fig. 4.1.1.1.14). The overhanging pediment and a base with a drawer. Two of them have arrived to Europe via the Spanish trade route to the New World. These objects included writing boxes that combined a traditional Japanese shape and decorative lacquer techniques with the ‘IHS’ monogram. An example of low, square shape with a flat lid in the Namban Bankun in Osaka, dating to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, is finely decorated in gold and silver nashiji, hiramakie and takamakie. Its delicate and simple decoration is Japanese in style. Finely decorated lacquer writing boxes, or szuribako, were used in Japan to hold an inkstone, water dropper, brushes and other writing implements from as early as the twelfth century. A detailed description of such boxes and their use in Jienai textual sources. A document published in Jienai no ÀÁ, mentions that when a guest receives a letter or another business document which requires a quick reply he asks for appropriate apparatus to write with. In a place in the same room it is customary to have a beautiful box, enamelled (decorated) with gold and silver roses on very richly adorned lacquer and it contained all the instruments necessary for writing ... the box was divided into five partitions inside; in the central, larger one is the inkwell, in the other compartments there is a small gilt copper disk with water to fill the inkwell, there are quills to write with and ink and a small knife for cutting, rather than scissors, often eaten by the Japanese in the Edo period.

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Fig. 4.1.1.15. Namban lectern (shokendai)
Momoyama period (1573–1615)
Early seventeenth century
Height: 37 cm
Private collection, Japan

Fig. 4.1.1.16. Namban lectern (shokendai)
Early Edo period (1615–1868)
Early seventeenth century
Height: 42.5 cm, width: 26 cm
Casa Colombo-Museu do Porto Santo, Ilha Porto Santo
resemble closely those depicted in a six-panel folding screen painted by Kanō Reon, which includes mythical animals, such as Chinese Buddhist Lions with curling manes, which are identified. An inventory taken in 1628 of the belongings of Viceroy Don Francisco da Gama in Goa, listing ‘small boxes from Japan’ and ‘circular boxes from Japan’, indicates that such small circular boxes were also made to order for Portuguese individuals, which were intended for secular use.*

The involvement of the Jesuits in the cultural and artistic exchanges that first occurred between Japan and Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century is undeniable. The Jesuits, who were well aware of the high quality and artistic value of Japanese lacquer objects, referring to them as ‘ínimes do japão’, were responsible for both introducing Japanese lacquer and spreading a taste for it among the royalty, clergy and nobility in Renaissance Europe. From the instructions given by Father Luís Fróis to the Portuguese ambassador, we learn that lacquer objects were not only sent by the Jesuits as diplomatic gifts to the Kings of Spain, Portugal and the Pope in Rome, but also to other individuals. He wrote: ‘Amongst the things that they are taking, are those items that are being sent from Rome to the Pope, which should not be tampered with in any way. Father Gabriel Afonso processus, will seek information as to whether it is convenient to take some items from Japan on behalf of the boys to offer to His Majesty and to the Cardinal, and will also … see what would be convenient to give to the others who will help in this matter, keeping in mind the occasion when they will be offered, so that everyone is given something’. *

In November 1584, Philip II received the gifts offered by the four young Japanese envoys representing the Christian clans of Kyushu, who had travelled to Europe via Macao, Malacca and India. Father Luís Fróis told the Tratado dos Embaixadores diplomáticos que fora a Roma no anno de 1582 describes the gifts as ‘pieces from Japan, one desk made of cane with its drawings, beautifully arranged, one vase for washing hands made of wood very well gilded with gold ground, which is put underneath the varnish; one delicate basket which contained many items, and His Majesty was astonished to see so many pieces of wood placed in such a small space, not to mention the quality of the work that was very well lacquered. The basket was the most talked about thing, and it was shown to all the Dukes and Grandees present, all of whom praised their invention, painting and artifice; and one long rectangular box for letters from Japan, well worked and gilded. His Majesty was very much interested; Father Luís Fróis, looking again upon his Tratado dos Embaixadores diplomáticos que fora a Roma, suggested by Oliver Impey in 2003. See Oliver Impey, ‘Introduction’, in Vinhais and Welsh, 2003, pp. 14 and 37. Oliver Impey in 2003. See Oliver Impey, ‘Introduction’, in Vinhais and Welsh, 2003, pp. 14 and 37. Oliver Impey in 2003. See Oliver Impey, ‘Introduction’, in Vinhais and Welsh, 2003, pp. 14 and 37.

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and is decorated with flowers and roses of thin sheets of silver, and gold, that are inlaid in that urushi. The lacquer ‘desk made of cane with its drawers’ given to Philip II, however, was probably made in the Ryukyû Islands, or in Southeast Asia. As Impey and Jorg have remarked, Philip II’s comments suggest that he was not familiar with Japanese lacquer, but he knew well Chinese lacquer. The instructions given by Father Alessandro Valignano to Father Nuno Rodrigues in 1585 indicate that folding screens were also brought to Europe by the Embassy, and that specific measures were taken to avoid damage of the valuable lacquer objects during their transportation in the long sea journey to Europe. The folding screens most probably included the pair given by Oda Nobunaga to Father Alessandro Valignano when he visited Azuchi Castle. According to Cabatias Moreno, two pairs of folding screens were taken for Philip II, and another two for Pope Gregory XIII. The folding screens, for instance, were packed in wooden boxes: ‘if possible, the folding screens should be taken inside the big box that I bought in Cochín for this purpose, because it seems that under the desk or in the hold, we have bought space for this purpose and they should be stored in a place where the rain does not enter or where they can get wet by water’. Father Alessandro Valignano instructed that the boxes and other objects that are taken to Portugal should be well marked with our emblem so that they can be recognised in Portugal. Some of the small lacquer pieces, as mentioned in the excerpts from Father Luis Frois, were packed in baskets. Recent research by Kawamura indicates that the posthumous inventory taken between 1596 and 1597 of Philip II’s possessions prior to his dispersed lien 21 pieces of lacquer that were decorated in the Namban style. These pieces, described as being decorated with black lacquer and gold depicting scenes with grasses, birds, and animals, consisted of two ‘round boxes of tray with lid’, another similar round box, one ‘round box as wafar box’, thirteen large trays, three other trays, and a table. There are also listed two lacquer cabinets of square shape in black with ‘two doors like a shrine’ lacquered in red, gold, and white, which may have been among the gifts sent by the sengoku Tottori Toshihisa to the Viceroy of India with Father Alessandro Valignano in 1591, and subsequently sent to Philip II in 1594.

Documentary and material evidence indicates that liturgical lacquers with or without Christian iconography were also made to order for other religious orders present in Japan at the time, or even for private individuals. It is known that until 1624, a small trade was conducted between the Japanese and Spanish merchants, who were based in the Philippines. A few Spanish ships, while sailing from Manila to Spain, entered Japanese ports. In 1592, dejected by the first anti-Christian edict of 1587, several Spanish Franciscans were sent from Manila to Japan as ambassadors. The Franciscans were allowed to stay as missionaries and began to build churches and hospitals in Miyako and Osaka. Their arrival meant the end of the evangelization in Japan by friars from these Mendicant Orders in Japan. They appear depicted, alongside other objects described as lacquered or ‘laqueados’ of the Namban style, on a folding screen (Fig. 4.1.1.1.18). The transcription of the original text in Portuguese reads: ‘... e as caixas e mais cousas q leva pera a possão sover [chover] ne sere molhados de agoa’.

Chapter 5

According to the transcription of Father Frois in Father Luis Frois, Arquivo Público de las Indias in Valladolid recommended that members of religious Orders from the Philippines should be allowed to go to preach in Japan via Manila, but in Japanese ships rather than Spanish ships. The Augustinians built the Church of the Holy Spirit in Nagasaki, and soon after more churches. In 1636, the Dominican friars from the Philippines organised a missionary expedition to Japan, but were arrested and condemned to death by the tribunal of Nagasaki. Visual sources attest to the presence of these friars from these Mendicant Orders in Japan. They appear depicted, alongside Jesuits, in a number of Namban folding screens (Fig. 4.1.1.1.18).

Only a few extant examples of liturgical lacquers made to order for the Mendicant Orders who were present in Japan, or believed to be associated with such Orders, have been recorded thus far. These pieces are all found in Spain. An apparently unique lectern decorated in the Namban style with mother-of-pearl inlays, dating to 1580–1614, now in the Dominican convent of San Esteban in Salamanca, was undoubtedly made for the Dominican friars in the Philippines. The lectern was given to the friars by the Dominican provincial in Manila, and includes scenes of the Assumption, the Coronation of the Virgin, the Transfiguration, and the Presentation in the Temple. It is likely that this lectern was made to order at the end of the Momoyama period, or sometime after the 1614 edict officially banning

El arte en las cortes de Carlos V y Felipe II

I am greatly indebted to Father Lázaro Sastre for his kind assistance in the present work, as well as to the librarians, curators, and staff of the institutions and museums who have provided access to the relevant material. In particular, I would like to thank the following:

Kawamura, 2013, pp. 15–16. The transcription of the original text in Portuguese reads: ‘... e as caixas e mais cousas q leva pera a possão sover [chover] ne sere molhados de agoa’.

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The shipwreck of San Felipe the Spanish galleon off the coast of Japan in 1596 was decisive in Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s policy against the Christian faith. The transcription of the original text in Portuguese reads: ‘... e as caixas e mais cousas q leva pera a possão sover [chover] ne sere molhados de agoa’.

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Christianity. According to Casado Paramio, the lectern may have been taken or sent as a gift to this convent of Augustinian nuns by one of the chaplains from the Philippine Augustinian Order. There is also a small oratory that instead of a sacred painting has a Sicilian silver crucifix inlaid with coral attached to the back panel in the Monasterio de las Trinitarias Descalzas in Madrid, which was most likely given to the monastery by the benefactress María de Villena y Melo, or by a family member of Juana Manuel de Portugal.

Six liturgical lacquers made to order in the Namban style during the Momoyama and early Edo periods are of particular interest to this study. All appear to be unique examples of their types. These include a small hanging oratory of shallow almost square shape, dating to the late sixteenth century, now in a private collection in Oporto, which has an opening at the top for inserting a religious oil painting and a sliding panel that opens to the right. A hexagonal domed tabernacle in the Peabody Essex Museum, constructed with a panelled base and six angled plinths on which stand pairs of pillars, all supporting a hexagonal dome surmounted by a tall finial, appears to have been made after an Indo-Portuguese model (Fig. 4.1.1.1.21). The shape of this type of tabernacle, dating to c.1580–1615, may have in turn derived from that of silver tabernacles of large size made by Iberian silversmiths in the early sixteenth century, which served to hold the monstrance containing the Holy Host carried in procession on Corpus Christi day.

A comparable example similarly made in the manner of a hexagonal temple by Juan de Orna in Burgos in 1526, called a custodia in Spanish, can be found in Santo Domingo de Silos in Barcelona. This suggests that the lacquer tabernacle could have been intended to hold a monstrance containing the Holy Host, or perhaps a sacred statuette. A standing shrine or retable of deep rectangular form with a tall triangular pediment in a private collection in Japan has an unusual metal suspension ring at the top meant for hanging the oratory and securing the painting.

Fig. 4.1.1.19 Namban lectern (shokendai) Momoyama period (1573–1615) Height: 35cm; width: 31cm Museo San Esteban PP Dominicos, Salamanca

Fig. 4.1.1.20 Namban lectern (shokendai) Momoyama period (1573–1615) Dimensions: 31.5cm x 50cm Convent of Santa María Magdalena, Medina del Campo, Valladolid

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Fig. 4.1.1.20 Namban lectern (shokendai) Momoyama period (1573–1615) Dimensions: 31.5cm x 50cm Convent of Santa María Magdalena, Medina del Campo, Valladolid

Christianity. According to Casado Paramio, the lectern may have been taken or sent as a gift to this convent of Augustinian nuns by one of the chaplains from the Philippine Augustinian Order. There is also a small oratory that instead of a sacred painting has a Sicilian silver crucifix inlaid with coral attached to the back panel in the Monasterio de las Trinitarias Descalzas in Madrid, which was most likely given to the monastery by the benefactress María de Villena y Melo, or by a family member of Juana Manuel de Portugal.

Six liturgical lacquers made to order in the Namban style during the Momoyama and early Edo periods are of particular interest to this study. All appear to be unique examples of their types. These include a small hanging oratory of shallow almost square shape, dating to the late sixteenth century, now in a private collection in Oporto, which has an opening at the top for inserting a religious oil painting and a sliding panel that opens to the right. A hexagonal domed tabernacle in the Peabody Essex Museum, constructed with a panelled base and six angled plinths on which stand pairs of pillars, all supporting a hexagonal dome surmounted by a tall finial, appears to have been made after an Indo-Portuguese model (Fig. 4.1.1.1.21). The shape of this type of tabernacle, dating to c.1580–1615, may have in turn derived from that of silver tabernacles of large size made by Iberian silversmiths in the early sixteenth century, which served to hold the monstrance containing the Holy Host carried in procession on Corpus Christi day. A comparable example similarly made in the manner of a hexagonal temple by Juan de Orna in Burgos in 1526, called a custodia in Spanish, can be found in Santo Domingo de Silos in Barcelona. This suggests that the lacquer tabernacle could have been intended to hold a monstrance containing the Holy Host, or perhaps a sacred statuette. A standing shrine or retable of deep rectangular form with a tall triangular pediment in a private collection in Japan has an unusual metal suspension ring at the top meant for hanging the oratory and securing the painting.

A comparable example similarly made in the manner of a hexagonal temple by Juan de Orna in Burgos in 1526, called a custodia in Spanish, can be found in Santo Domingo de Silos in Barcelona. This suggests that the lacquer tabernacle could have been intended to hold a monstrance containing the Holy Host, or perhaps a sacred statuette. A standing shrine or retable of deep rectangular form with a tall triangular pediment in a private collection in Japan has an unusual metal suspension ring at the top meant for hanging the oratory and securing the painting.
or painted on seventeenth century Indo-Portuguese oratories, serving as background makie Orders provides further evidence of special orders made for them. Such as example is Esteban in Salamanca, Spain (Fig. 4.1.1.1.25).

