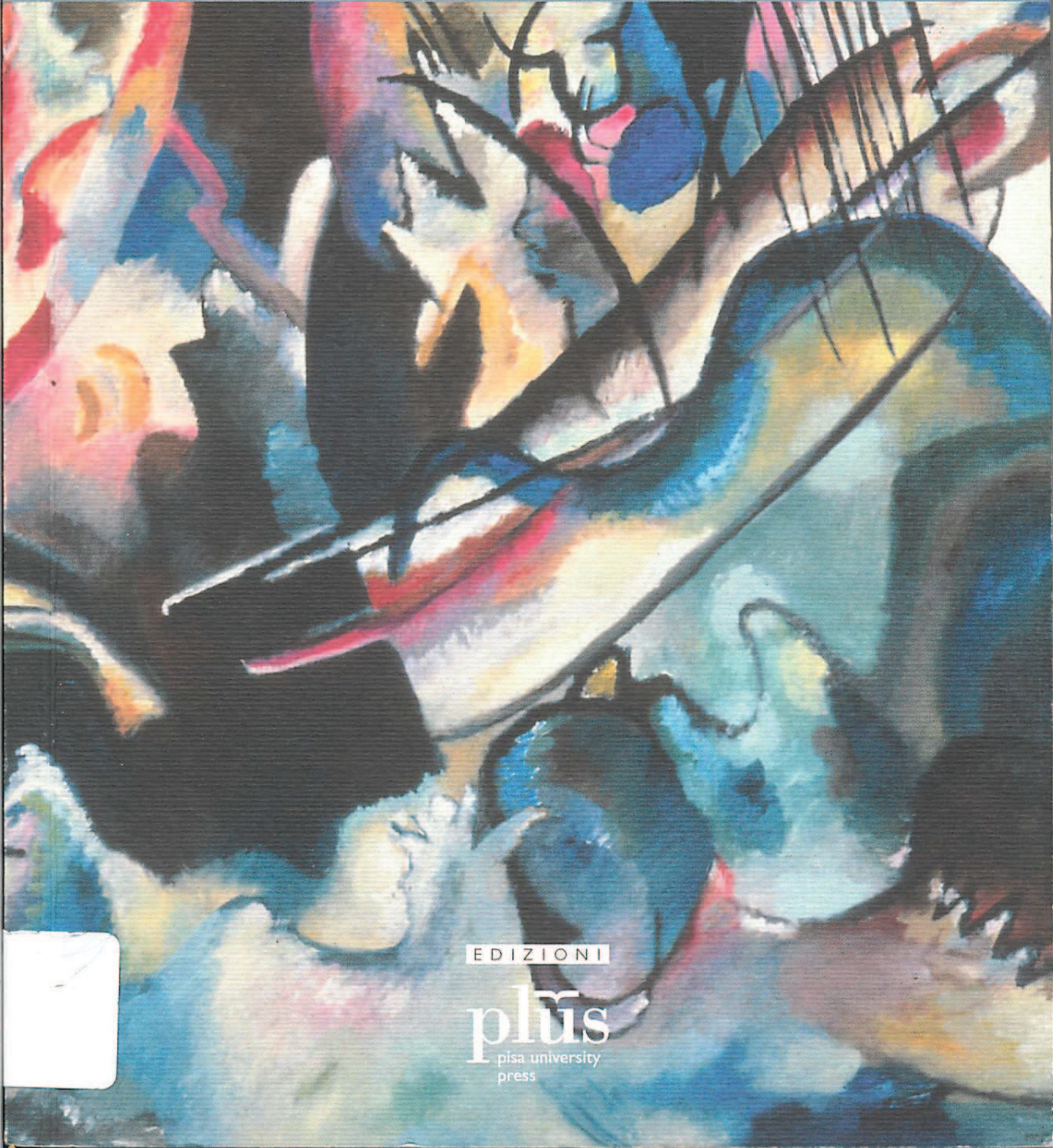


Sights and Insights

Interactive Images of Europe
and the Wider World



EDIZIONI

plus
pisa university
press

Contents

Preface

Ann Katherine Isaacs, Guðmundur Hálfðanarson..... pag. VII

Introduction

Mary N. Harris, Csaba Lévai..... pag. IX

THE ORIENT AND AFRICA AS SEEN BY WESTERN EUROPEANS

Japan through the Eyes of St. Francis Xavier

María Jesús Cava Mesa..... » 1

Orientalism or Oriental Studies: Stereotypes and Rituality - the Tea Cult

Ana Paula Avelar..... » 23

Exoticism and Imagination in the 18th-Century Portuguese Tiles: Some Examples in the Lisbon Area

