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NAMBA N ART
Packing and Transportation¹

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Introduction

Methods of packing art objects as well as practices adopted during transportation and while carrying ceremonial gifts reflected the multicultural interaction between Europeans and Japanese in the sixteenth century (Fig. 1). Such practices could also be viewed as an example of what has nowadays been commonly termed the Namban Culture.

Throughout the centuries, the packing of art objects has been one of the issues that required special attention, primarily during long distance journeys. If, nowadays, this is considered to be one of the most important issues in programmes for the preventive conservation of art objects belonging to museums², the same attention was required during the sixteenth century for the objects to reach their destination without any damage. We must bear in mind that, at that time, a ship would take about two years to cross the seas between Nagasaki and Lisbon and about three years from Lisbon to Nagasaki³. Such objects, manufactured in wood and lacquer, could easily deteriorate upon being exposed to equatorial climes as well as changes in environmental factors, if the necessary measures were not taken during packing and handling. In fact, contemporary studies on the conservation of wooden artefacts have demonstrated that lacquerware with mother-of-pearl inlays number amongst those objects that show a high or very high vulnerability, particularly to humidity and ultraviolet radiation⁴.

³ The transit time from Japan to Europe was different from Europe to Japan. An example is the journey made by the first Japanese Embassy to Europe, which left Nagasaki in February 1582 and arrived in Lisbon in October 1584. On their return, they embarked in Lisbon in April 1586 and arrived in Nagasaki in July 1590.
⁴ Stefan Michalski, Wooden Artefacts and Humidity Fluctuations: Different Construction and Different Means Different Vulnerabilities (Table Version 3.0) Ottawa, Canadian Conservation Institute, 1994; Humidity Response Times of Wooden Objects, Ottawa, Canadian Conservation Institute, 1994.
If on the one hand, adequate packing was essential for the preservation of these objects during the long sea voyages, this study seeks to go one step further and will also analyse the role of certain objects whose main function was almost exclusively related with practices of protocol. In order to communicate efficiently, both Europeans and Japanese had to adopt symmetrical protocol practices. This article will analyse this issue, citing examples of the function that objects, such as trays, had in such ceremonies. The perception of the vulnerability of Namban art and measures taken in order to avoid damage to the objects during their transportation are perfectly demonstrated, mainly by three Jesuit written sources, all related to the first Japanese Embassy to Europe:\(^5\): The instructions given in 1583 by Father Alessandro Valignano, S.J. to Father Nuno Rodrigues, S.J., *Regimento e Instrução do q hadi fazir o Padre Nuno Rois q vay por Procurador à Roma*, preparing the first Japanese Embassy to Europe; accounts of the journey in the *Tratado dos Embaixadores Iapões que forão de Iapão a Roma no anno de 1582* written by Father Luís Fróis, S.J.; and, finally, the return of the same Embassy to Nagasaki attributed to the same author in the *Apparatos para a Historia Ecclesiastica do Bispado de Japam do anno de 1588*. Therefore, this study will cross reference information about the Embassy’s journey given in such accounts in order to illustrate the main theme of this article.

\(^5\) Father Alessandro Valignano, S.J., organised the first Japanese Embassy to Europe after his visit to Japan, which took place in 1579. One of his main goals was to develop the local Catholic mission. The Embassy consisted of four young Japanese envoys, Miguel Chijiwa, Mâncio Ito, Julião Nakaura and Martinho Hara, who were selected to represent the Christian clans of Kyushu: Bungo, Arima and Omura, respectively.
1. Transporting namban art

The Jesuits were fully aware of the value of Namban objects and for this reason lacquerware was known as "brincos do Japão". However, these valuable and delicate objects had to be transported by sea to Europe. This meant that they had to endure climatic changes during the long distance trip, namely in terms of relative humidity and temperature. Eventual attacks by insects, careless handling and shocks inherent to sea travel also contributed to the dangers of transportation. The perception of these environmental dangers and the hazards caused by carrying excess cargo are clearly described in the following text that gives an account of the Embassy’s outward voyage:

“They left from Nagasaki for China (…) in the era of 1582 (…) where they remained for a few months awaiting the monsoons to go to India (…) and when this arrived, they left from Macao and took the China route to Malacca. They encountered a fierce storm, and this passed, but they had to jettison some cargo from the ship, that was small, and managed to arrive in Goa safely (…) We left from Cochin (…) in the nao Santiago (…) that left, and was very heavily loaded with cargo, and carrying large volumes, as was usual (…) After we left Cochin, three days later, (…) they found that the ship was letting in water (…) but thought that it was due to the blows that it had received from the barges at the time of loading the cargo, (…) and after a lot of effort shifting the cargo and boxes, and finding a large hole, it was caulked and the leak was stopped (…)".