The relief carved decoration of the interior frame, frieze, base and cornices is almost dating to the seventeenth instance, an ebony and ivory Indo-Portuguese carved Indo-Portuguese decoration (Fig. 4.1.1.1.22). It is important to note that an oratory in the Real Monasterio de la Encarnación in Madrid was formerly believed to be another combination of makie and mother-of-pearl inlay in the Namban style lacquer with carved Indo-Portuguese decoration (Fig. 4.1.1.1.23). This hybrid lacquered shrine, dating to c.1600–1630, would most probably have served to hold a sacred statuette. The relief carved decoration of the interior frame, frieze, base and cornices is almost identical to that seen on a seventeenth century Indo-Portuguese oratory made in teak, lacquer and mother-of-pearl housed in the Museu de Arte e Arqueologia in Viana do Castelo, which bears the emblem of the Order of Saint Dominic on the interior of the doors (Fig. 4.1.1.1.23). It seems likely that the carved decoration was a later addition at one of the workshops working under Portuguese patronage in India. Moreover, the gold and sunbursts painted on the black lacquered back panel may also be of Indo-Portuguese influence or manufacture, as sunbursts were frequently carved or painted on seventeenth century Indo-Portuguese oratories, serving as background for a sacred statuette or crucifix.114 It is important to note that an oratory in the Real Monasterio de la Encarnación in Madrid was formerly believed to be another hybrid lacquered combining Nambon and carved Indo-Portuguese decoration (c.1620–1650), but Kawamura has recently noted that it is probably Indo-Portuguese with lacquer and mother-of-pearl decoration that could have been made in both India or the Ryukyu islands (Fig. 4.1.1.1.24).115 The fact that some unique lacquered losanges are found in convents of Mendicant Orders provides further evidence of special orders made for them. Such and example is a large crucifix decorated with makie and mother-of-pearl inlay in Namban style with an ivory figure of Jesus Christ made in Manila, which is housed in the convent of San Esteban in Salamanca, Spain (Fig. 4.1.1.1.25).116 The supposed Hispano-Philippine origin of the ivory Christ suggests that the crucifix was ordered by a Spanish priest who was at some point in Japan, who could have brought the ivory figure with him to Japan or taken the crucifix to Manila when it was added. It would then have arrived at the

115 See note 110. The crucifix appears to date the inscription making reference to the Franciscan convent of San Juan de la Penitencia (better known as Las Juanas) in the Franciscan convent of San Juan de la Penitencia (better known as Las Juanas) in the Apóstol parish church in Gáldar, Gran Canaria (Fig. 4.1.1.1.26).

114 The crucifix discussed here.

116 See note 110. The crucifix appears to date the inscription making reference to the Franciscan convent of San Juan de la Penitencia (better known as Las Juanas) in the Franciscan convent of San Juan de la Penitencia (better known as Las Juanas) in the Apóstol parish church in Gáldar, Gran Canaria (Fig. 4.1.1.1.26). It is probable that the simple temple-like shape of this Host receptacle derives from a European or Indo-Portuguese model. According to an inscription on a silver lamp, also used for the Eucharist, this Host receptacle was given to the parish by doña María de Quimanta, a benefactress who sent it with other objects made of silver from New Spain in 1626.117 This example further demonstrates that liturgical lacquers circulating via the Spanish trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic trade routes to Spain. The Nambon style crucifix and Host receptacle discussed above would have had an evident Christian association in Japan and thus were probably made prior to the 1616 edict banning Christianity.

Perhaps the most unusual liturgical lacquer recorded thus far is a Host receptacle in the Franciscan convent of San Juan de la Penitencia (better known as Las Juanas) in Alcalá de Henares in Madrid, dating to c.1580–1630, which has a hybrid form that is neither European nor Japanese (Fig. 4.1.1.1.27).118 Recent research by Kawamura has shown that it was originally a cabinet of rectangular form with a fall front door, which had later additions of a crown-like support for a cross at the top, four small cubic candlestick holders at the corners, and a protruding candleholder on one side of the base, to be adapted to serve as a Host receptacle of the Baroque style.119 The interior was originally fitted with four rows of small drawers, which were removed and its traces on the sides, top and back (the original back lacquer panel was replaced by a wood panel painted in black) were then covered with silk lining. Kawamura has

Opposite page left Fig. 4.1.1.1.22 Lacquered standing device or roble

Opposite page right Fig. 4.1.1.1.23 Indo-Portuguese oratory or shrine

Seventeenth century

Museo de Arte e Arqueologia, Viana do Castelo

Inv. no. MAAVC 1043

Right Fig. 4.1.1.1.24 Lacquered oratory or shrine

Probable Indo-Portuguese

Seventeenth century

Real Monasterio de la Encarnación, Madrid

Patrimonio Nacional (MAD0048)
noted that the fine lacquer layers of the original back panel and drawers were split and then pasted onto the new wooden additions, and that this extensive and meticulous alteration work, as well as the addition of three silver lock-plates enriched with red, blue and green semiprecious stones, may have been made in New Spain, sometime after the mid-seventeenth century. There is no documentary evidence concerning the arrival of this liturgical lacquer to the convent.

Firs of these Mendicant Orders also participated in establishing diplomatic relations between the rulers of Japan and Europe, as well as those representing the Spanish Crown in New Spain. In 1613, the Spanish Franciscan Luis Solóto (1574–1624) was appointed ambassador for another Japanese delegation, known as the Keichô Embassy, which was sent via New Spain to the royal court in Madrid and the Vatican. Hasekura Tsunemaga (1571–1621), a samurai from the fief of Sendai, was sent to Europe by his feudal warlord, Date Masamune (1567–1636), who organized the diplomatic mission. In January 1615, Philip II received the Japanese delegation in Madrid. In November of that same year, they were granted an audience with Pope Paul V in Rome. The main goals of the mission were to request Franciscan missionaries to be sent to a region of New Spain controlled by the Date clan and to finalize a treaty that would have established direct Japanese trade relations with New Spain.29 Tenennial sources attest to the presence of Japanese lacquered objects in the King’s residence in Madrid, the Alcázar, in the early decades of the seventeenth century. In a description of the new Room or Mirror Room made by the Italian antiquarian Cassiano del Pozzo in Colonial Mexico, it is desired.’26 The object described as ‘paintings from Japan that is folded’ is in all probability a folding screen, perhaps one of the two pieces brought by the first Japanese embassy to Philip II in 1582. Although such folding screens, which appear to have been imported in considerable quantities to New Spain,30 are beyond the scope of this study, they are important in demonstrating the continuous use of Japanese lacquer objects, even if only in small quantities, by the royal court of Madrid.31

To sum up, the Jesuits played a very important role in the cultural and artistic exchanges that occurred between Japan, Western Europe and the New World in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Jesuits, as textual sources have shown, were well aware of the high quality and artistic value of lacquer objects made in the Momoyama period for the domestic market, and this led them to send pieces of Japanese lacquer as gifts and thus spread a taste for it among the monarchy, clergy and nobility of Renaissance Europe in the late sixteenth century. Isolated from Europe, Macao, Malacca and Goa, and with the rapid spread of Christianity, the Jesuits of the Japan mission required a regular supply of religious objects for their devotional practices and evangelical work. This necessity, and the opportunity they had to observe the fine lacquer manufacturing techniques as well as the sumptuous lacquer paintings made by reknown artists of the Kōan School, converted into New Spain as early as 1607 and their influence in the decorative arts of New Spain, see Cabañas Moreno, 2013, pp. 279–281, fig. 13. For a discussion on the Japanese folding screens brought by the first Japanese embassy and their influence in the decorative arts of New Spain, see Cabañas Moreno, 2013, pp. 279–281, fig. 13. English version.


126 For a discussion on the Japanese folding screens brought by the first Japanese embassy and their influence in the decorative arts of New Spain, see Cabañas Moreno, 2013, pp. 279–281, fig. 13. English version.

127 For a discussion on the Japanese folding screens brought by the first Japanese embassy and their influence in the decorative arts of New Spain, see Cabañas Moreno, 2013, pp. 279–281, fig. 13. English version.


129 For information on this mission, see Javier Villalba Fernández, ‘Japón, Date Masamune y la diplomacia Keichôtó, in Kawamura, 2013, pp. 47–92 (English version).

130 For more information on this mission, see Javier Villalba Fernández, ‘Japón, Date Masamune y la diplomacia Keichôtó, in Kawamura, 2013, pp. 47–92 (English version).
techniques, which had been influenced by objects imported from China and Korea, and developed a new style of urushi lacquer for export, known as Namban, most likely to speed up the production process and to lower the cost, which consisted in reducing or totally omitting the textile layers on the base or edges, and the use of relatively simple lacquer techniques.

The Jesuit textual sources and extant lacqueric literature discussed above demonstrate that the lacquer craftsmen made a wide variety of hybrid objects for the Jesuits, which combined a European or Indo-Portuguese shape, and the ‘IHS’ monogram of the Society of Jesus or other motifs embedded with Christian symbolism, with a new urushi lacquer style depicting dense compositions of Japanese flowering or fruiting plants, birds, animals (both real and mythical) in gold and silver makie most probably based on paintings made by the Kan’s school, but with a bolder suzuri and lavish use of mother-of-pearl inlay (yukari) which were alien to Japanese aesthetics. In addition, the Jesuits ordered lacquer objects that could have been used both in religious and secular contexts, some with the ‘IHS’ monogram. These included objects such as writing boxes that combined a traditional Japanese shape and finest lacquer techniques with the ‘IHS’ monogram. Such fine and expensive liturgical lacquers would most probably have been intended for personal use or to give as gifts to powerful daimyō, who had converted to Christianity and supported their mission in Japan. It also included low, rectangular tables that were most probably used as portable altars in Japan. It seems reasonable to believe that the extant liturgical lacquers with Christian iconography that would not have been immediately recognizable by the Tokugawa shōgunate, or no Christian iconography at all, began to be made to order for the Jesuits after the anti-Christian edict of 1597, which caused the execution of missionaries and the expulsion of Jesuits from Japan. It seems reasonable to believe that the extant liturgical lacquers with Christian iconography that would not have been immediately recognizable by the Tokugawa shōgunate, or no Christian iconography at all, began to be made to order for the Jesuits after the anti-Christian edict of 1597, which caused the execution of missionaries and the expulsion of Jesuits from Japan.

The lacquer decoration of the liturgical lacquers made to order with the ‘IHS’ monogram in the early Edo period, as shown earlier, was also executed in the so-called Transition style with an even simpler, less time-consuming technique depicting large-scale flowers and autumn grasses in flat gold and silver makie on a plain black lacquer ground, and details inscribed by needle drawing (tegivari), whichimitated the Rodoku makie style introduced by the workshops of the Kōma family of Miyako for the domestic market in the late sixteenth century. The liturgical lacquer objects decorated in the hybrid Namban or the so-called Transition styles discussed above, and a considerable number of other objects that are still found today in churches, monasteries and convents in both Portugal and Spain, demonstrate that the majority of the liturgical lacquers were made for the Jesuits. This is not surprising as they were not only the first Christian missionaries to arrive in Japan, but also those who being sponsored by the Portuguese Crown were able to remain there for a longer period of time. Jesuit textile sources and these extant objects attest to the direct involvement of the Jesuits in such liturgical lacquer orders, unlike those made to order for them in Chinese porcelain. It is at the same time discussed in Chapter III, which reflect the indirect nature of orders placed through Chinese junk traders who acted as middleman between the Jesuits and porcelain potters.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century a small number of liturgical lacquers were also made to order for friars of the Agustinian and Dominican Mendicant Orders, or even for private individuals, who may never have actually served in Japan, to be sent as gifts to these religious institutions or to members of the nobility in the Iberian Peninsula and/or New Spain. Only a few extant liturgical lacquers made to order for the Mendicant Orders, or believed to be associated with such order, have been recorded thus far. These pieces are all in monasteries and convents in Spain. The most important example, providing tangible evidence of an order made for the Dominicans, is a lectern bearing the monogram of the Order of Saint Dominic decorated in makie with a date inscribed by needle drawing (tegivari) of 1617, which was inlaid entirely with pieces of mother-of-pearl or with mother-of-pearl overlaid decoration, for both the local and export markets, including Turkey and the Middle East. For instance, the objects made in Japan for the Portuguese market and two examples of Irish monks- and mother-of-pearl lacquer, see van der Veer, 2005, pp. 14–15. A further example of the Portuguese and Spanish origin of the painted and painted ornament images of the early Edo period is one that is likely Chinese in Indo-Portuguese, possibly in the coastal region of Gujarat in western India, as well as with lacquer objects from China, which had been imported in small quantities to the Portuguese Crown, since the early sixteenth century. When the Portuguese and Spanish expeditions to the Far East left Macao or Goa, some of the portable furniture they took to Japan served as models to the lacquer craftsmen, particularly those working in and around Miyako, who made new types of furniture and utilitarian objects using both local materials and decorative techniques.

The extant liturgical lacquers discussed in this study were made for export, such as those made for the Portuguese secular market, which would have been useful for private use in a laqueur's workshop or in their residences in Asia that had hot and humid climates. Some of the portable furniture they took to Japan served as models to the lacquer craftsmen, particularly those working in and around Miyako, who made new types of furniture and utilitarian objects using both local materials and decorative techniques. The extant liturgical lacquers discussed in this study were made for export, such as those made for the Portuguese secular market, which would have been useful for private use in a laqueur's workshop or in their residences in Asia that had hot and humid climates. Some of the portable furniture they took to Japan served as models to the lacquer craftsmen, particularly those working in and around Miyako, who made new types of furniture and utilitarian objects using both local materials and decorative techniques.