Maria Alexandra Trindade Gago da Câmara..... » 35

Images of India through the Eyes of Filippo Sassetti, a Florentine Humanist Merchant in the 16th Century

Nunziatella Alessandrini..... » 43

The People of the Orient as Seen by the Chroniclers of King Manuel I

Anabela Miranda Soares..... » 59

Plant Hunting and the Provenance of South African Plants in British Botanical Magazines, 1787-1910

Donald P. McCracken..... » 75

MISSIONARY ENCOUNTERS IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES

Racing with Secularization: Protestant Missions in Japan, 1900-1930

Seija Jalagin..... » 91

Excavating a Usable Past: the Politics of Christian Missions in South Africa with Special Focus on KwaZulu-Natal, 1850-1910

Vukile Khumalo..... » 109

EMIGRANT IMAGES OF THE WIDER WORLD

- Hungarian Travellers' and Emigrants' Images of Turkey from the 16th to the 19th Century*
Gábor Demeter » 123
- Slovene Images of the United States from the 1830s to the 1930s*
Matjaž Klemenčič » 143

THE USE OF STEREOTYPES AT MOMENTS OF POLITICAL CRISIS

- Global Warming: Shifting Perspectives on Terrorism on Both Sides of the Atlantic after 9/11 and 3/11*
Aitor Ibarrola-Armendariz » 165
- Inconvenient Belligerency: the Representation of the Allies in the Blue Division's "Hoja de Campaña"*
Emilio Sáenz-Francés San Baldomero » 185
- Irish Images of Religious Conflict in Mexico in the 1920s*
Mary N. Harris » 205
- Notes on Contributors » 227
- Index » 231

Exoticism and Imagination in 18th-Century Portuguese Tiles: Some Examples in the Lisbon Area

MARIA ALEXANDRA TRINDADE GAGO DA CÂMARA
Universidade Aberta, Lisbon

Tudevads

ABSTRACT

The taste and fashion for *chinoiserie* achieved enormous success in 18th-century Europe, establishing itself as a true 'state of spirit', an experience of and fascination with the Orient that was most keenly felt in the decorative arts and everyday decoration. This bright, lively decorative trend was also captured by many tile-painters, who both imagined and sought to recreate the distant Orient on many of their panels. Some of the finest examples, presented and studied here, are to be found in the Lisbon area.

O gosto e a voga da 'chinoiserie' conheceu na Europa do século XVIII um enorme êxito, afirmando-se como um 'estado de espírito'. Foi especificamente no domínio das artes ornamentais e no quotidiano da decoração que esta vivência e fascínio pelo Oriente se aplicou com mais intensidade. Um tendência decorativa, alegre e festiva não escapou às mãos de muitos pintores de azulejos deste período, que imaginaram e procuraram recriar em muitos painéis azulejares este Oriente longínquo.

É especificamente na região de Lisboa que se encontram alguns destes melhores exemplos que iremos analisar e dar a conhecer ao longo deste texto.

INTRODUCTION

The West's fascination with Asian objects and the very concept of classical China was expressed in an alternative aesthetic tendency in the second half of the 18th century, establishing itself both as a model of good taste and as a decorative feature of European Rococo. The resulting imitation of the characteristics found in Oriental products would provide an artistic mould for a broad range of Western perceptions of Asia during this period.

The gradual emergence of new patterns of artistic sensibility and eclecticism in 18th-century Portuguese culture can be clearly observed within the complex process of re-establishing contact with the Orient. Alongside somewhat circumstantial characteristics, there can be no doubt that the fashion for *chinoiserie* was an enormous success in En-

lightenment Europe. It could be added that *chinoiserie* became a global phenomenon, sweeping through Holland, England, Sweden, Spain and Greece, and extending to the American continents as well. This phenomenon involved an interpretation of everything considered Asian and included both an emotional attitude and a behavioural disposition towards the exotic. *Chinoiserie* can thus be regarded as a European mental construction.