6 "Ear rings from Japan" is an expression of the age that meant fine objects. Father Alessandro Valignano, SJ, uses this expression: "Amongst the things that they are taking, are those items that are being sent to Rome to the Pope, which should not be tampered with in any way. Father Gabriel Afonso, Procurador, will seek information as to whether it is convenient to take some piece 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 (…)"

7 "partirão de Nangazaqui para a China (…) na era de 1582 (…) a onde estiverão algúz meszes esperando pela monsãó para India (…) e chegando o tempo, se partirão de Macao passando naq[ue]le camino da China para Malaca Hia grande tempestade, e tormenta desfeitas, mas có se alijar algú fato da nao, q era pequena (…) de os levar em salvamento á Goa (…) Partimos de Cochin (…) em a nao Santiago (…) que partido, hia sobejamente carregada, e abulumada. como
Specific measures were taken to minimise the risks of damage upon transportation. Individual pieces or groups of lacquerware were accommodated in wooden boxes, chests, baskets or rattan cases specially ordered for the purpose. The boxes and chests were constructed in hard woods from India, such as teak, sandalwood, jacktree and even camphor-wood. Some of these botanical species had antiseptic properties that offered protection from the attacks of xylophagous insects. For example, Father Alessandro Valignano, S.J. wrote that he had ordered boxes in Cochin to pack folding screens:

"If possible, the folding screens should be taken inside the big box that I bought in Cochin for this purpose, because it seems that he costume (...) depoes q partimos de Cochim, dahi a tres dias, (...) acharão que fazia a nao tanta agua (...) mas entendendo que seria das pancadas que recebera das barcas ao tempo da carga, (...) que buscandoa se deo com ella, posto q cõ muito trabalho de mudar o fato, e caxaria, e achando hum buraco grande, se calafetou, e vedou de todo (...)". Luís Fróis, S.J., *Tratado dos Embaixadores Japões que foram de Iapão à Roma no anno de 1582, La Première Ambassade du Japon en Europe 1582-1592*, edition by Abranches Pinto; Yoshitomo Okamoto; Henri Bernard, S.J., *Tokyo, Sophia University*, 1942, p. 9; 23-25.

The expression "alijar algú fato" means "to throw cargo overboard". For further information see footnotes of the *Tratado dos Embaixadores Japões*, partial edition of the *Tratado dos Embaixadores Japões que foram de Iapão à Roma no anno de 1582*, annotated by Rui Loureiro, Lisbon, Grupo de Trabalho do Ministério da Educação para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, s.d.

8 In Japan these chests and boxes were called *Saibitçu* – large square box to carry provisions on board [Saibitçu – caixão quadrado pera meter matalotagem], *Voc. Ling. Japam*, op. cit., fl. 421.

9 Currently, the materials used to manufacture packing cases are carefully selected. One of the most important considerations is chemical stability. Boxes made from organic materials such as wood can release organic acids and can cause corrosion or tarnish in metallic items such as copper gilded fittings. Despite the inherent drawbacks of these materials, Erhardt states that, "It is inevitable that unsafe materials will be packed and housed with objects. The use of material such as wood continues despite all the evidence against it. There is no better alternative material that combines the insulation, relative humidity buffering, and strength of wood with its working properties and economic appeal", David Erhardt, *Art in Transit: Material Consideration*, *Art in Transit, Studies in the Transport of Painting*, National Gallery of Arts, ed. by Marion F. Washington, Mecklenburg, 1991, p. 32.


11 Due to its intrinsic properties camphor-wood was not only used to construct chests but was also used in the construction of the ships themselves: "There is also camphor, (...) the tree, or its wood, is aromatic, and has an almost incorruptible durability, that due to its resistance is so good for ships", ["Também há canfora, (...) a arvore, e de dura quazi incorruptível, que por sua frialdade tão bom para os navios"], Father João Rodrigue, SJ, *História da Igreja do Japão*, 1549-1570, Jesusitas na Ásia, B.A. 49-IV-53, fl. 42 v.

under the deck 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” 13.

As the above account mentions, specific places inside the ship were reserved for cargo, which was placed over wooden beams. These kinds of measures were also used by the Japanese and are defined in the Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam as: “Tomegui. Certain logs of wood that they place in the ship to secure the goods and cargo so that these don’t fall” 14. In 1575, the “Regimento das Cazas das Índias e Mina” promulgated measures in order to standardise the dimensions of packing cases, as quoted by Jordão Felgueiras in the article “Arcas Indo-Portuguesas de Cochim”:

“I, the King [D. Sebastião], announce to those who read this charter that I have been informed that very large boxes are taken and brought in the ships of the Armada, and it is for this reason that I decree that henceforth nobody shall neither take nor bring in them boxes apart from those measuring five palmos, two and a half in width and another two and a half in height.” 16