Lacquer for the Portuguese and Spanish markets [6.1.1.2]

It is well known that Portuguese merchants brought with them a variety of European models of portable furniture to the Far East. By the time of their arrival in Japan in 1543, the Portuguese were already familiar with the mother-of-pearl objects from the coastal region of Gujarat in western India, as well as with lacquer objects from China, which had been imported in small quantities to the Portuguese Crown, since the early sixteenth century. When the Portuguese and Spanish expeditions to the Far East left Macao or Goa, some of the portable furniture they took to Japan served as models to the lacquer craftsmen, particularly those working in and around Miyako, who made new types of furniture and utilitarian objects using both local materials and decorative techniques.
For a discussion on all types of coffers with domed lids with solid ends, see Vinhais and Welsh, 2008/1, pp. 304–331, nos. 40–45.

See, for instance, the examples published in Franz Windisch-Graetz, Möbel Europas, Renaissance – Manierismus, Munich, 1983, pp. 180 and 188, pl. 6, figs. 25–27.


Treatise in which is contained a very succinct and brief account of some of the contradictions and differences of customs between the people of Europe and this province of Japan. 1585. Cited in Ibid.


this Chapter, lacquer pieces were also being decorated in the so-called Transition style. These lacquers came to be much admired in Portugal and the rest of Europe and thus lead to an enormous number of orders for secular use. Some of these lacquers, as will be shown, were also adapted for religious use.

Although documentary evidence of specific lacquer orders made in Japan remains scarce, there are numerous extant lacquer pieces in convents and monasteries in Spain and Portugal, as well as in public and private collections around the world, which provide material evidence of the varied typologies of portable furniture and utilitarian objects ordered by the Portuguese and Spanish at the time. The shapes of the furniture, as will be shown in the following pages, were mostly based on those of pieces made to order for the Portuguese at various workshops in India, in turn copying European models from Germany, Italy and Spain, which circulated throughout Europe.

A clear example of such hybrid influences is seen in some of the Namban lacquer coffers of rectangular form with a half-cylindrical lid hinged at the back, fitted with metal carrying handles on the sides, which appear to have been among the earliest furniture made to order for the Portuguese in the Momoyama period (Figs. 4.1.1.2.1a and b).\(^{132}\) The shape copied faithfully a domed chest, one of the most important pieces of furniture in Renaissance Europe, commonly used to store clothing. Renaissance domed chests, like those made in Italy (cassone), were richly decorated with carvings and intarsia, often combined with ivory, mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell.\(^{133}\) Jesuit textual sources attest to the presence of European coffers in Japan in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. A letter written in Miyako by Father Luís Fróis to Father Belchior de Figueredo in July 1569, inform us that the powerful daimyō Oda Nobunaga had so much clothing and objects from Europe and India that ‘some twelve or fifteen trunks like those of the kingdom [Portugal], [were] full’.\(^{134}\) In a treatise written that same year, Father Luís Fróis compares European and Japanese chests, saying that ‘Our houses [are furnished] with leather trunks and Frandes [Flanders] coffers or cedar wood trunks; those from Japan having black baskets made from cow hide …’.\(^{135}\) The use of chests by the Jesuits residing in Japan is attested by the ‘seven small lacquered chests, three bought by Father Barreto himself, having the other two given to him by Father Balsasar Correia’ listed among the belongings left by Father Manuel Barreto to his successor Father Manuel Borges, in 1616.\(^{136}\)
In Japan, pasted skin of rays and sharks had been used in a variety of decorative objects (aogai) reserved on grounds of geometric designs inlaid in mother-of-pearl, of tiny particles of lacquer, or of a broad base protruding on all sides) in a variety of sizes.

146 The folding fans, as shown by Jordan Gschwend, in his Apollo: Accessories. Japanese, Indian and Sinhalese Fans (November 1999), p. 28. However, in a more recent section 4.1.2 of this Chapter.

155 According to research by Kawamura the relics were renewed impetus to the production and veneration of her son, Emperor Rudolf II, in Prague. The document is published in Jordan Gschwend, ‘Les Portugais au Japon’ in Artur Goulart and Clara de la villa de Madrid …, Madrid, 1616, p. 50.

158 For further information on this rattan case, see Maria acquired the coffer that same year in Lisbon, where she purchased a number of portable objects made for the two Portuguese churches, and they were shipped from Portugal to Japan in the 'reliquary' room, see Kawamura, 2009, pp. 92–105, no. 136.

159 The Coimbra Religious, in the Valladolid of sacred goods, in which the relics of the Holy Family were held, is a symbol of the Holy Family's desire to protect and assist her son, Emperor Ferdinand II of Portugal and the sheath of a knife, which was dedicated to the Habsburgs. Published in Paulo Valente, ‘Cofre’, in Artur Goulart and Ana García Pinto, 1990, pp. 79. Other examples with a varying number of elements of the coffer from the moment Brother Mauro Cortes). In Chapter XVIII, Carrillo states that ‘Her Majesty

164 The shape of Namban lacquer coffer was a semi-cylindrical lid that had no solid ends and a body following its curvature at each side, and a metal carrying handle on top in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century is provided by an example now housed in the Iusso Art Museum in Osaka, which still preserves its original ratten case bearing a coat of arms and an inscription representing the owner’s name: ‘DONA ANA ARZ (Alvarez) GIRON’ (Fig. 4.1.1.2.3a and b).

154 The shape of Namban lacquer coffer with a semi-cylindrical lid that has no solid ends and a body following its curvature at each side, and a metal carrying handle on top is another example of the Japanese and Portuguese to each other.

151 The coffer, known in Japan as fish sausage (kamaboko) and in Portuguese as koi (fish), may have been adapted from the Indo-Portuguese mother-of-pearl objects made for religious use in Japan, and the idea of using fish skin for religious objects had been introduced from the Portuguese Empire, which was the first European nation to adopt fishskin lacquer techniques in Japan, as seen in this example dating to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in the Gifu City Museum of History, the National Museum of Nature and Science, and the Phoenix and Herbert Irving Collectors. Published in Kyoto National Museum, 1990, p. 118, and Clara de la villa de Madrid …, Madrid, 1616, p. 50.

152 Another example in the Iusso Museum in Osaka is a large rattan case, known as ‘Cofre de hojaldría’ (tin case) (November 1999), p. 28. However, a more recent section 4.1.2 of this Chapter.

144 The text of this publication is in Jordan Gschwend, ‘Les Portugais au Japon’ in Artur Goulart and Clara de la villa de Madrid …, Madrid, 1616, p. 50.

143 For a discussion on this type of lacquer coffer see, Vinhais and Welsh, 2003, pp. 60–65, no. 8.

142 This technique comprised of cutting the top of the coffers made in Gujarat in the mid-sixteenth century. For more information on this technique see, Vinhais and Welsh, 2008/1, p. 309.

141 This technique comprised of cutting the top of the coffers made in Gujarat in the mid-sixteenth century. For more information on this technique see, Vinhais and Welsh, 2008/1, p. 309.

140 This technique comprised of cutting the top of the coffers made in Gujarat in the mid-sixteenth century. For more information on this technique see, Vinhais and Welsh, 2008/1, p. 309.

139 For an example of large size, see Fig. 4.1.1.2.14. This technique was published in Jordan Gschwend, ‘Les Portugais au Japon’ in Artur Goulart and Clara de la villa de Madrid …, Madrid, 1616, pp. 50–51, fig. 3.


137 With a large drawer in the middle for paper; two domed lacquer chests, one larger that was undoubtedly copied by the local lacquer craftsmen from the coffers or other portable objects made for other countries (Fig. 4.1.1.2.2).

136 For a discussion on this type of lacquer coffer see, Vinhais and Welsh, 2003, pp. 60–65, no. 8.

135 The folding fans, as shown by Jordan Gschwend, in his Apollo: Accessories. Japanese, Indian and Sinhalese Fans (November 1999), p. 28. However, in a more recent section 4.1.2 of this Chapter.

134 According to research by Kawamura the relics were renewed impetus to the production and veneration of her son, Emperor Rudolf II, in Prague. The document is published in Jordan Gschwend, ‘Les Portugais au Japon’ in Artur Goulart and Clara de la villa de Madrid …, Madrid, 1616, p. 50.

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as gifts the Namban lacquer casket of this shape (kamadohō) and the chest still preserved today in the Reliquary room of the Monastery of the Encarnación in Madrid to Queen Margaret of Austria (1584–1611), to thank her for the lucrative business of selling the licenses for two commercial expeditions to Japan, which had been given by Philip III to his wife in order to finance the construction of the monastery. Although there is not enough documentary evidence, textual sources suggest that the Crown supplied Japanese lacquers to the royal courts of both Lisbon and Madrid. The chest with a flat lid in the Monastery, which was financed by Queen Margaret of Austria and finished in 1616, may have been made to order as an altar and Eucharist casket. This is suggested by the lacquer decoration of its front side, consisting of scrolling grape vines probably symbolizing the Eucharist, which relates stylistically to that of the pyx in the Kanagawa Tōkei-ji Temple in Kamakura, and the two oratories now housed in the Kyoto National Museum and the Tsuchiura City Collection, mentioned earlier, as well as of a cylindrical box with a flat lid in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.

Another example of hybrid influences is the lacquer cabinet made after a European writing desk, known as escritório in Portuguese and escritorio in Spanish, which is of wide rectangular form or of small cubic form with small drawers of varying sizes concealed behind a fall front door with a lock, with a metal carrying handle on top of the lid or on the sides (Fig. 4.1.1.2.4). The cabinets of wide rectangular form appear to have been the most commonly produced, showing great differences in height, width, and door and drawer arrangement. It is not known whether the Portuguese provided the lacquer craftsmen with a European or Indo-Portuguese model, such as the example veneered with various woods and inlaid with rosy dating to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 4.1.1.2.5). Some of the cabinets, made without the fall front door, had a central drawer of architectural form like that on many examples with fall front doors, which resembled that of cabinets made in Flanders (present-day Belgium) in the sixteenth century. Cabinets with a fall front door hinged to open downwards, typically fitted with nine drawers, occupied only a small space on the table where writing was performed, or were placed on a carved stand that was specially made for it at the time it arrived at its destination. These cabinets were mostly decorated in the Namban style with dense
Fig. 4.1.2.4 Namban cabinet
Momoyama/early Edo period
Late sixteenth/seventeenth century
Height: 57cm; width: 85.5cm; depth: 44cm
British Museum, London
(museum no. 1977,0406.1)

Fig. 4.1.2.5 Fall-front cabinet
Gujarat or Sind
Late sixteenth/early seventeenth century
Height: 25cm; width: 39cm; depth: 28cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
(museum no. 569–1890)
designs of flowering and fruiting plants, animals and/or birds in mother-of-pearl inlay, sometimes within large cartouches (Fig. 4.1.1.2.6). Some of them were made with cushion-shaped lids and no drawers.171 These chests, made in both small and large size, were typically fitted with one, two or four drawers at the base of the front side.172 Others were made with cushion-shaped lids and no drawers.173 All of these portable cabinets and chests of relatively small size discussed above were most probably used by the Portuguese to hold documents, jewels and small items like circular boxes and boxes with a door hinged at the side, fitted with drawers on the interior and with a metal carrying handle, were made after Indo-Portuguese writing chests or boxes made in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.174

Birds reserved on geometric grounds (Fig. 4.1.1.2.6). For a discussion and examples of this type, see Sakai City Museum, Momoyama/early Edo period, c. 1600–1630.175 For images and a discussion on this type of cabinet, see Hino Museum, Osaka, 1983, p. 48, no. 47; and Gifu City Museum, East and West through Lacquer Craft, exhibition catalogue, Osaka, 1990, pp. 86, no. 67, and Sia Oy History Museum, 2000, p. 81, no. 47.176 For images of an eighteenth-century cabinet in Bombay, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem (inv. no. OMA 1828) (Fig. 4.1.1.2.6).

Some of them were made with cushion-shaped lids and no drawers.177 These chests, made in both small and large size, were typically fitted with one, two or four drawers at the base of the front side.178 Some of them were made with cushion-shaped lids and no drawers.179 All of these portable cabinets and chests of relatively small size discussed above were most probably used by the Portuguese to hold documents, jewels or other small objects of value. António Bocarro, writing in 1635, describes the lacquer goods taken from Japan to Goa as ‘much giltwork, which comes from Japan and which is much better than that from China; ... and many small items like circular boxes and writing cabinets of lacquer, all extremely fine.”

Spanish written sources suggest that a number of lacquer cabinets, described as escritórios and/or writing desks, were sent to Spain as gifts from male and female members of the elites and clergy living in the Philippines and New Spain in the early seventeenth century. In 1615, for example, Martin de la Cueva, regidor in Manila, sent to his sister Doña María de la Cueva in Úbeda, a consignment of 2 Japanese escritórios.180 Three years later, Don Álvaro Fajardo, Governor of the Philippines between 1618 and 1624, sent several escritórios, writing desks and beds from Japan to Seville.181 That same year, in 1618, the Count of Santiago sent from New Spain to his wife who lived in Spain, a consignment that included 2 folding screens, 2 writing desks from Japan, and 1 chest from Japan, as well as several pieces of woven and raw silks from China.182 It was also that year, that the Marchioness of Gaudalcazar, vicereine of New Spain, sent to her sister in Madrid a consignment that included an escritorio and a chest from Japan, and several little boxes.183 In 1619, the Jesuit Martín de Oriaus from New Spain sent 3 escritórios from Japan (alongside 9 pieces of satin) as a gift to Father Jacobo Tirino in Antwerp.184 The mention of beds from Japan sent as gifts in 1618 by Governor Alonso Fajardo from the Philippines to Seville is of particular interest to this study. We learn from Jesuit textual sources that folding beds were brought to Japan at least as early as 1563. In a letter written by Frater Luis Frutos at the port of Hacoa in November of that year, he states that ‘Approximately one month after we had been in this port Dom Barulosome [the recently converted Omura Sumitada] arrived to see the priest and the Portuguese. We immediately went with the captain to visit him and the Portuguese. We immediately went with the captain to visit him and the Portuguese. We immediately went with the captain to visit him and the Portuguese. We immediately went with the captain to visit him and the Portuguese. We immediately went with the captain to see him and gave him some shell-horse beads I had brought from India with a holy hand set in gold, which he greatly appreciated and placed round his neck ... Dom Pedro [Captain-General Dom Péro da Guerra] had given us a present that we took to him because for them it is a new thing, we went to his house, brother João Fernadez and myself and he thanked us very much for what we took which was a gold folding bed and a silk

171 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 211–12, nos. 25, 27. This type of cabinet was recorded in the Hikiga Naga yori Shōwa-shingi, Japan, presented in a Japanese Portuguese dictionary, dating to about 1600, with the Japanese term onjo (literally ‘from the East forest’). For a discussion and examples of these cabinets, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 183–194, nos. 19 and 26.