The Orient also represented a space for exploration and for projecting aesthetic taste and sensibility¹. Furniture and pieces – jewellery, bronzes, textiles and porcelain – decorated with *chinoiserie*² hold pride of place among the most commonly found Oriental-style ornaments from that period.

The enormous demand for products of exotic character easily outstripped the supply, and this was consequently followed by a rapid and more or less accurate reproduction of pieces in which imagination played a central role. This increased flow of merchandise meant more than simply using such objects. Rather, Western decorative terms acted and imposed themselves on Asian objects, as Baroque frames and metal fittings were adapted to lacquerware, and the details of carved wood were applied to Chinese textiles.

Within Portugal, this Oriental experience was most strongly felt in the ornamental arts used for everyday decoration. During the second half of the 18th century, the exotic became a fashionable code for interior decoration. This applied equally to walls (frescoes, stucco, painted fabrics and paper, and printed cotton cloth), to pieces of furniture for religious spaces and the home, and to details in ephemeral structures (stage-sets and props, decorations for court celebrations, etc.), though the primary focus of this article will be on the use of decorative tiles.

The first books depicting Oriental-style decoration date back to the 17th century. They appeared at the same time as increasing information arrived from prints and books on travel to Asia³, in which habits and customs, and flora and fauna were filtered by the vision and profile of the narrator/traveller. Such works acted as the justification for adopting specific decorative options. The iconography employed in this exotic form was so varied – offering a mix and combination of several formal elements – that it formed a dense and absurd yet simultaneously logical and coherent world.

SOME EXAMPLES IN TILES FROM LISBON

During the second quarter of the 18th century, Portuguese tile-production was particularly open to these transcultural movements, and proved receptive to integrating motifs from outside Europe into the conception and decoration of many panels. The lively, festive, courtly sense – even sometimes involving an intimate feeling – and the extrinsic reproducibility of these images from 18th-century *chinoiserie* acted as models for tile-painters throughout the century, and as signs of an Asia that they imagined and recreated.

It is possible to catalogue surviving pieces from significant sets that are identified with Asia or Asian-style images. The following are the most relevant from among the various buildings in the Lisbon region: the Pimenta Palace (rooms on the first floor), the Rebelo de Andrade-Ceia Palace (one room on the main floor); the S. Vicente de Fora Monastery (panels on the staircase); the Queluz Palace (the Mangas room), Sacramento à Lapa Street (wall-covering by the steps); the Azulejos Estate (garden bench), the Alfarrobeira estate (octagonal water-tank), the Nossa Senhora da Piedade Estate (rooms on the main floor) and the Sobralinho Palace (garden terrace) in Vila Franca de Xira.

These sets of tile panels, decorated with Chinese scenes and located in noble houses, act as a record of the taste and evident interest shown by a type of clientele that was interested in the Chinese theme. A detailed examination of the various sets selected reveals their encyclopaedic nature, where moments of leisure (hunting, fishing, having tea, dancing, etc.) appear alongside the world of work⁴ (silk-production, port activities, religious customs, etc.).



Fig. 1
Panels during restoration work, collection of Lisbon City Council.
Source: Photo by the author.

A chronological analysis of tiles between the 1740s and the early 1800s shows an evocation of an exotic Orient, the enchanted kingdom of Cathay, which was the perfect land for testing an idea of unbridled fantasy.

The Orient and Africa as Seen by Western Europeans

Clearly, the earliest decorations in this fashion for *chinoiserie* are very rough (i.e. the Pimenta Palace, S. Vicente de Fora Monastery and Nossa Senhora da Piedade Estate), with images of small pagodas, figures sitting cross-legged and wearing Chinese dress, conical hats, riverside scenes with Chinese-style boats, tents and Chinese carpets for when tea is served, servants accompanying ladies and protecting them from the sun as they walk beside the river. These themes are intermingled with classical ornaments, such as borders filled with putti, pilasters and scrolls.