In order to avoid misunderstandings during the unloading of merchandise, the packing cases were identified with labels, coats of arms, religious emblems or markings belonging to the owners. For instance, Father Valignano, S.J. mentions that, “(...) and the boxes and other things that are taken to Portugal should all be marked with our emblem so that they can be recognised in Portugal” 17. An example of a rattan case with a coat of arms

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13 “hos biobos se for possivel se levarão metidos no caixão grande q pera ysso deixey comprado in Cochim, porq parece q onde bayxo da cuberta ou na parte da solda q compramos aucra comodidade pera ysso e pondoos em lugar onde não possão sover [chover] ne serë molhados de agoa”, Regimento e Instrução, op. cit. fl. 51.
15 According to Jordão Felgueiras, 5 palmos corresponded to 1.10 metres and 2½ palmos was equivalent to 0.55 metres.
16 “Eu, El Rey, faço saber aos que este alvará virem que eu sou informado que nas naos da Armada (...) se levão e trazem caixoens munto grandes (...) hey por bem e mando que daqui em deante pessoa algúna (...) não leve, nem traga nellas, senão caixão de cinco palmos, dous e meyo de largo, e outros dous e meyo d’alto”, Damião Peres, Regimento das Cazas das Índias e Mina (1509-1697), Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1947, p. 147.
17 “(...) e as caixas e mais cousas q leva pera Portugal os faça mutrar [marcar] todas com nossa marca paraq se possão conhecer em Portugal (...)” Padre Alessandro Valignano, S.J., Regimento e
and the owner’s name (Fig. 2), with the corresponding contents – a Namban chest (Fig. 3) – has survived and is currently on display at the Itsuō Art Museum, Osaka, Japan. The design of this case, with a cylindrical shaped lid, prevented other objects being piled on top of it.

The following excerpt from Father Luís Fróis, S.J., about this Embassy mentions the packing of lacquerware in baskets:

“They offered him [Philip II of Spain] some pieces from Japan, (...) a delicate basket, that contained many pieces inside, and he was amazed to see them packed in such a small space; and a kind of small barrel, very beautifully lacquered, that was packed in the bottom, and this was the most admired piece of all”.

The use of oilpaper to wrap outer boxes in order to protect the contents from humidity has been described by Jesuits as a Japanese procedure. The

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18 The rattan case has the following inscription: “DOÑA ANA ARZ [Alvarez?] GIRON”, which along with the above mentioned coat of arms would suggest that it belonged to a Portuguese or Spanish family. For further information see Martha Boyer, *Japanese Export Lacquers from the Seventeenth Century in the National Museum of Denmark*, Copenhagen, The National Museum, 1959.

19 “Offerecerão-lhe [a D. Filipe II de Espanha] algúas peças de Japao, (...) hum cesto delicado, q dentro de sy tinha muitas peças, e ficou espantado de as ver metidas em tao pequeno espaco; e húa maneira de pipazinha muito bem uruxada, q hia no fundo, e esta foi a mais celebrada de todas”, *La Première Ambassade du Japon en Europe*, op. cit., p. 88.
Vocabulario also mentions: “Yutan. oiled paper, or something else that they place on top of the goods, or box, etc., so that it is not treated badly or damaged”\(^{20}\). It is widely known that paper or fabrics were also used to wrap lacquerware and served as protective cushioning. Another practice was to place the objects within pouches which, in the case of letters, were called *Fubocuro* – letter pouches\(^ {21}\) that, in their turn, were placed inside lacquered boxes. These pouches, normally made of silk, did not simply conform to practices of protocol or serve a merely decorative purpose, but also played an important role in the conservation of the object. Official documents illustrate this practice quite well, as is evident in the description given by Father Luís Fróis, S.J. while referring to the letter that the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi sent to the Viceroy of India in 1591, after receiving the Embassy upon its return from Europe.

“(…) the paper is placed inside decorated all over with floral motifs in gold, placed in a pouch that is as long as the width of the paper; and the letter is rolled up, as is the custom in Japan\(^ {22}\). The said pouch is made of painted crimson silk, and decorated with floral motifs in gold, and silver, and is placed inside a kind of box, that in Japan is used only for letters, and this box is a marvellous and very rich piece, that

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\(^{20}\) *Yutan. Papel azeitado, ou qualquer outra coisa que botam por cima do fato, ou caixa etc. p.ª Que não se trate mal ou dane* Voc. Ling. Iapam, op. cit., fl. 650 v.