172 For examples of this type, see Saka City Museum, Momoyama–the Early Edo period, c. 1600–1628. Dimensions: 152 cm x 191 cm x 122 cm. Private Collection, Portugal.

173 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 183–194, nos. 27. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

174 For examples of this type, see Saka City Museum, Momoyama–the Early Edo period, c. 1600–1628. Dimensions: 152 cm x 191 cm x 122 cm. Private Collection, Portugal.

175 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

176 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

177 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

178 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

179 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

180 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

181 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

182 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

183 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.

184 For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Vitória and Madeira, 2008, pp. 203–206, no. 21. For images and a discussion on a similar design of cabinet, see Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, Saka City Museum.
mattress and a rich bedspread and a velvet pillow and other smaller ones, a fine Borneo man and another four or five good pieces that the same Dom Pedro gave him. For a discussion and images of this bed frame, now in a private collection in Portugal, is discussed in Vinhais and Welsh, 2008/1, p. 160.

Portugal.

individuals residing in the Portuguese settlements in Macao, Malacca or India, or in whether such lacquer bed frames would have been intended for the personal use of the bed head, as it occurred in the lectern bearing the ‘IHS’ emblem in the Church of

It also includes Japanese family crests or personal insignia (mons). Namban relates closely to that of pieces of makie and mother-of-pearl inlay,

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that rectangular lacquer trays with slight differences in their shape and Namban style decoration were primarily made to order as exotic gifts to be sent to Western Europe, and thus were used not only to ship goods but also to provide items for luxury consumption in the New World. As indicated above, the lacquer trays were typically made of lacquer or other materials, and were often packed in large wooden cases, such as the so-called "Japanese chests". These chests were used to transport precious goods, such as lacquer trays, to Western Europe, where they were highly prized and sought after. As such, the transportation of these objects was an important aspect of the trade between Japan and the West.
as two folding screens, two writing desks from Japan, and one chest from Japan.215
In 1636, Doña Ana María de Birués, the wife of the commercial agent Ascanio
Guzzoni, shipped from Manila an order valued in 1,000 pesos to the rich merchant
van den Luitenant-Admiraal Piet Heyn of the WIC when he seized the
Spanish Trade between Lisbon and Acapulco, including Santi
beds among the goods he purchased from merchants from Acapulco, including Santi
unnecessary to be sold between 1630 and 1639.216 The booty
taken by the Dutch privateer and captain Pieter Heyn of the WIC when he seized the
Spanish Treasure Fleet anchored at Manatán Bay (east of Havana) in September 1629,
with Philippine and Japanese lacquer objects from Japan into Spain were not only available to
royalty but also to the high-ranking nobility.

Dutch textual sources inform us that the Portuguese merchants were still purchasing in Nagasaki a wide variety of lacquer objects in 1630, during the early Edo period. In September of that year, a staff member of the VOC factory in Hirado noted in his journal that the Portuguese purchased ‘all kinds of lacquerwork, Japanese boxes or screens, porcelain dishes, small boxes and all kinds of similar curiosities’.217 By the end of 1637, however, a document written in Macao stated that the trade with Japan was ‘in a very perilous condition and in danger of ceasing, and that of Manila in a like condition’. Two years later, in 1639, the trade activities of the Portuguese and Spanish merchants as well as the missionary work and trade activities of both the Portuguese and Spanish missionaries came to an end, when they were all expelled from Japan and the country entered the period of sakoku.

From the textual sources and extant pieces of lacquer discussed above it is possible to conclude that a variety of lacquer portable furniture and utilitarian objects were made in order to satisfy the considerable quantities of lacquer objects in the foreign trade of Japan. Furniture and utilitarian objects would have been popular in Europe and Asia, and the combination of a European or Indo-Portuguese style with the Namban style decoration developed by the lacquer craftsmen to suit the Jesuit orders. By the early seventeenth century, the decoration also included a traditional Japanese
lacquer technique that involved the use of a material of animal origin, painted/pasted
ray skin (semeigotan or sakehuke), in addition to maki-e and mother-of-pearl inlay. Material evidence indicates that the majority of such objects were made using the ‘splintering denim’ technique. At about the same time, some of the furniture began to be ordered with an all-over design of small scales of mother-of-pearl forming an overlapping lappet motif, secured by metal rivets, which was undeniably copied from coffers or other objects brought by the Portuguese from Goa in India, again in addition to maki-e. The maki-e decoration of the furniture and smaller objects made for the Portuguese appears to have rarely included European motifs. An apparently unique cabinet proves that the European motifs, such as a Portuguese inscription, were occasionally painted on the lacquers. It seems that the naturalistic scenes of Japanese flowering plants, birds and/or animals as well as Japanese traditional motifs, such as the family crests or inscriptions (mon), were much appreciated by the Portuguese as being especially suitable for these objects, and subsequently re-exported to Spain. An inventory
of the belongings of the Marquise of Masibradi, taken in 1656, lists ‘seven small red
lacquer furniture, folding screens, and most possibly also in tableware objects, which
were imported into New Spain, and subsequently re-exported to Spain. An inventory
of the Marquises of Maubruii, taken in 1656, lists ‘seven small red
lacquer objects to be sold to the Spanish merchants there, who in turn would have
shipped them to New Spain, some of them to be re-exported to Seville in Spain.

It is possible that lacquer furniture from Japan reached the royal court of Lisbon as early as the mid 16th century. By the late sixteenth century such lacquer furniture would have been available for purchase in Lisbon, and subsequently taken by members of the nobility to Spain. Some of the furniture pieces, such as coffers, chests and cabinets, were adapted for religious use, and served as reliquaries in monasteries and convents of both Portugal and Spain. Furniture cabinets, described as zwevende of zwevende poot cabinet, or cabinet on wheels, were sent to Spain as gifts from male and female members of the elites and clergy living in the Philippines and New Spain in the early decades of the seventeenth century. From the early 1610s, to the late 1620s, textual sources indicate that Spanish monarchs and high-ranking members of the nobility would have been interested in lacquer objects in considerable quantities, which included tableware as well as furniture and screens. By this time lacquer furniture and objects of smaller size were available not only to the royalty but also to the high-ranking nobility. The Portuguese were still purchasing a variety of lacquer objects in the early 1630s. By 1637, however, the trade in lacquer carried out by both the Portuguese and Spanish was in danger of ceasing. Their trade activities ended two years later, in 1639, when they were expelled alongside the missionaries from Japan and the country was closed to all Europeans (sakoku) with the exception of the Dutch, who were allowed to stay because they did not proselytise the Christian faith.
In 1609, nine years after arriving by chance in Nyosibi, the Dutch obtained permission from the shogun at Eda to trade in Japan. Although trade with the Japanese was slow after establishing the VOC factory in Hirado, the Dutch merchants recognized the potential of Japanese lacquer, mainly made in Miyako, as a profitable trade good to be imported into Europe. They thought that the material qualities and exotic designs of the lacquer would appeal to the new class of rich merchants and burghers of the Dutch Republic, and that these rare and expensive imported objects would serve to enhance the social status of the owners. Impey and Jörg have noted, the fact that wares imitating Oriental lacquer were being made in the Dutch Republic prior to the arrival of the first shipment of Japanese lacquer imported by the VOC, proves that there was both an interest and a ready market for lacquer. All international events as pieces orders for lacquer sent by the Gentlemen Seventeen from the Dutch Republic, as we saw earlier with the orders for Chinese silk and porcelain, arrived via Batavia. The Oppenheimer in Hirado, and later in Dshima, reported to the Governor-General and his Council in Batavia. The Dutch and VOC commercial papers and letters of the VOC factory in Japan, most of which are preserved in the Nederlandes Factory Japen archive, give us a fairly accurate idea of the lacquer trade, particularly the methods of ordering, purchasing and shipping the lacquer goods to the Dutch Republic via Batavia. The earliest textual evidence of the importation of Japanese lacquer by the VOC into the Dutch Republic dates to 1610. From a report sent that year by Jaques L’Homme the Younger, the VOC representative in Bantam, to the Gentlemen Seventeen, we learn that the Dutch were familiar with lacquer from both China and Japan. This is clear in an excerpt from the report, in which he states that the lacquerware from China is usually of very poor quality and therefore it is not very common, small pieces, that is also very expensive. I have seen some lacquer in the ship that came from Japan, the Luxeu met Pijlen, which is very beautiful and of good quality and from that country one can easily obtain and also have made those items that one might wish to trade. Undoubtedly, Jaques L’Homme knew about the lacquers that were being made to order for the Iberian market from the last decades of the sixteenth century, and thus thought to take advantage of ordering objects to the specific requirements of the VOC customers in the Dutch Republic. As mentioned earlier, a letter sent in December 1612 by Pieter Segers to the Gentlemen Seventeen, indicates that VOC servants also purchased lacquers that had been made to order for the Iberians. The 23 cases of lacquer purchased from a Spanish merchant were shipped from Bantam on the Vlissingen, a ship of the Zeeland Chamber of the VOC, which arrived in Middleburg at the beginning of October 1613, where the lacquer cargo was valued at fl. 500. In March of the following year, the Gentlemen Seventeen resolved to sell the lacquer in three different sales that took place in May and June. Although the sales in Middleburg were disappointing, most probably for the high sale price, some of the lacquer was sold in Amsterdam. A letter sent in January 1613 by Hendrik Brouwer, who had replaced Jaques Speck as Oppenheimer in Hirado, to the Governor-General in Bantam, confirms that at least a small quantity of the lacquer objects made to order in Miyako for VOC servants, as well as for the Spanish as suggested by Segers’s comment on washing, consisted of tableware. Brouwer writes “I have delivered to Captain Dirk Mertens a small case with Japanese lacquers for Your Honour, in which are packed three small chests each costing 25 maes or schellingen, also six half-sized samedehoven [cups], six butter dishes and six saucers, which I ordered in Mexes for 6 maes or schellingen each; they total, including two maes for the case in which they were packed, one hundred and eighty-five guilders, in guilders 55–10.11. This stuff is very expensive, but it is exceptionally beautiful and the process of making it is very protracted, as I have seen from experience. One can put water in it without being damaged. Such saucers and cups have never been made in Japan. When it suits you I should like to hear that Your Honour will show them to the Honourable Gentlemen Masters to see if their Honours would like to order a batch. Which I hope will happen in due course in spite of the price because of the beauty of work, which would be to my honour. For now, I am not sending any more because I am afraid that they will be too dear and I have also not been able to get more ready, for each piece takes more than a month to finish. I am therefore only able to send more of this kind of Chinese porcelain listed in the VOC documents discussed in Chapter III. It seems that although Brouwer was excited by the beauty of this apparently new type of lacquer tableware, he was not certain if there would be a regular supply of such lacquer in Japan Counrs. Impey and Jörg have pointed out that if there would be a demand for it in the Dutch Republic due to its high cost.

By this time, the States-General of the Dutch Republic had already begun presenting consignments of lacquer as diplomatic gifts to rulers of other European countries. That year, in 1615, a gift of ‘Indian lacquer’ that must have included some lacquer from Japan was presented to Elizabeth, daughter of James I, who had recently married Fredrik V, Elector of the Pfalz (d. 1632), during her visit to Amsterdam. The gift comprised ‘an exceedingly large rich furniture for a cabinet of china-work, blanke and gilde, containing a bedstead, a cupboard, a table, two great chests, one laccha in [Chinese], the other veydray [tray], twenty-four dikes, twenty-four saucers, twenty fruit dishes and six saucers, all being valued at Lh 10.000’. The ‘bedstead’, as shown earlier, could have been made in Japanese or Chinese lacquer. In June 1616, the States-General presented a lacquer coffer from Japan as gift to the King of Sweden, Adolf Gustav I (1594-1660). Anthony Josters, treasurer of the Dutch Embassy, sent a letter home containing several gifts for the King on behalf of the States-General, describes the coffer given as After the meal Their Honours presented to himself his Majesty and the Queen of Sweden, Adolf Gustav II (1594–1632). Anthonius Goeteeris, treasurer of the Dutch Embassy, sent two of these lacquer pieces in 1616. The first, one of the earliest documented pieces of Japanese lacquer to arrive in Europe, is now housed in Gripsholm Castle near Stockholm (Fig. 4.1.2.1). It is a large coffer with a domed lid decorated in the Namban style with naturalistic scenes depicting bird and animals amongst flowering plants. It is a large coffer with a domed lid decorated in the Namban style with naturalistic scenes depicting bird and animals amongst flowering plants. In the following year, several more similar lacquer pieces were presented to other European rulers. In November 1614, the Gentlemen Seventeen had sent instructions to Jaques Speck as Oppenheimer in Hirado, to the Governor-General in Bantam, confirming that the VOC servants also purchased lacquers that had been made to order for the Iberians. The 23 cases of lacquer purchased from a Spanish merchant were shipped from Bantam on the Vlissingen, a ship of the Zeeland Chamber of the VOC, which arrived in Middleburg at the beginning of October 1613, where the lacquer cargo was valued at fl. 500. In March of the following year, the Gentlemen Seventeen resolved to sell the lacquer in three different sales that took place in May and June. Although the sales in Middleburg were disappointing, most probably for the high sale price, some of the lacquer was sold in Amsterdam. A letter sent in January 1613 by Hendrik Brouwer, who had replaced Jaques Speck as Oppenheimer in Hirado, to the Governor-General in Bantam, confirms that at least a small quantity of the lacquer objects made to order in Miyako for VOC servants, as well as for the Spanish as suggested by Segers’s comment on washing, consisted of tableware. Brouwer writes “I have delivered to Captain Dirk Mertens a
November 1615, we learn that although precise instructions for each order of lacquer were given in a contract, sometimes the Japanese lacquerers did not fully comply with them. It reads: ‘The small comptoir that Luisdonno made is not as specified in your Memorandum for the ordered lacquerware, for in it you specify that the middle drawer-front should be arched and the other drawers should be panelled, and that the outside also be panelled. But in his signed contract for the lacquerware it is as annexed, for he says that the fashion first shown to you was thus, and because the five remaining pieces of the type have been already blackened, I have struck an agreement with him that I shall take 2 of this fashion and 3 as you demanded in the Memorandum’. The reasons behind the VOC instructions to discontinue shipments of lacquer have been subject to some debate. Impey and Jing, as well as Hutt, have suggested that the dense decoration of the lacquer made in the Namban style for export at the time did not appeal to Dutch tastes, and thus the customers in the Dutch Republic were not willing to pay high prices for it. Viallé, however, argues that VOC records indicate that the 1614 orders were issued because the Gentlemen Seventeen considered that the 1614 orders were issued because the Gentlemen Seventeen considered that ‘the lacquerwares and other Japanese wares’ were ‘of no use’ and that they could not ‘be sold with any profit’.