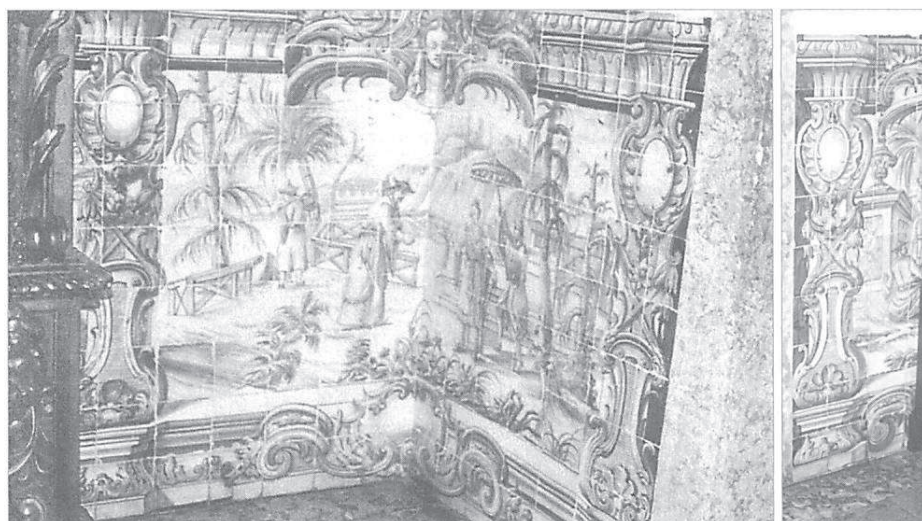


Fig. 2 and 2b
Detail of a panel at the Pimenta Palace, Lisbon.
Source: Photos by the author.

The surrounding nature also has Asian-style characteristics: palm-trees and curving trunks that recall the traditional floral motifs, huge flowers supported by delicate trunks and stems, exotic plants. Finally, several other forms of nature are simply invented and decorative motifs are simplified. At a later stage, European Rococo style would assimilate these themes, developing, juxtaposing and adding formal elements with greater interpretative freedom.

Nature became a consistent theme, even enveloping ephemeral architecture and coexisting alongside the same Rococo vocabulary. Exotic flowers also appear (i.e. at the Ceia Palace, the panel on the steps in Sacramento à Lapa Street, now the Fundação Luso-Americana⁵, and panels in Alcantara Street and at the Azulejos Estate).

Meanwhile, the human figure is shown in a stereotypical ethnic portrayal with no personal features, establishing a restricted typology of gestures and actions: the fisherman, the dancer, the servant pouring tea. People sit down to talk or have a family meal. These figures of short stature wear a variety of floating clothes, have their hair in pigtails, long

moustaches and wear various forms of conical hats. Most such pieces involve asymmetrical lines in different rhythms. In contrast to the greater movement of the plants, the figures seem immobile. Yet the imagery reflects a gradual approach to what is unknown, constructing a sort of osmosis between Western values and types of forms that are the product of an imagined Asia.

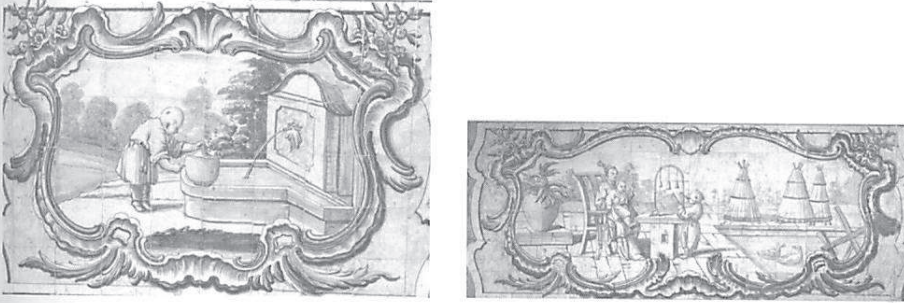


Fig. 3 and 3 b

The Ceja Palace, Lisbon, head office of the Universidade Aberta. Details of the panel in the room with Oriental-style tiles.

Source: Photos from the Universidade Aberta Archive.

The taste for a potentially more effective fantasy is recorded by the third phase in the iconography of *chinoiserie*, exemplified by the water-tank at the Alfarrobeira Estate and the neoclassical polychrome panels attributed to the pottery painter Francisco Jorge da Costa (1784) on the bay window in the Mangas corridor at the Queluz Palace.