\(^{21}\) *Fubocuro. Saquinhos de cartas, ibid., fl. 197 v.*

\(^{22}\) The letters were also folded, as the definition given in the Vocabulario informs us: "*Tatebuni. Letter that is closed folding it lengthwise, and giving it knots only at the ends." ["Tatebuni. Carta que se fecha ao comprido dobrando, e dando-lhe nós somente nas pontas"], Voc. Ling. Iapam, op. cit., fl. 474.
without doubt if anyone in all of Europe saw it, they would admire the
delicacy and perfection of that object; because it is entirely covered
inside, and outside, by a kind of varnish, that in Japan is called *urushi*;
sprinkled with gold ground as fine as sand; it is a very laborious
masterpiece, and is decorated with flowers and roses of thin sheets of
silver, and gold, that are inlaid in that *urushi*. 23

One also observes that it was an established practice to tie the boxes with
cord and later place them within other boxes made of plain wood. These
cords were of silk or cotton, in accordance with the reverence that was due to
the receiver. To quote the words of Father Luís Fróis, S.J., in the same text:

“(...) and on one side and on the other it has some roses with some
rings of gold with a relief executed in black copper 24, in which
there are some cords by which one closes the box. And the roses,
except for being very expensive, are of excellent workmanship and,
if they were made in the fashion of our chests, they would be greatly
prized by any grand Prince in Europe. This box is completely
covered by another fine box, with its fittings and key. By this one
can understand the esteem in which these Lords of Tenca 25 hold
their letters and the honour that they do to your King in sending it
to him in this manner” 26.

23 “(...) vai o papel por dentro todo floreado com ouro, metida em húa bolsa tão comprida, como
he a largura do papel; e a carta vai enrolada, como em Japão se costuma; a qual bolsa he
carmezim de seda pintada, e floreada de ouro, e prata, e vai metida dentro de uma feição de
caxa, que serve em Japão somente para cartas, a qual he mui rica, e de tão maravilhoza obra, q
sem duvida em todas as partes de Europa q a virem se hão de admirar da delicadeza, e primor
daquella obra; por q he toda cuberta por dentro, e fora de húa maneira de verniz, que em Japão se
chama uruxi; semeada de ouro moido á maneira de area, q he obra de muito custo, e lavrada có
humas flores, e rozas de laminas delgadas de prata, e ouro, q vam de maneira encaxadas có
aquelle uraxi [sic].”, Father Luís Fróis, *Apparatos para a Historia Ecclesiatica do Bispado de
Japam do anno de 1588* (1589-1594), Jesuítas na Ásia, B.A., 49-IV-57, fl. 187 v. – 188 f.

24 The *Vocabulario* also refers to two techniques used to obtain the black copper that was
commonly used in Japan: “Xacudo. black copper that is skilfully made by mixing gold and
silver”; (“Xacudo. Cobre preto que se faz artificiosamente com mistura de ouro, ou prata”), *Voc.
Ling. Japam, op. cit.*, fl. 574. “Niarai. (...) to boil the copper in a certain kind of vinegar to make it
black, like goldsmiths do”. (“Niarai. (...) ferver o cobre em certo vinagre p.a fazer preto como

25 The term *Tenka* means realm, a title used by Oda Nobunaga with the intention of legitimising
his authority and was also used by his successors. For further information see *The Cambridge

26 “(...) e de húa parte, e da outra tê húas rosas có húas argolas de ouro có hum relevo de cobre
preto, em as quaes estão hús cordões có q a caxa se fecha; e as rozas alem de serem de muito
Sometimes, the lacquered boxes were equipped with the metal rings mentioned above or had open holes in the wood itself through which the cords were inserted. The latter method is mentioned in the *Vocabulario* as, “Uotouoxi. holes through which one passes the cord as is to be found in the base of some boxes (…)” 27. Vegetable fibres as well as bands of leather were frequently used to close the wooden packing cases and would clearly influence the decoration of the lacquered objects. This is particularly evident in the separation of the decorative fields, where the bands are transposed as geometric patterns around the chests, dividing it into different decorative areas (Fig. 4).

Specific preventive measures and the use of lacquerware itself as a container continued to be used in subsequent centuries according to Portuguese reports. Indeed, the quotation made by Maria Helena Mendes Pinto 29, registers a chest of Chinese lacquer lined with fabric 30 used as a container for other lacquerware.

27 “Uotouoxi. buracos e a onde se mete algũa corda como hà nos pês algũas caixas (...)", *Voc. Ling. Iapam*, op. cit., fl. 556.
28 The *Vocabulario* also mentions the use of fibres from the bark of trees that were utilised to tie boxes: “Togi, zzuru, ita (…)” *Vague monouo tozzuru*. to bind, or close boxes or cases etc. with some tree bark etc.”. “Togi, zzuru, ita (…)” *Vague monouo tozzuru*. Liear, ou fechar caixas, bocetas, etc. com alguma casca de arvore, etc.”, *Voc. Ling. Iapam*, op. cit., fl. 507 v. – 508 f.
30 The inner surfaces of the chests were usually covered with plain black or red lacquer and were sometimes painted with motifs inside the lid.
“Excerpt of the shipments that I sent from India [Goa] to Lisbon, on my account and risk, of which I mention: (...) On the 21st January 1707, I shipped in my covered space 31 on the *nao São Pedro Gonçalves* (...) in six containers the following items: (...) in one of them a lacquer chest from China, lined in damask (...) And inside this a trio of little boxes from Japan (...) two host boxes (...) four smaller boxes (...) one very long one (...) eight little trays (...) two large boxes (...) one square box with another eight [boxes] inside (...) and likewise two more *ventós* 32 from Japan, each one in their own container (...) And a large box that is full of ordered merchandise (...)” 33.