It seems likely that the difficulty to sale the lacquer had more to do with its high sale price rather than with its decoration, which would have been considered without a doubt rich and exquisite. The lacquer shipments sent to Batavia in 1616 included a new type of furniture, tables. Tables of at least three sizes were shipped that year. In February Woutersen sent ‘2 tables of the 2nd kind at 1½ each’, and ‘4 ditto of the third kind at 75 maans each’. The lacquer sent by Woutersen from Kyotō in September included ‘4 of the largest tables at T 23 each’, and ‘1 of the smallest ditto at T 7½’. A shipment sent by Specc to Batavia in October included ‘3 large lacquered and gilded tables on raised feet, at T 24 each’, ‘3 ditto middle size, at T 15 each’, and ‘3 ditto small, at T 8 each’. In November, Woutersen sent more lacquer from Kyotō to Specc, including ‘1 table of the largest type T 25’. One cannot fail to wonder if the ‘4 of the largest tables’ and ‘1 table of the largest type’, sent in September and November respectively, were like the only full-sized table of European proportions known thus far, which was formerly in Wilanów Palace in present-day Warsaw. If so, it would have been a Namban style table that dismantled into nine major sections. Considering the dimensions of other extant Namban lacquer tables dating to the Momoyama period, it seems safely to assume that the tables of smaller sizes listed in these shipments were all low tables with their heights ranging from 36 to 50 cm, such as the example illustrated in Fig. 4.1.1.1.17. Coincidentally, the earliest documentary evidence of the presence of tables among the belongings of Jesuits in Japan dates to this same year, 1616.

VOC instructions not to order more lacquer were repeated in 1618, and again in 1619. The Dutch were forbidden from trading in Hirado for five years as a consequence of the so-called Taiwan Incident of 1628. The VOC trade in lacquer prior to the embargo was carried out on only a small scale, and the same can be assumed regarding the private Dutch trade.134 Further evidence of private trade in lacquer at the time is scant. The earliest reference to a private order dates to 1626. It is found in a letter sent from Miyako in September of that year by Cornelis Van Neyenrode, a Dutch merchant sent as envoy to the shogun, to Cornelis van Neyenrode, who was Oppoheber of the Hirado factory from 1623 to 1633. In this letter, Cornelis Van Neyenrode states that the goods ordered by Van Neyenrode were being procured.135 A letter sent some weeks later by Van Neyenrode to the senior envoy Isaac Bogaert in Miyako, says that the goods ordered included lacquer, as he requests that Bogaert should ask the lacquerer if his goods were ready, and if they were, the lacquerer should be paid.136 In October, Cornelis Van Neyenrode sent this letter to his associates in Batavia, informing him that Bogaert ordered various goods including 200 taels’ worth of lacquer before he died during the trip. The next reference, dating to 1631, proves that private Dutch orders were still being fulfilled despite the trade embargo. In November of this year, Van Neyenrode sent a letter to the governor of Formosa, Hans Putman, informing that the lacquer that he (Putman) ordered through the VOC, to Cornelis van Neyenrode, to procure at Hirado, was not delivered.137 It can be argued, however, that the reason for Van Neyenrode not acquiring much lacquer when he was at Hirado may have related to his personal taste. In any case, the inventory informs us that he owned both lacquer furniture and tableware.

A letter written in 1635, the year that the embargo on all Dutch official trade was lifted, by Steven Barendts, one of the private outfitters of the ship Warmond, to his associates in Batavia indicates that about 350 taels’ worth of lacquer were on board the ship when she departed from Hirado that year.138 Viallé has noted that this lacquer must have been purchased ready-made and could not have been ordered. The letter of 1631 mentioned above, however, informs Putman that the lacquer he ordered was sent to Specc from Batavia in October included ‘3 large lacquered and gilded tables on raised feet, at T 24 each’, ‘3 ditto middle size, at T 15 each’, and ‘3 ditto small, at T 8 each’.
almost finished, proves that at least part of the lacquer loaded on the ship could have been ordered privately.

The VOC had a renewed interest in lacquer and began placing orders on a larger scale at this time. In 1634, Batavia sent the first official order of lacquer after the Tainan incident, requesting Nest of coffers and comptoirs of all kinds, priced between 3000 and 4000 taels. This letter specifies that no compartmented boxes for bottles, most likely like the extant example in the Kyoto National Museum that will be discussed in the following pages, or tableware should be ordered, as there was no demand for these in the Dutch Republic.\(^{250}\) About 127 pieces of lacquer were shipped in November of that year from Hirado to Batavia on the Groc, including one of a number of nests of coffers covered in ray skin.\(^{251}\) In June of the following year, Batavia ordered more lacquer specifying that it should be the same as last year.\(^{252}\) In the month of November, a large shipment was sent from Hirado on the Nieuw Amsterdam, consisting mostly of coffers, nests of coffers, kisten (chests) and comptoirs (comptoirs), some of them described as being covered in ray skin and with lacquered ovals.\(^{253}\) More of such pieces were sent in December on the Wassenaer, but this time also including some kisten with rayskin only and ‘8 comptoirs with side doors covered in ray skin and lacquerwork throughout’.

It seems likely that these pieces were decorated with the ‘splinter dendeté’ technique rather than with pasted ray skin, like those made to order for the Portuguese discussed earlier.

One of the largest shipments of lacquer was sent to Batavia on the Wassenaer in November 1636. It consisted of some 663 coffers, nests of coffers, comptoirs and kisten, with a total cost of E. 4560.\(^{254}\) Cost prices did not vary according to lacquer or ray skin decoration, but only by size. In June of the following year, and again in June of 1638, Batavia instructed Hirado to cancel further lacquer orders, because there was still some in stock. That year, Hirado was instructed not to send any lacquer for the Portuguese discussed earlier.

In the letter written on 26 March 1639 by Hendrick Hagenaer in the Dutch Republic to François Caron to order him a third with green interiors, a third with red, and a third with black, with a total value of 3500 to 4000 taels. The letter specifies that 1500 taels was to be spent on ‘extraordinarily rare and costly’ pieces, with the lacquer ground to be mixed with gold and silver (mizuhiki).\(^{256}\) This order was repeated in 1643, but it is specified that no coffers of woods were to be ordered and that tables were not wanted in the Dutch Republic, as it had been informed earlier in June 1639.\(^{257}\)

A letter written on 26 March 1639 by Hendrick Hagenaer in the Dutch Republic to François Caron (1608–1678), a French Huguenot who served the VOC in Japan from 1623, and was Opperaad in Hirado from that year (1639) to 1641, is of particular importance to this study. The letter provides both textual and visual evidence of an order of lacquer made by a private Dutch individual, through a VOC servant in Japan, at the time. In the letter, Hendrick Hagenaer not only requests François Caron to order him a unusually taller comptoir (comptoir) with two doors, but also includes a drawing with the specific arrangement of drawers he wanted to have on the interior of the comptoir (Fig. 4.1.2.2).\(^{258}\) After the letter was intercepted in Batavia, as noted by Impey and Jörg, François Caron responded to the reprimand that arose from his involvement in such a private order saying that no great harm had been wrought and that he deserved some recompense for all the pains he had taken in earlier years.\(^{259}\)

From a letter sent from Japan to Batavia in October 1644 we learn that lacquer craftsmen from Osaka, Miyako and Nagasaki went to Deshima to complain that all the orders placed by the Dutch the previous year had been placed with only one lacquer worker, and they insisted that the work should be distributed more evenly among themselves. The lacquer worker was Mascena Simenonodorte, who most probably made lacquer of high quality and responded well to specific orders in terms of shape, decoration and time of production.\(^{260}\) The 278 pieces of lacquer shipped via Fort Zeelandia, the VOC fortress in Dayuan (present-day Anping in south Taiwan), to Batavia on the Orangienboom that same month, included nests of coffers and comptoirs, half of them lacquered in gold with figures and the other half covered in ray skin with lacquered ovals. Eight comptoirs, described as extraordinairy superb (extraordinairebeautifull), the large ones with a high cost price of 65 taels and the smaller 27 taels each. Batavia placed an order ‘as before’ the following year. The shipping list of October 1644 of the ill-fated Soen, includes 388 pieces of lacquer. These included some coffers in nests, comptoirs and kisten of red lacquer, amongst with green, red

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251. Ibid., p. 286.
252. Ibid., p. 286.
253. Ibid., p. 286.
254. Ibid., p. 286.
256. Ibid., p. 286.
257. Ibid., p. 286.
258. Ibid., p. 286.
259. Ibid., p. 286.
260. Ibid., p. 286.
The lacquer workshops in Miyako were of relatively large scale and that the lacquer craftsmen worked hard to fulfill the orders made for the English and other European merchants.

It is clear from this excerpt that the lacquer workshops of the comptoirs, coffers and very expensive. He hath 50 men that worketh night and day, that, so far as I see, he doth makeman who hath promised that in short time he will have done. In 1617, the Englishman William Adams writing from Sakai to Richard Wickman in Hirado informed him that he had ‘… bin at Meaco [Miyako] and talked w’th the
In February of that year, the tankard, also dating to .1600–1620, is decorated in makie and raised central mound, such as the example decorated in .Namban style. The shape of the tankard, with a tall, tapering cylindrical body, spreading foot, loop handle with a curved terminal and stepped lid arranged vertically in the .Namban style. The shape of the tankard, with a tall, tapering cylindrical body, spreading foot, loop handle with a curved terminal and stepped lid arranged vertically in the .Namban style. This tankard, also dating to .1600–1620, is decorated in makie and raised central mound, such as the example decorated in .Namban style. The shape of the tankard, with a tall, tapering cylindrical body, spreading foot, loop handle with a curved terminal and stepped lid arranged vertically in the .Namban style.

Lacquer basins of considerable large size with raised rings around narrow wells and raised central mounds, such as the example decorated in .Namban style in the Victoria and Albert Museum, dating to .1600–1620, were most probably made after a pewter model which in turn copied a European silver or gold basin that together with an ewer formed part of a set used for washing the hands after dinner (Fig. 4.1.2.3). Visual sources attest to the use of such sumptuous sets in Western Europe in the early seventeenth century. For example, see the silver gilt set depicted in the painting .Allegory of Fire by the Antwerp artist Adriaen van Utrecht, dated 1636, illustrated in Chapter III (Fig. 3.1.3.7). Pewter basins of varying size large were commonly used throughout Europe at the time. The raised central mound, like that of the metal prototypes, would have served to steady the foot of the matching ewer. We do not know the exact shape and decoration of such lacquer ewers, as no example appears to be recorded. The pieces listed as ‘1 water tankard ure de silver (water ewer with its saucer)’ among the shipment of lacquer sent by Woutersen from Miyako to Spinas in November 1616, may have referred to an ewer and basin set. Basins with ewers were mentioned frequently in documents of the EIC factory in Japan. In a letter written from Hirado by William Eaton in December 1617, he informs Sir Thomas Smythe in London that he ‘… sent the last year by the Thomas for your Witsips one causer in a case & 2 basins and yewers, the one of make work, the other of blake varnish, & 24 smale frute dishes of make work, bring into 2 boxes, w’ch I sent to your good lady’. In November 1616, the head of the English factory Richard Cooke, wrote in his diary ‘I received a basom [basin] and ure [ewer] from our medam at Mauco, cont 9 Asc. 5th. Oil’. In January 1618, Richard Cocks wrote in his diary ‘I made up the nakeyware for my Lady Smith this day, for her conor rec. in the .Adva’, rated at 40 mark str., it is 106:6:7 and packed it up in 5 parcelles in chists, viz.: … No. 5, divers matters, viz.: … 03 basons and spoue pots, grete 1050, 03 demo lesser sort, cost 0750’. So Thomas Dale writing from Batavia in March 1619 informed his brother in London that he had sent hom in the ship [the Little James], … one voyder, one trencher knife, two broad basons & 2 ewers suitable unto them [en suite], one hand bowl, & one spout-pot ewer, & one cabinet, to my wife, all these are of Japan works. It is clear from these excerpts that EIC servants in Japan sent lacquer basins and ewers on various occasions as gifts, as presents or as private consignments to private individuals in England, such as the wife of the Governor of the Company.