From this excerpt one can deduce that the Portuguese shipped Japanese lacquers from other parts of Asia during the period of seclusion (sakoku-jidai). In fact, this is quite surprising if we keep in mind that from 1639 onwards there were no official and commercial contacts between these two nations. Even more curious is the reference to the host boxes that belong to the so called *Jesuit lacquers*, which apparently continued to arrive in Portugal even after the edicts that expelled the Christians.

The same merchant gives us other examples of lacquered objects utilised as packing cases for other lacquered wares:

"I declare that I am taking with me on the ship aboard which I am sailing, the following items: In a chest measuring four *palmos* thirty two *ventós* lacquered in varied hues with gilded fittings (...) and inside one of them sixteen wooden bowls lacquered in Japan (...) And in the other *ventó* I am taking the following items: (...) a box from China with the relic of St. Francis Xavier and another little box for the *Misericordia* in Lisbon (...) And in container number ten a little chest made

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31 The term *gazalhados* means the covered space on a ship.
32 The term *Bentó* is defined in the *Vocabulario* as "A box in the manner of a writing-cabinet that has drawers inside, in which they carry foodstuffs". ["Húa caixa como escritorio, que tem dentro gavetas em q se levão couzas de comer"] Voc. Ling. Japan, op. cit., fl. 38 v.
33 "Extracto das Carreguaçoins que mandei da India [Goa] pera Lisboa por minha conta, e risco das quais faço mençam (...) En uninte e quatro de Janeiro de mil e settesenttos e sete carreguei nos meos aguazalhados da nao Sam Pedro Conçalues (...) em seis lechos as couzas seguintes (...) em hum delles huma arca de charam da China forrada de damasco (...) E dentro della hum terno de boçettas do Japam (...) dois de hostias (...) quatro mais piquenas (...) huma sobre comprída (...) oito tabolleirinhos (...) Duas boçettas grandes (...) Huma quadrada com oito dentro, (...) E assim mais dois ventós do Japam cada hum em seu lecho (...) E hum cachão que levou cheyo de encomendas (...)", *O Livro de Rezão de António Coelho Guerreiro* (1698-1707), preface by Virgínia Rau, Lisbon, Publicações Culturais da Companhia de Diamantes de Angola, 1956, pp. 86-88.
and lacquered in China (…) and inside it eight lacquered and gilded little boxes to be used as sweetmeat containers (…)" 34.

These Oriental objects are an example of the exotic material culture that was in vogue in Europe at the time. This consisted of varied paraphernalia 35 that included objects of a religious nature – according to the author a “relic of St. Francis Xavier” – as well as objects of everyday use: “I am taking three lacquered and gilded little boxes in one of which there are two wigs” 36.

The same author mentions that on the ship aboard which he sailed he took with him in one of the chests a set of fabrics, contained in two Japanese lacquered ventós:

“And in chest number four, four pieces of fine caixa (…) Two quilts in red cheri with stripes (…) printed cotton pieces, seven of which are coloured and five are white, (…) Two ventós from Japan (…)” 37.

34 “(…) E declaro que eu leuo comigo no nauio em que vou embarcado as couzas seguintes: Em huma arca de quatro palmos numero trinta e dois ventós acharoados de matizes com as ferragens douradas (…) E dentro de hum delles dezaseis tigellas de páo acharoadas no Japam (…) E no outro ventó leuo as couzas seguintes: (…) Huma boçetta da China com a reliquia de Sam Francisco Xauier e huma boçetinha pera a Mizericordia de Lisboa (…) E no feicho numero des huma arquinha feita e acharoada na China (…) e dentro della oito boçettas acharoadas e douradas como confeteiras (…)”, ibid., pp. 89-90.

35 Examples of this paraphernalia include: “porcelain watering cans from China; (…) cruets and other curiosities in chinaware, (…) bowls, (…) cups with their saucers from Japan, (…) fans (…) some gilded iron fittings, (…) ivory angels, (…) of two Calvaries (…) golden buttons with (…) diamonds and (…) rubies, (…) silver sword decoration from Japan, (…) spherical clock in silver, (…) clock with its tortoise shell box inlaid in silver, (…) seal and toothpick holder in gilded and ornamented silver, (…) reliquaries in silver filigree with (…) rubies, (…) crystal buttons with their roses of gilded and enamelled silver, (…) spoons, (…) forks and a knife handle in silver, (…) spectacles with silver frames and their cases, one of ivory and the other of tortoiseshell, (…) hand spectacles with its case; (…) silver buckles, (…) games with ivory game boards, (…) a piece of benzoin, little white vases painted in blue, with sweets (…)”

“borrifadores de louça da China; (…) galhettas e outras coriosidades de loussa, (…) tijellas, (…) xicharas con seos pires do Japam, (…) leques (…) algumas ferragens douradas, (…) anjos de marfim (…) de dois caluarios, (…) botoins de ouro com (…) diamantes e (…) rubis, (…) guarniçon de espadim de pratta do Japam, (…) relogio espherico de pratta, (…) relogio (…) com sua caxa de tartaruga atauxiada de pratta, (…) frasquinho de pratta laurada, (…) sinette e paliteiro de pratta aurada e dourada, (…) relicarios de filigrana de pratta, (…) rubis, (…) botoins de cristal com suas rozinhas de pratta douradas e esmaltadas, (…) colheres, (…) garfós e hum cabo de faca de pratta, (…) oculos con os aros de pratta e suas caxas huma de marfim outra de tartaruga, (…) oculo de mam de gráos com sua caxa, (…) filellas de pratta, (…) joguos de tabollas de juguar de marfim, (…) pedasso de beijoin, jarrinhas brancas pintadas de azul, com doçes (…)”, ibid., pp. 84-93.

36 “leuo tres boçettas acharoadas e douradas en que entra huma com duas cabelleiras”, ibid., p. 93.

37 “E na arca numero quatro quatro pessoas de caxas finas (…) Duas colxas de cheri vermelho lauradas de linhas (…) Pessas de chitas sette de cor, e sinco brancas (…) Dois ventozinhos do Japam (…)”, ibid., p. 90.
These textiles that were carried as merchandise in the same chests as the lacquered objects undoubtedly played an important role in the conservation of these items and served as a cushion against shocks.

Danish reports also refer to preventive measures and the use of lacquer-ware as a container. Martha Boyer states the following, when commenting on a manuscript written by the Danish Captain Claus Ritter, who commanded a trade ship from 1639 to 1644: "These chests were probably Japanese ones, as such were regularly used at the time as packing cases for Oriental goods to be sent to Europe, such as textiles, spices and small lacquered objects." She further adds that, "In order not to mislead the reader into thinking that it was only Japanese lacquered chests which were used for packing purposes, we should add that, time and again, mention is made of boxes and chests of plain wood for transportation" 38.

Finally, one may wonder whether all these measures outlined above and the extreme care that was taken with these objects during the transoceanic voyages were really an effective means of protection. According to the known accounts about the artefacts transported, such as the work by Father Luís Fróis, S.J., most of them arrived at their destination safely.

2. Presenting ceremonial gifts

Art objects were, amongst other things, one of the preferred items that were used as gifts for ceremonial exchanges. Rules of protocol determined not only the types of gift containers but also ways of packing and presenting them, thus creating patterns in the material language of such objects 39. In fact, objects such as trays that arrived in Europe well packed in their respective boxes, are also described in the ledger that we have mentioned earlier in this study: "(...) I am taking four more ornamented boxes with their metal fittings which contain ten trays from China; and in one of them, twenty six skeins of twisted sewing silk and coloured silk are packed (...)" 40.

Oriental practices of protocol, particularly those in Japan, were so different from equivalent ceremonies that were prevalent in the West that

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39 About the canons of protocol see Ronald Toby, State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan, Stanford University Press, California, 1991, particularly the chapter entitled The Looking Glass of Protocol: Mirror to an Ideal World.
40 "(...) Leuo mais quatro boçettas labradas com suas fechaduras en que vam des bandejas da Chyna (...); e en huma dellas vam vinte e seis massos de retrós e de seda de cores (...), O livro de Rezão, op. cit., fl. 93.
Father João Rodrigues, the Tçuzzo 41, who also served as protocol counsellor to the Portuguese delegations in Japan, dedicated several chapters of his História da Igreja do Japão to this theme.

“(…) it is a general custom in China, and Japan, as we have mentioned not to offer these things by hand as that is considered a discourtesy. Instead, everything is presented on their trays, which in China are lacquered and in Japan are made for this purpose from fine white cedar-wood (…) And when one goes or sends gifts outside their lands, they are sent with the trays made of wood that we have mentioned, if they are not to be found there, as sometimes happens (…)” 42

Rules of protocol pertaining to the handing over of gifts were based on principles of courtesy, linked with an extremely rigid notion of hierarchy and the dichotomy between the concepts of pure and impure. Thus, it was important to avoid physical contact when presenting gifts. This explains the use of trays upon which these gifts were placed 43, “(…) and all these [gifts], like all the other items as well as foodstuffs, are presented on trays or boards adapted to this purpose, that serve as salvers”.