Tankards are also listed a few times in VOC and EIC textual sources. The only lacquer tankard that appears to have survived is in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Fig. 4.1.2.4). This tankard, also dating to .1600–1620, is decorated in makie and mother-of-pearl inlay with a dense design of flowering and fruiting branches arranged vertically in the .Namban style. The shape of the tankard, with a tall, tapering cylindrical body, spreading foot, loop handle with a curved terminal and stepped lid with a side handle, faithfully copies a Dutch pewter or tin-glazed earthenware model commonly used in the Dutch Republic in the early seventeenth century, such as the models discussed in Chapter III (Figs. 3.4.2.1.12 and 3.4.2.1.14). Lacquer beer basins appear to have been first made to order for the Dutch in 1615. In November of that year, Woutersen who travelled between Miyako and Osaka, sent to Jacques Spex a number of lacquer pieces, including 20 beer basins (beer basins) at 15 mats for 5 pieces. The invoice of the ship Rotterdam, for the Rotterdam Chamber, dated 1 January 1616, states that among the lacquer brought by the VOC ship Oud Zeeland from Japan included ‘148 beerbekers at 5 mats each’. In February of that year,
Westremsen sent to Specks another shipment of lacquer that included ‘1 box beakers of 5 pieces’.

The beer beakers, sent along with other lacquer by Specks to Bantan on the VOC ship *Eckhoven* just a few days later, are described in the invoice as nests of fives, fitting into each other.

278 Just a few days later, are described in the invoice as nests of fives, fitting into each other.

maky

maky

I rec. a letter from Magazemon Dono, our host in Miaco, with a box of 20 ordenary beakers, cost 0600’. These excerpts indicate that both lacquer tankards and beakers acquired by Richard Cocks for ‘my Lady Smith’ in January 1618, to be subsequently ordered for the Portuguese in Gujarat in the mid-sixteenth century (Fig. 4.1.2.2). Another lacquer example of this date that appears to be unique is a comb case or toilet box with leather work, 4 beakers or drinking cups. The bottles, as well as the storage box, have been dated to the Momoyama or early Edo periods, 1580–1620. The box containing the six bottles and the set of small bottles with flaring copper mounts at the neck, the box with the bottles was also published in *Impey and Jörg*, 2005, pp. 100–101, in a private collection in Crewkerne, Dorset, are published in *Impey and Jörg*, 2005, pp. 100–101, in a private collection in Crewkerne, Dorset.

The earliest reference of the shipment of lacquer comb cases appears to be that of the invoice listing the lacquer sent by Jacques Specks to Bantan on the VOC ship *Eckhoven*, on 28 February 1616, which included 4 lacquered comb cases (boxes for combs). The earliest reference of the shipment of lacquer comb cases appears to be that of the invoice listing the lacquer sent by Jacques Specks to Bantan on the VOC ship *Eckhoven*, on 28 February 1616, which included 4 lacquered comb cases (boxes for combs).


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These excerpts suggest that bottles were made to order for the EIC servants in sets of an unknown number (most probably six) alongside boxes in which they were stored. Thus it can be argued that the body of the bottles was made in both wood and metal, but all the extant examples appear to be made of lacquered wood. The sides are decorated with flowering trees framed by scrolling vines or in a border of spiralled particles of mother-of-pearl inlay (maki-e). Storage boxes of rectangular shape with a flat lid were made in sets of bottles to store and transport a set of three bottles. A storage box that appears to be a unique example of this type decorated with naturalistic compositions of flowering trees, birds and animals in the *Namban* style, still containing six bottles, is now housed in the Kyoto National Museum (Fig. 4.1.2.6). The earliest reference of the shipment of lacquer comb cases appears to be that of the invoice listing the lacquer sent by Jacques Specks to Bantan on the VOC ship *Eckhoven*, on 28 February 1616, which included 4 lacquered comb cases (boxes for combs). The earliest reference of the shipment of lacquer comb cases appears to be that of the invoice listing the lacquer sent by Jacques Specks to Bantan on the VOC ship *Eckhoven*, on 28 February 1616, which included 4 lacquered comb cases (boxes for combs).
Fig. 4.1.2.7 Namban bottle (tokkuri)
Ming dynasty/Edo period
Height: 30.6 cm; width: 11.8 cm
Private Collection, Portugal
© Jorge Welsh, London-Lisbon

Fig. 4.1.2.8 Namban storage box containing six bottles
Ming dynasty/Edo period
Height: 33.5 cm; width: 41.5 cm; depth: 28.6 cm
Kyoto National Museum, Kyoto
Fig. 4.1.2.10  Games board
Oak with marquetry of ebony, coloured wood and ivory inlay
Spain (probably Granada)
Sixteenth century, c.1520–1575
Length: 56.3 cm; width: 34 cm; height: 13 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
(museum no. 154–1900)

Fig. 4.1.2.9  Transition style
backgammon board
Early Edo period, c.1630–1650
Length: 44.2 cm; width: 42.7 cm; height: 9 cm (closed)
Private Collection, Portugal
© Jorge Welsh, London-Lisbon

Opposite page
Figs. 4.1.2.11a and b  Games board
Wood veneered with ebony, and bone inlay
Germany (probably Augsburg)
Late sixteenth century, c.1580–1600
Length: 41.5 cm; width: 42 cm; height: 6.6 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
(museum no. 567–1899)

Fig. 4.1.2.12  The Cardsharps
Oil on canvas
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), c.1595
Dimensions: 94.2 cm x 130.9 cm
Kimbell Art Museum, Texas (inv. no. AP 1987.04)
that the dating of this type of boddle and storage box could be early seventeenth century rather than late sixteenth century, probably c.1615–1620.

Thus far only a few lacquer backgammon boards have been recorded. (Fig. 4.1.2.9). Two of these examples are decorated in the Namban style. Their shape consists of two hinged rectangular sections, that when open form a playing surface for backgammon framed by raised borders, and when closed form a shallow portable box. The lacquer craftsmen most probably copied the shape from a European wooden box made specifically for playing games (usually with a board for chess on one side and backgammon on the other) that was taken to Japan, such as those made in Yantai and southern Spain with the external and internal surfaces inlaid with luxury materials of the sixteenth century, which in turn derived from Islamic models (Fig. 4.1.2.10).294 Decorative game boards were popular among the royalty and high-ranking nobility of Renaissance Europe and frequently served as diplomatic gifts, despite religious strictures imposed against game playing and gambling.295 The Namban backgammon boards, dating to c.1615–1620, are decorated on the exterior with various motifs of distinguishable Japanese character. One example in the Namban Bunkakan in Osaka depicts Japanese fans on a floral ground,296 distinguishable Japanese character. One example in the Namban Bunkakan in Osaka depicted Japanese figures.297

As noted by Impey and Jörg, it is possible that Richard Cockes was referring to this latter type of backgammon board when he wrote in his diary of September 1621 that he paid the '2 other boddle playing tables with wheat' at 15 marec’s each'.298 Two wooden square-shaped backgammon boards in Europe in the late sixteenth century. One appears depicted in the oil painting The Cardsharps by the Italian artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, dating to c.1595 (Fig. 4.1.2.12). The shape of all the lacquer backgammon boards, whether decorated in Namban, Italian, or Spanish Pictorial styles, differs from the European models in that the exterior sides are not meant to serve as a game board and thus have a flat surface (omitting a raised border) decorated with various motifs. It is not known whether this was a request made by the English and/or Dutch, or if it was a liberty taken by the lacquer craftsmen to embellish the exterior with lacquer techniques and decorative motifs of hybrid Japanese-European origin used in other lacquer objects made to order for the Europeans. The backgammon board illustrated here appears to be a unique example decorated in the so-called Transition style, dating to c.1630–1650. Its interior is decorated with two flying geese in nasho on a plain black lacquered ground, while its interior playing surface is alternately painted with red lacquer and sprinkled particles of mother-of-pearl inlay (agée).299 Two backgammon boards decorated in the so-called Transition style with an even simpler or plain decoration are known. One example, dating to c.1640–1670, is decorated on the exterior with two flying birds in kosode and on the interior with the playing surface with triangles of inlaid white wood alternating with others that include mother-of-pearl inlay.300 The other, dating to c.1640–1660, in the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum in Brunswick, has a plain lacquered exterior and an interior playing board with alternating gold and striped gold-and-black triangles, within a wide border finely painted with nasho, birds, and birds in raised gold lacquer and chrysanthemum insignia (mon) on the corners.301

It appears that VOC servants were responsible for ordering shaving bowls and boxes for collars. Shaving bowls appear listed in VOC documents as early as 1615. That year, Woutersen sent to Specs a shipment of lacquer that included shaving bowls of two sizes (cylindrical and flat-bottomed shaving bowls) at 1½ each.302 In February of the following year, Woutersen sent more lacquer to Specs. This time the shipment included 4 large shovel-shaped shaving bowls at 3½ each and 4 ditto smaller at 2½ each.303 Although no example decorated in the Namban style appears to have survived, it is likely that the lacquer craftsmen copied the shape of the power or earthenware models taken to Japan. Shaving bowls continued to be ordered by the VOC after 1634. In November 1635, for instance, 10 shaving bowls were among the large consignment of lacquer shipped from Hirado into the Nieuw Amsterdam.304 Boxes for collars appear to have been shipped in December 1638. In October of that year, Specs sent a consignment of lacquer on the ship Osde Sonne, via Bantam, which included 2 round, lacquered and gilded raised liquiryleds [boxes for collars], the space for the neck inside filled with small boxes fitting into each other, at 3½ each.305 The description of the collar boxes, being round and raised, seems to somewhat match an extant box of cylindrical shape and inlaid entirely large size, with a shallow domed lid decorated in the Namban style with a dense design of flowers in nasho and mother-of-pearl inlay, which is in the Peabody Essex Museum (Figs. 4.1.2.13a and b).306 This cylindrical box, as well as a few other extant Namban

![Fig. 4.1.2.12a and b: Namban backgammon board decorated by the Italian artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, dating to c.1595.](image-url)
Figs. 4.1.2.14a and b. Document box
Late Edo period, c. 1630–1650
Height: 17.5 cm, width: 32.5 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
(museum no. W.49.1916)

Figs. 4.1.2.14b

Figs. 4.1.2.15  Engraved plate with designs
Early Edo period, c. 1630–1650
Dim: 34.2 x 26.5 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Published in: A. van Impey and Jörg, Domestic Interiors at the Cape and the ‘Van Diemen Box’ (Amsterdam: gemeentemuseum, 2005; pp. 140–143, ill. 292).

Figs. 4.1.2.14. Transition style chair
Early Edo period, c. 1630–1650
Height: 61 cm, width: 36 cm

Fig. 4.1.2.14. Transition-style chair. Left

Fig. 4.1.2.15. Engraved plate with designs for nine chairs

Crispin van de Passe the Younger (1593–1670), Officium Aureum in Qua sunt ad spectantia diversa Eximia exempla ex varijs autoribus collecta
Oficina Arcularia in Qua sunt ad spectantia diversa Eximia exempla ex varijs autoribus collecta

Oficina Arcularia in Qua sunt ad spectantia diversa Eximia exempla ex varijs autoribus collecta

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The lacquer craftsmen would have transformed the lion finials into Buddha Lions and turned them around to look backwards. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that the model taken to Japan could have been a church chair of similar shape made for the Dutch in southern India, which in turn copied the Dutch model.**

The lacquer chair discussed here is similar to the lacquer chairs dated to the second quarter of the seventeenth century, such as an example in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. The popularity of this type of chair at the time is attested by an example depicted in an engraved plate with designs for nine chairs published by Crispijn van de Passe the Younger (1593–1670) in his Officium Aureum in Qua sunt ad spectantia diversa Eximia exempla ex varijs autoribus collecta, Amsterdam, in 1642 (Fig. 4.1.2.15). The arcaded rails in the back, as well as the front and back stretchers of such Dutch church chairs were decorated with low relief carving of floral motifs, and they usually had floral carved finials at the top of the back legs and tautened balusters. A Dutch church chair like the example found during this research study with finals carved in the shape of lions and small ball knobs inserted between balusters in the back, may have served as model for the lacquer chair discussed here (Figs. 4.1.2.14a and b).**

The lacquer craftsmen would have transformed the lion finials into Buddha Lions and turned them around to look backwards. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that the model taken to Japan could have been a church chair of similar shape made for the Dutch in southern India, which in turn copied the Dutch model.** Small folding chairs were used in the Calvinist churches of southern India, and were hung up on the wall after use.** Thus, the Japanese lacquer chair, dating to c. 1630–1650, combines a Dutch shape with fine decoration and mother-of-pearl inlay, which consists of cash and scrolling foliage patterns, and long-tailed birds in flight, on the sides and front of the legs, which are not usually found in Namban or the so-called Transition style lacquers. The arcaded rails, however, are decorated with scrolling foliage and typical Namban scrolls, and the cresting on the top rail has eight chrysanthemum mon. This chair was probably a private order.

In February of 1640, François Caron, the Opperhoofd in Hirado, sent on the VOC ship Capricorn to Batavia via Formosa ‘one costly cemertiek, lacquered, for His Honour the Governor-General’, valued at 100 tacks.** In October of that same year, examples of similar large size but of shallow, cylindrical shape with a flat base, may have been used to store a ruff collar or a wide-brimmed hat.**
François Caron sent on the VOC ship Breeda to Batavia a table made after a Dutch model of exceptional quality. The table is described in a letter written on 30 November 1640 by the Governor-General Van Diemen to the Gentleman Seventeen, saying that he was sending on the VOC ship Salamander an extraordinarily beautiful lacquered table, Dutch fashion, and a set of tšeelen [close-stools], very rare and no less costly, all of the highest quality they could obtain for the purpose, and that they were to be presented to the two highest ranking officials of the VOC serving in Asia at the time. In the same letter, he mentioned that theдонщо or the closest relatives of the Dutchman who had commissioned the lacquer work were his wives, the daughters of the two highest ranking officials of the VOC serving in Asia at the time.

In the following year, Van Diemen received lacquer as gifts from Japanese officials in 1638 and 1639. A detail of one object inscribed with the names of these women because this did not accord with protocol.