If, on the one hand, some of these gifts were placed directly on the tray, others were previously wrapped in fabrics or placed in their respective boxes. The Vocabulario mentions the following term for these boxes: Reixen. Reinojeni – Boxes that are presented, or offered, when visiting somebody 44. Pictorial sources bear witness to these practices, namely in details of the procession of the Namban (Namban gyoretsu) (Fig. 5).

The manufacture of these objects was entrusted to professional craftsmen who specialised in these typologies. However, the structure of these trays implied the use of various techniques for their construction. For the square and rectangular shaped trays they resorted to joinnery

41 The term Tçuzzo is derived from the ancient Japanese word tsuji, which means “translator”.
42 “(...) he costume geral na China, e Japão como dissemos não oferecer estas couzas na mão por ser descortezia, mas todos sobre seus taboleiros, na China acheirados, e em Japão feitos para isso de madeira de fino cedro branco (…) E quando hum vay, ou manda prezente fora da terra, leva juntamente os taboleiros feitos de pao q dissemos, se lá as não há, como acontece as vezes (…).” Father João Rodrigues, S.J., História da Igreja do Japão, 1549-1570, Jesuítas na Ásia, B.A., 49-IV-53, fl. 87 v.
43 “(...) e todos estes [presentes], como todos os demais ainda de couzas de comer se apresentão sobre bandejas, ou taboleiros accomodados a isso, que servem como salvas”, ibid., fl. 85.
(sashimono), sometimes reinforced with pins or dowels. Round or flower shaped objects were manufactured by bending fine strips of wood (mage-mono). The dimensions varied according to the object that was being presented and the degree of courtesy that one wished to demonstrate, as this author also mentions:

“(...) [trays] proportioned to the items that are being offered, small, or large, which are custom made to order by craftsmen who live solely by this profession, who always have several already made in stock as it is an item that is often used, or if they have to be of a certain shape, they make them in a very short span of time as they are very dextrous in this art, and they are thus very cheap (…)” 45

Although the majority of the trays did not have any singular value, playing only an instrumental role in the ceremonies of protocol, they sometimes acquired a value similar to works of art in their own right when they were decorated with lacquer. To quote Father João Rodrigues, S.J.:

“(...) These trays would go with the present without being returned to the person who offered the gift, being utilised just that one time, a practice that is undoubtedly refined and pure, and praiseworthy in its own way (…)” 46.

45 “(...) [bandejas] proporcionados a couza que se offerece, pequenas, ou grandes, as quaes se mandão fazer depropozito por officiaes que só diso vivem, tendo sempre feito varias na tenda por ser couza muy uzada, ou se são de certa forma as fazem em muy breve tempo por serem nisso muy destros, e são porem muy baratas (...), História da Igreja do Japão, op. cit., fl. 87 v.
46 “(...) estas bandejas irião com o prezente sem se tornar a quem os offerece servindo só aquella vez, couza por certo de muita policia, e urbanidade, e digna de ser louvada a seu modo (…)”, ibid., op. cit., fl. 87 v.
He also adds that,

“(...) When, sometimes, the gifts are offered in trays lacquered with the very fine varnish obtained from a tree 47, of which no copies exist, these are returned to the person who brought it (...)” 48

Descriptions of these trays appear in the *Apparatos* about the visit of the aforementioned Embassy to the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1591. The gifts that were offered on the occasion by Hideyoshi to the visiting Embassy, beginning hierarchically with the Father Visitor, then with the *Línguas* (translators) and ending with the pages, the respect for the codes of conduct of protocol mentioned above is evident. This hierarchy was established by means of the relation between the value of the presents and the size of the trays upon which they were placed:

“(...) and they immediately bid the Father Visitor to enter. (...) as is the custom, some nobles appeared there, who took with them two large trays, each one of which contained a hundred ingots of silver, and another tray which contained four silk robes, which they call *Coçondes*. (...) After the Father Visitor, both the Fathers also went, (...) and each one of them was offered a tray in the same manner, with a hundred ingots of silver, and two silk *Coçondes* (...) Then, one by one he called the four nobles and all the other Portuguese, and pages; and ordered that a small tray with five ingots of silver and one silk *Coçonde* be given to each one of them, and (...) to those who served as *línguas*, he ordered that each one be given a tray with 30 ingots of silver, and two *Coçondes* of silk” 49.

47 According to the text, “acharoadas com verniz de arvore muy fino” is a term used as a synonym of *urushi* or lacquer to designate the sap extracted from the *Rhus vernicifera* and *Rhus succedanea* trees.
48 "(...) quando alguas vezes se offerecem em bandejas acharoadas com verniz de arvore muy fino onde não hà copia das outras, estas se tornão a dar ao que a trouxe (...)", *História da Igreja do Japão*, op. cit., fl. 87 v.
49 "(...) e logo fizerão entrar o P' Vizitador; (...) como he costume, aparecerão alli hús fidaldos, q levavão dous grandes taboleiros, em cada hum dos quaes vinhão cem barras de prata, e outro em q vinhão quatro vestidos de seda, a que elles chamão *coçondes* (...) Depois do Padre Vizitador, forão tambem ambos os Padres, (...) e a cada hum delles se ofereceo hú taboleiro da mesma maner.; consertada có cem barras de prata, e dous *coçondes* de seda (...) Depois fez chamar hum assim os quatro fidalgos, como todos os mais Portuguezes, e pagens; e à cada hum mandou dar hum taboleiro pequeno com cinco barras de prata, e hum *coçonde* de seda, e (...) q servião de *línguas*, mandou dar á cada hum taboleiro com 30. barras de prata, e dous *coçondes* de seda", *Apparatos*, op. cit., fl. 152 v and 153.
But if the Europeans strove to adapt themselves to the rules of Japanese protocol in order to communicate more effectively with the political authorities, the inverse also happened. In fact, the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi himself, according to reports in the *Apparatos* with regard to the letter he sent in response to the Viceroy of India’s letter, tried to find symmetries on a material level between the two cultures:

“This letter is written on a paper, that is almost eight palms long and four palms wide, that he specially ordered to be made to imitate as closely as possible the manner of the parchment upon which the Viceroy’s letter was written”\(^{51}\).

These symmetries would reflect the necessity and the care taken to establish a common form of communication between so different cultures.

Conclusions

Although preventive conservation is considered to be a modern and growing sphere of conservation, it was already an established practice as early as the sixteenth century, through the development of fairly simple empirical measures, as demonstrated in the accounts that describe the transportation of art objects by sea. However, the existence of lacquer objects in good physical condition in various European collections is the most significant proof of the effectiveness of these measures, keeping in mind the difficulties and duration of the sea crossing by ship. These objects played a decisive role in the communication between these two cultures and reflected a global desire to establish ties by means of a material culture.

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\(^{50}\) The Viceroy of India’s letter belongs to the collection of Myoho-in Temple, in Kyoto. For further information see António Vasconcelos de Saldanha and Takase Koichiro, *A carta do Vice-Rei D. Duarte de Menezes a Toyotomi Hideyoshi 1588*, Chaves Ferreira ed., Lisboa, Fundação Cidade de Lisboa, 1995.

\(^{51}\) “Vai escritta esta carta em hum papel, qhe quazi de oito palmos de comprido, e quatro de largo, q mandou fazer de propozito para imitar quanto podia a maneira do purgaminho em q viera a do V. Rey.”, *Apparatos*, op. cit., fl. 187 v.
Abstract

This article seeks to analyse the importance of the packing of Namban art during its transportation from Japan to Europe from the sixteenth century onwards. If we are able to view Namban objects in European collections today, this is due to the fact that, at the time, there was a collective awareness of the vulnerability of these objects that was compounded by the adverse conditions of a maritime voyage of such a long duration. Thus, the packing and transportation of these items was a constant concern throughout the centuries when sending these objects to Europe.

If, on the one hand, packing was essential for maintaining the physical condition of these objects during transportation by sea, this study seeks to go one step further and will analyse ways of presenting gifts during ceremonies of protocol which were also fundamental in establishing links of communication between different cultures. Thus, the role of lacquer objects as an important aspect of protocol practices will also be studied. This article will analyse this issue on the basis of pictorial representations and written sources.

Resumo

O presente artigo pretende analisar a importância do acondicionamento de arte Namban durante o seu transporte do Japão para a Europa a partir do século XVI. Se hoje podemos usufruir de objectos Namban nas colecções Europeias tal deveu-se ao facto de se ter verificado uma consciência colectiva quanto à vulnerabilidade desses objectos conjugada com as condições adversas de uma viagem marítima de longa duração. Assim, o acondicionamento constituiu ao longo dos séculos uma preocupação constante no envio destes objectos para a Europa.

Se por um lado, nas viagens por mar o acondicionamento era indispensável para a preservação dos objectos, pretendeu-se no presente trabalho ir um pouco mais além, analisando igualmente o papel desempenhado por determinados objectos cuja função residia no cumprimento de práticas protocolares, estabelecendo deste modo, elos de comunicação entre diferentes culturas. O presente artigo propõe abordar esta temática baseando-se em fontes pictóricas e escritas.