In 1639, François Caron sent on the VOC ship Breda to Batavia a table made after a Dutch model of exceptional quality. The table is described in a letter written on 30 November 1640 by the Governor-General Van Diemen to the Gentleman Seventeen, saying that he was sending on the VOC ship Salamander an extraordinarily beautiful lacquered table, Dutch fashion, and a set of tšeelen [close-stools], very rare and no less costly, all of the highest quality they could obtain for the purpose, and that they were to be presented to the two highest ranking officials of the VOC serving in Asia at the time. In the same letter, he mentioned that theдонщо or the closest relatives of the Dutchman who had commissioned the lacquer work were his wives, the daughters of the two highest ranking officials of the VOC serving in Asia at the time.

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Fig. 4.1.2.18a Transition style chest, the ‘Mazarin Chest’
Early Edo period, c. 1640
Height: 59cm; width: 101.5cm; depth: 63cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
(museum no. 4121, 2-1882)

Fig. 4.1.2.18b Transition style chest, the ‘Mazarin Chest’
(Silver rivets detail)

Fig. 4.1.2.18c Transition style chest, the ‘Mazarin Chest’
(Silver metal foil and mother-of-pearl inlay detail)
Fig. 4.1.2.19a  Transition style chest, formerly the ‘Lawrence Chest’
Early Edo period, c. 1640
Height: 66cm; width: 142cm; depth: 71cm
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
(museum no. AK RAK-2013-2)

Fig. 4.1.2.19b  Transition style chest, formerly the ‘Lawrence Chest’
(detail)
lacquers, which were made to order between the early 1630s and early 1640s. 344 rectangular chest with a flat lid with an extremely refined lacquer decoration known as Namban combine the shape of a European chest that was made to order earlier for the Iberian Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum, was also made. This chest was dismantled, who ruled France as first minister of the regent Anne of Austria, purchased this chest Hutt, 2011, pp. 10–25. For examples of comparable shape, but made with 345 Both combine the shape of a European chest that was made to order for the Iberian in the Netherlands style, 346 with a wide range of very complex and expensive lacquer decorative techniques, including bizenmaki, tambakuri, and the use of small silver rivets (ginbyō) (Figs. 4.1.2.1b and 4.1.2.18b), and silver metal foil and mother-of-pearl (Fig. 4.1.2.18c) on a black lacquer ground. Their decoration is wholly Japanese, with rectangular panels and oval complex cartouches incorporating mythical beasts depicting scenes taken from the Tale of Genji and the Eight Views of Oi (Omitsuhide), within all various geographical borders. 347 Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602–1661), who ruled France as first minister of the regent Anne of Austria, purchased this chest together with the example of slightly smaller size in Amsterdam in 1658. Research by Hutt has shown that a third chest of this shape and comparable lacquer quality, but inferior in terms of workmanship to that of the Mazarin chests in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum, was also made. This chest was dismantled, and then its panels and geometrical borders were cut to form two parts of two cabinets made in French boulle-work marquetry in the early eighteenth century. 348 One of these cabinets, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, serves to illustrate the close similarities of its front lacquer panel to that of the Rijksmuseum chest (Fig. 4.1.2.20). An entry in the VOC archives dated 15 October 1643, as noted by Hutt, mentions ‘4 extremely large square chests, all lacquer, with gold [lacquer] ground at 144 taels each’, which in total would have been the large sum of 576 zeeu. 349 Considering the fact that four chests are listed, although described as square rather than rectangular, and the very high purchase price of each one, it seems likely that the VOC document referred to the three chests discussed above. As Hutt has pointed out, the lesser quality of workmanship of the chest that was dismantled raises some questions. Was it made at a slightly later date? Was it the last one of the group of four to be made, and thus the lacquerer had to take some shortcuts to fulfill the order in time to be shipped with the others? Future research might shed light on these questions. It has been suggested that the chests were made in the lacquer workshop of the Kiami family of Miyakozakana, who as mentioned earlier began producing Kadoji 394 marks in the late sixteenth century, under the headship of the tenth generation master Ōkami Chūjū (1599–1651). The fact that there was a seven-year gap between orders of wedding sets received by the Kiami workshop for the Japanese elite, between 1657 and 1664, as argued by Hutt, shows that it would have been possible to make the four chests as a special order for the Dutch. 350 Recent research by Lacambre has shown that the high quality Transition style lacquer close-stool ventured as a cadeau d’affaire at the Petit Trianon in the Château de Versailles once formed part of the magnificent collection of Cardinal Jules Mazarin. Considering the stylistic similarities of the lacquer decoration of the Versailles close stool, especially the geometrical borders, with the Mazarin chests in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum, it seems possible that Cardinal Mazarin had acquired the close stool in Amsterdam together with the lacquer chests in 1658/59. One other close stool, as noted by Lacambre, was confiscated from the Château de Chantilly, which housed the collection of Prince de Condé. 351 No documentary evidence has been found thus far indicating that the close stool given as gift by the Généraux Sieur de Béringhen Maria in 1642 could have ended up in France. Extant examples of high quality lacquer, though not of the extraordinary high quality of the Mazarin chests discussed above, made for order for the Dutch after a European shape include chests of small size with a cornice around the slightly domed lid, dating to c. 1630–1640 (Figs. 4.1.2.21a and b). An example in the Victoria and Albert Museum, now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum, was purchased in gold and silver bizenmaki and tambakuri, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, gold, gold foil and kirikane on a black lacquer ground, also depicting scenes from the Tale of Genji. 352 The decorative borders of the base of the chest resemble those of the small box bearing the initials CF or FC discussed above. This type of chest may have been made to order as a marriage casket, as its shape resembles closely the kusakorogurō commonly used in the Dutch Republic in the early seventeenth century, which were usually made of richly engraved silver and symbolized a proposal of marriage (Fig. 4.1.2.22). 353 In addition, Dutch merchants in Japan not only bought special orders for lacquer boxes but also became active in the domestic market for their Japanese lacquer suppliers, and European merchants in other parts of Asia purchased domestic lacquer originally exported from Japan by Chinese merchants. 354 To sum up, the VOC documents discussed above indicate that lacquer from Japan was initially believed to be a profitable trade good to be imported into the Dutch Republic, but the sales proved to be disappointing. Although there was a ready market for lacquer, their customers were not willing to pay such high sell prices for the imported lacquer. Despite the repeated instructions sent to stop purchasing lacquer
lacquer craftsmen, for those working in Osaka, Miyako and Nagasaki complained in informed earlier in 1639. It is clear that the Dutch had a preference for some specific were to be ordered and that tables were wanted in the Dutch Republic, as had been instructions. Orders for some furniture with green, red or black interiors were made was once again instructed not to send any lacquer to the Dutch Republic until further compartmented boxes for bottles or tableware, however, were to be ordered because, no cost prices did not vary according to the decoration, or ray skin, but only by size. No compartmented boxes for boxes or tableware, however, were to be ordered because there was no demand for such lacquers in the Dutch Republic. In June 1638, Hirado was once again instructed not to send any lacquers to the Dutch Republic until further instructions. Orders for some furniture with green, red or black interiors were made again in 1642. The following year, the instructions stated that no names of coffers were to be ordered and that tables were wanted in the Dutch Republic, as had been informed earlier in 1639. It is clear that the Dutch had a preference for some specific lacquer craftsmen, for those working in Osaka, Miyako and Nagasaki complained in for the Dutch Republic because it was too expensive and did not sell quickly. VOC servants in Japan not only had ordered a small quantity of lacquer objects for them, but also purchased lacquers that had been made for the Iberians, as well as for the domestic market. By the early 1610s, the States-General was presenting lacquer consignments as diplomatic gifts to rulers of other European countries, perhaps as a way of using the large stocks of unsold lacquer that the VOC had in both Batavia and Amsterdam. Various types of furniture and small utilitarian objects were made to order for the VOC at this time. Tables, for example, appear to have been made in at least three sizes. Those of the two smaller sizes may have been of low, rectangular shape like the extant examples decorated in Namban style, while the largest size may have been a full-sized table of European proportions, such as the only recorded example dating to the Momoyama period. Chests and cabinets were also made. Although specific instructions were given in a contract for each specific order, the lacquer craftsmen sometimes did not fully comply with them. Private trade was also carried out at the time, but on a small scale. Although the Dutch were forbidden from trading in Hirado as a consequence of the so-called Taiwan incident, some VOC and private orders were still fulfilled during the trade embargo, including both furniture and tableware. When the embargo was lifted in 1633, the VOC had a renewed interest in lacquer and began to place orders on a large scale, especially of coffers, chests and comports, some of them decorated with ray skin, most probably made with the ‘sprinkle denticle’ technique. Cost prices did not vary according to the decoration, or ray skin, but only by size. No compartmented boxes for boxes or tableware, however, were to be ordered because there was no demand for such lacquers in the Dutch Republic. In June 1638, Hirado was once again instructed not to send any lacquers to the Dutch Republic until further instructions. Orders for some furniture with green, red or black interiors were made again in 1642. The following year, the instructions stated that no names of coffers were to be ordered and that tables were wanted in the Dutch Republic, as had been informed earlier in 1639. It is clear that the Dutch had a preference for some specific lacquer craftsmen, for those working in Osaka, Miyako and Nagasaki complained in 1643 that the work was given to only one and insisted in that it should be distributed more evenly among themselves.

The extant lacquer objects discussed above have demonstrated that a number of new shapes were made to order for the Dutch and English merchants, despite the fact that the latter stayed only for ten years in Japan, in the early decades of the seventeenth century. A variety of utilitarian objects are mentioned in both VOC and EIC documents suited for European daily life and pastimes. These objects were mostly modelled directly after European models that must have been provided, including ewer and basin sets, tankards, comb cases, square-shaped bottles and backgammon boards. VOC documents also mention boxes of collars and shaving bowls, but only few extant examples of these shapes appear to have been preserved. These were hybrid objects combining a European shape and the relatively simple decorative technique of Namban lacquer that had been developed to suit the demand of the Jesuits and later the Iberians. The lacquer tankards can be considered as precursors of those made to order for the Dutch in porcelain at the kilns of Jingdezhen in China discussed in in section 3.4.2.1 of Chapter III. New lacquer furniture shapes appear to have been introduced by private Dutch merchants, including folding chairs that copied faithfully a Dutch church chair model. The Dutch influence on such early pieces of furniture, as with the smaller objects used daily or in pastimes, was limited.

VOC servants and private Dutch merchants began to order objects of very high quality decorated in expensive and elaborate lacquer techniques in the 1630s and early 1640s. The Dutch influence on these pieces is clearly more obvious. Some of the objects combined Japanese shapes and scenes taken from Japanese literature with the names or monograms of the wives of the two highest ranking officials of the VOC serving in Asia, as well as of some of the VOC servants in Japan. Other objects, such as the balustrades ordered for the wife of the third Stadholder of the States General in the Dutch Republic, were made after European models but decorated in the so-called Transition style that imitated the Kodaiji makie style of lacquer made for the domestic market. This type of balustrade was intended for use in the interior decoration of their residences. The inventories of their palaces in The Hague, Noordeinde and the Stadholder’s Quarter list in the closets of both the prince and princess, objects in red lacquer as well as Namban lacquer. Lacquer pieces of extraordinary high quality decorated in the so-called Transition style were also made to order after European shapes at about this time. Two extant chests of this high quality, and two cabinets made in French boule-work marquetry with panels from one other chest of comparable quality that was dismantled and cut, belong to the so-called ‘superlative group’ of lacquers. The fine and complex lacquer techniques and decorative motifs, however, are wholly Japanese depicting scenes taken from Japanese literature. These chests, together with one other chest presumably of the same high quality, appear to have been ordered by the VOC in 1643. It is believed that these chests were made at the lacquer workshop of the Kiámi family of Miyako. Such high quality and expensive pieces of lacquer would most probably have been intended to give as gifts.
Lacquer for the Japanese domestic market [4.1.3]

To finalize the discussion of the European influence on Japanese lacquer it is imperative to mention briefly a variety of Namban objects decorated in lacquer of very high quality with European figures, which were made during the period of Portuguese presence in Japan, from 1542/1543 to 1619, most probably for the Japanese domestic market rather than for export to Western Europe or the New World. The strange physical features of the Portuguese merchants and officials, and their attendants (sailors, African slaves, Indians and Malays), dressed with their voluminous breeches (kowndana), doublets, cloaks, collars, ruffs and tall hats, who came to Japan every year in the Black Ship (tsuribune), called the Namban-ō in Japan, were so fascinating to the Japanese craftsmen that they were portrayed with a high degree of detail on various objects, mostly made in traditional Japanese shapes, all finely decorated in lacquer. These include wooden objects, such as saddles (kura), letter boxes (suzuribako), writing boxes (nambuwa), writing boxes (suzuribako), large bulging eyes), the exotic clothes they wore and their daily customs.

Although these lacquer objects fall out of the scope of this study, they deserve some attention because they provide further material evidence of the profound influence that the continuous presence of the Portuguese and their culture exerted on the Japanese daily life and the arts made during the Momoyama and early Edo period for the warrior elite and wealthy merchant class. A tiered food box (jubako) dating to the first quarter of the seventeenth century in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. no. 48.14) is clearly

Fig. 4.1.3.1 Tiered lacquer box (jubako) Momoyama/early Edo period. Height: 21 cm; width: 26.5; depth: 22.5 cm. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. no. 48.14).

Fig. 4.1.3.2 Boardwalk (jubako) 17th century. Silver inlay (maki-e) and kirikane. Height: 27 cm; width: 24.5; depth: 22 cm. Fundação Abel e João de Lacerda – Museu do Oriente, Lisbon (inv. no. 46332-46362).
The present study of textual sources concerning the trade in Chinese porcelain and Japanese lacquer by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and of extant porcelain and lacquer objects from public and private collections around the world, has brought to light an interesting and important historical fact that had been previously overlooked. This historical fact relates to the influence the Europeans exerted in the goods made to order for them in both Japan and China. It has been shown that Japanese lacquer objects were made to order in European shapes for the Dutch and English trading companies earlier than in Chinese porcelain. This was a totally unexpected find, and something of a revelation, which could only occur because the research was not restricted to the study of only porcelain or lacquer. However, it also raised some concrete questions relating to the material qualities of the goods made to order, and the way in which the European demand and Japanese/Chinese production/supply was conducted at a personal level.

In order to fully understand this historical fact it is important to remember that exactly the opposite occurred in the case of the Portuguese and Spanish. The earliest extant Japanese lacquer objects modelled directly after European shapes appear to have been made in Miyako (present-day Kyoto) for the Jesuits in about 1580, and shortly after for the Portuguese and Spanish. Porcelain in European shapes, as shown in section 3.4.1 of Chapter III, was first made to order at the Jingdezhen kilns in China for the Portuguese about forty years earlier, in the early 1540s.

Textual sources concerning the trade in lacquer by both the VOC and EIC and extant lacquer objects demonstrate that a number of new shapes suited for European daily life and pastimes were first made to order for the Dutch and English trading companies in Japan in the early 1610s. The apparently unique extant lacquer tankard decorated in Namban style made after a Dutch pewter or tin-glazed earthenware model, dating to c.1600–1620 (Fig. 4.1.2.4), together with the lacquer tankards first mentioned in an EIC document dated July 1617, and the beer beakers first mentioned in a VOC document dated November 1615, can be considered as precursors of the tankards and beer beakers that began to be made to order for the Dutch in porcelain decorated in the so-called Transitional style at the Jingdezhen kilns in the mid-1630s (Figs. 3.4.2.1.11 and 3.4.2.1.20). At this point it is important to note that this study did not find evidence of any influence exerted by the English in porcelain made to order during this period. One cannot fail to wonder why the English ordered lacquer in European shapes, but not porcelain in European shapes, despite the fact that their presence in Japan lasted only ten years, from 1613 to 1623. A few possible reasons come to mind. The English, and perhaps also the Dutch, may have considered that the material qualities of Japanese lacquer were better than those of Chinese porcelain. They may also have thought that there would be a regular demand for such expensive imported lacquer if made in European shapes, which would have served to enhance the social status of the owner, whether in England or the Dutch Republic. English and Dutch textual sources have shown that some of the lacquer tankards and beer beakers ordered by EIC servants were sent as gifts to VOC representatives or as private consignments of lacquer to individuals in England; and that although lacquer was too expensive and did not sell quickly in the Dutch Republic, the States-General presented lacquer objects as diplomatic gifts to rulers of other European countries, perhaps as a way of using the large stocks of unsold lacquer that the VOC had in both Batavia and Amsterdam.

However, it is also possible that the main reason why the Dutch first ordered small utilitarian objects in European shapes in lacquer rather than in porcelain was more practical and related to the ways in which the VOC and private Dutch merchants conducted trade with Japan and China. The Dutch first arrived in Japan in 1601, but it was only in the late 1610s that they opened a VOC factory in Hirado. The following year, Jacques U’Hermite the Younger, the VOC representative in Batavia, sent a report to the Gentlemen Seventeen, stating ‘I have seen some lacquer in the ship that came from Japan . . . which is very beautiful and of good quality and from that country one can easily obtain and also have made those items that one might wish to trade’. It is clear from this excerpt that the Dutch, who undoubtedly knew about the lacquers that were made in European shapes for the Jesuits, Portuguese and Spanish since the 1580s, thought to take advantage of ordering objects to the specific requirements of the VOC customers in the Dutch Republic. The presence of the Dutch in Japan and their direct contact with the lacquer craftsmen facilitated the placing of such orders, the supply of European models, and the control of the production. In sharp contrast to the situation in Japan, the Dutch had been unable to establish a permanent VOC trading post in China or in a nearby location like the Portuguese had done in Macao and the Spanish in Manila. Thus the Dutch were forced to acquire porcelain through the Chinese junk traders that came to trade with them at Batavia, and then at Batavia. As was shown in the preceding pages, the VOC only began to order porcelain in European shapes or with specific decorative motifs after they established a trading post on Tayouan in 1624. The following year, the VOC servants in Batavia supplied Tayouan with models to be copied by Chinese potters in Jingdezhen. However, the earliest textual evidence of porcelain having been made in European shapes dates to 1635. These so-called Transitional porcelains in European shapes, made by the Chinese potters after models provided by the VOC, had to be painted in Chinese style and not with European models, despite the ‘Dutch paintings, flower or leafwork’, which did not last long. Thus, a nice contrast was created between a familiar shape and the exotic Chinese designs, which apparently pleased the Dutch customers and was profitable for the VOC. It is interesting to note that almost at the same time the VOC began to request Japanese lacquer in a different, more Japanese and pictorial style. Here, too, a similar dichotomy was achieved, because the compotes, boxes, bowls, garnitures and other European-shaped objects ordered soon were all decorated in this new Japanese pictorial style. European-style decorations on Japanese lacquer were only introduced much later, when the fashion had changed once again.

Discussion [4.2]
This led to the development of a new style of lacquer, known as *Namban urushi*. Japan, and most probably also in their missions in Asia, Europe and the New World, working in and around Miyako for use in personal devotion and Jesuit churches in appear to have been the first Europeans to order lacquer objects from local craftsmen conclusions. Firstly, it is shown that the Jesuit missionaries helped to spread a taste for From the scattered information provided by the primary and secondary sources, and the extant lacquer pieces, discussed in this Chapter is possible to make severalFrom about 1580, the lacquer craftsmen made a wide variety of hybrid objects combining a European or Indo-Portuguese shape, and the ‘IHS’ monogram of the Society of Jesus or other motifs embedded with Christian symbolism, with dense naturalistic compositions of Japanese flowering plants, birds and/or animals most probably based on paintings made by the renowned Kano school, but with a *horror vacui* and lavish use of mother-of-pearl inlay that was totally alien to Japanese aesthetics. In addition, they made objects combining a traditional Japanese shape and lacquer techniques with the ‘IHS’ monogram, most probably intended for the Jesuits personal use or as gifts to powerful daimyos who had converted to Christianity. Liturgical lacquers with Christian iconography that would not have been immediately recognizable by the Tokugawa shogunate, or no Christian iconography at all, most probably began to be made to order after the anti-Christian edict of 1597. Liturgical lacquers made with the ‘IHS’ monogram in the early Edo period were also decorated in the so-called Transition style, which imitated the *Kodaiji makie* style introduced by the workshops of the Kōami family for the domestic market. Initially, liturgical lacquers were exclusively made for the Jesuits, but by the beginning of the seventeenth century small numbers were also made for friars of the Mendicant Orders, or even for private individuals, present in Japan at the time to be sent as gifts to the Iberian Peninsula and/or New Spain. These included pieces bearing the monogram of the Order of St Dominic decorated in *Namban* style. Textual sources indicate that friars of these Mendicant Orders helped in further establishing diplomatic relations between Japan, Western Europe and New Spain. A few extant liturgical lacquers decorated in the late, so-called Transition style, including those bearing the ‘IHS’ monogram, demonstrate that despite the severity of the Christian persecution, the Jesuits and friars of the Mendicant Orders continued ordering liturgical lacquers in the early Edo period up until about 1639, when they were expelled and the country was closed to all Europeans (sakoku).

The Portuguese merchants ordered a variety of lacquer portable furniture and utilitarian objects in considerable quantities after models they brought with them from both Europe and their settlements in India, which would have been useful for private use in a European context or in their settlements in Asia. These objects, probably first made in the early Momoyama period, were decorated in the *Namban* style newly developed by the lacquer craftsmen to suit the Jesuit liturgical orders. Later, in the early seventeenth century, the decoration also included the traditional Japanese ‘sprinkling dentille’ lacquer technique imitating ray skin, or an all-over design of small scales of mother-of-pearl, which was undoubtedly copied from objects brought by the Portuguese from Gujarat in western India, in addition to *makie*. The exotic naturalistic scenes of Japanese flowering plants, birds and/or animals as well as Japanese traditional motifs, such as the family crests or insignia (mon), appear to have been much appreciated by the Portuguese, as the furniture and smaller objects made for them rarely included European motifs. Japanese lacquer furniture may have reached the royal court of Lisbon as early as the mid-1560s. By the late sixteenth century lacquer furniture would have been available for purchase in Lisbon. Members of the high-ranking nobility acquired pieces in Lisbon and then took them to Spain. Some furniture pieces, such as coffers, chests and cabinets, were adapted for religious use, and served as reliquaries in monasteries and convents of both Portugal and Spain.

The similarities of the lacquer imported by the Iberians is not surprising, as Japanese and Portuguese ships went to Manila with cargoes of lacquer and other trade goods for sale. By the early 1610s, Spanish merchants traded in lacquer objects in considerable quantities, which may have been tableware rather than furniture. Accounts, reports and letters written by Jesuits and European merchants who were present in Japan, or in other settlements in Asia, prove that lacquer objects reached the Iberian Peninsula via both the Portuguese trans-Atlantic, and Spanish trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic trade routes. Pieces such as coffers and/or writing desks were sent to Spain as gifts from male and female members of the elites and clergy living in the Philippines and New Spain in the early decades of the seventeenth century. In the late 1620s, during the early Edo period, the Spanish were importing into Spain lacquer furniture, folding screens, and most probably also tableware, which would have been available not only to the royalty but also to the high-ranking nobility. By 1637, the trade in lacquer carried out by both the Portuguese and Spanish was in danger of ceasing. Two years later, in 1639, their trading activities ceased abruptly when they were expelled, alongside the Christian missionaries, and Japan was closed to all Europeans with the exception of the Dutch, who were allowed to stay because they did not proselytize the Christian faith.

VOC written sources provide a fairly good idea of the trade in lacquer, shipments to the Dutch Republic and purchase price of lacquer in Japan. Initially, it was believed

From the scattered information provided by the primary and secondary sources, and the extant lacquer pieces, discussed in this Chapter is possible to make several conclusions. Firstly, it is shown that the Jesuit missionaries helped to spread a taste for

Conclusions [4.3]
that lacquer was a profitable trade good to be imported into the Dutch Republic. The sales, however, proved disappointing because their customers were not willing to pay such high sell prices for the imported lacquer. Repeated instructions were sent to the VOC servants in Japan to stop purchasing lacquer for the Dutch Republic. Due to the time lapse in communication, the VOC servants not only continued to order lacquer objects, but also purchased lacquer made for the Iberians, as well as for the domestic market. The States-General began to send lacquer as diplomatic gifts to rulers of other European countries in the early 1610s, perhaps to make use of large stocks of unsold lacquer that the VOC had in both Batavia and Amsterdam. Private trade was also carried out, but on a small scale. Although the Dutch were forbidden from trading in Hirado for five years as a consequence of the so-called Taiwan incident of 1628, some private orders of furniture and tableware were still fulfilled during this period. The VOC developed a renewed interest in lacquer at the time and began to place orders on a large scale after the embargo was lifted in 1633. Five years later, in 1638, Hirado was once again instructed not to send any lacquer to the Dutch Republic until further instructions but orders for furniture with green, red or black interiors and for other objects were made again in 1642.

A number of new lacquer shapes were made to order for the Dutch and English trading companies in the early 1610s, despite the fact that the latter stayed in Japan only from 1613 to 1623. These included a variety of utilitarian objects suited for European daily life and pastimes, which were made directly after European models. These were hybrid objects combining a European shape and the new style of lacquer known as Namban that had been developed to suit the demand of the Jesuits and later the Iberians, depicting Japanese naturalistic scenes largely based on paintings by artists of the Kōno school. As shown in the previous pages, both VOC and EIC textual sources demonstrate that these utilitarian lacquer objects were made to order in European shapes for the Dutch and English almost two decades earlier than in Chinese porcelain. Tankards are first mentioned in an EIC document of 1617, beer beakers are first mentioned in a VOC document of 1615, while an extant Namban lacquer tankard provides tangible evidence of such orders. They can be considered as precursors of similar objects made to order for the Dutch in porcelain decorated in the so-called Transitional style at the kilns of Jingdezhen in the mid-1630s. New lacquer furniture shapes appear to have been introduced by private Dutch merchants. These include folding chairs made in 1630–1650 after a Dutch church chair model. The influence exerted on the lacquer craftsmen by the Dutch in the making of such early pieces of furniture, and the smaller objects used daily or in pastimes, was still limited. Although specific instructions were given in a contract for each specific order, it is clear that the lacquer craftsmen not always fully complied with them. This changed between the early 1630s and early 1640s, when VOC servants and private Dutch merchants ordered objects of very high quality decorated in expensive and elaborate traditional Japanese lacquer techniques. The Dutch influence on these lacquer pieces is more obvious, not only in the variety of shapes, but also in the preference of the northern European customers for pictorial Japanese exotic decorations. Objects combined Japanese shapes and scenes taken from Japanese literature with Dutch names or monograms, or were made after European models decorated in the so-called Transition style that imitated the Kodaiji makie made for the domestic market. For instance, the balustrades, the objects in red lacquer and the Namban lacquer listed in the inventories of the Dutch Stadholder's palaces in The Hague attest to the taste for lacquer that developed amongst the elite of the Dutch Republic, who could have afforded such expensive imported lacquer. Lacquer made to order after European shapes at this time also included pieces of extraordinary high quality decorated in the Transition style with a wide range of very complex and expensive lacquer techniques. A small number of pieces, among them the Mazarin chest in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Rijksmuseum chest, all of extraordinary quality, appear to have been ordered by the VOC in 1643. In all probability such high-quality and expensive pieces of lacquer, probably made at the lacquer workshop of the Kōami family of Miyako, would have been intended to give as gifts. They give testimony to the Dutch preference for fine quality lacquer made for the domestic market decorated with exotic Japanese motifs rather than the lacquer decorated in the Namban style.