In the former case, while maintaining the Rococo spirit of fantasy in the yellow borders, the painter used manganese to highlight and outline images of port activities and leisure scenes, such as music and dance with Oriental figures. He also used an accurate image of a port with its countless ships. There is a suggested narrative where the figures pause for a moment. The principle of contrast is defined in this composition by the surrounding paler background and the figures with clearer outlines in the foreground. It thus becomes a sort of *veduta*, a pretext for an image set very close to the water, the very function that was embodied by the building housing the panels.



Fig. 4

Detail of the panel on the water-tank at the Alfarrobeira Estate, Lisbon.

Source: Photo by the author.

The Orient and Africa as Seen by Western Europeans

The final example is part of the decoration of the colourful Mangas Room. The high quality images have a great decorative effect and were applied individually, acting as decorative models (a sort of picture-postcard) that are unique works of decoration⁶. The painter developed a complex artistic language in these panels through his handling of the landscape (the background), his drawing of the flora and fauna, and the treatment of the clearly Oriental character depicted. As a result, we stand before a window onto the world that had long been exposed to contact with Oriental art-work.



Fig. 5 and 5b
Details of the panels in the Mangas Room, Queluz National Palace.
Source: Photos by the author.

To conclude, within this experience of the exotic, such works can be classified as a typological group, characterising an artistic discourse of ideal images of private social life in the 18th century⁷. In sum, orientalized Western art, materialized in different artistic media, revealed itself as a representative element of all European culture in this period (including Portuguese culture), testifying to Europe's capacity for dialogue with the other, with difference, and its propensity for wonder in its representation of the singularity of a civilizational order. The recreation of the exotic and the different constituted a domestication of the unknown. It was not a case of merely making a copy of a culture but rather of appropriating its difference, of adapting it to different attitudes and conceptions of space.

NOTES

¹ For a discussion of this point in Portuguese historiography see F. Bethencourt, K. Chaudhuri (eds.), *História da Expansão Portuguesa*, 5 vols., Lisbon 1998 (See especially R. Moreira, vol. 1, pp. 455-482, and R. Moreira, A. Curvelo, vol. 2, pp. 532-570) and also P. Dias, *História da Arte Portuguesa no Mundo*, 1415-1822, 2 vols., Lisbon 1998.

- ² See M. Jarry, *Chinoiserie, le Rayonnement du goût Chinois sur les Arts décoratifs des XVIIe e XVIIIe siècles*, Fribourg 1980; H. Honour, *Chinoiserie The Vision of Cathay*, London 1973; O. Impey, *Chinoiserie – The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration*, London 1976; D. Jacobson, *Chinoiserie*, Paris 1993.
- ³ “I, Duarte Barbosa, native of the very noble city of Lisbon, having navigated throughout the Indies, discovered in the name of the King Our Lord and having travelled through many and various countries along the coast, seen and heard various things I regarded as wonderful and stupendous, as they had never been seen before, nor heard of by our forefathers, have resolved to write down what I have seen for the benefit of all, labouring to record in this my Book the places and boundaries of all those kingdoms where I have personally been and of which I bear faithful and dignified information...” Cf. Duarte Barbosa, *Livro em que se dá relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente Duarte Barbosa*, with introduction and notes by A. Machado, Lisbon 1946; J. de Mendonça, *História de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumes del gran Reyno de la China... Cō un itinerário del nuovo Mundo*, Madrid 1587; J. Nieuhof, *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine, ou Grand Cam de Tartarie, faite par Srs. Pierre de Goyer et Jacob de Keyser*, 2 vols.; French translation and commentary by Jean Le Carpentier, Leiden 1665; L. Le Comte, *Des cérémonies de la Chine*, Liège 1700; *Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde, Représentées par des figures de la main de Bernard Picart, avec des explications historiques et des dissertations curieuses*, Paris 1807-1808, 11 vols., 1st edition: 1723-1743; I have used the 1789 edition at the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, currently in very poor condition and J. Du Halde, *Description Geographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de L'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise...* The Hague 1736, 4 vols. The prints in the last two works have already been studied. Cf. C. Magucci, *Imagens da China – Fontes gráficas para os azulejos do Palácio do Sobralinho*, in “Revista Almadan”, 1998, II series, 7, pp. 141-147.
- ⁴ The significant collection acquired between 1955 and 1962 for the final reconstruction of the Sobralinho Estate in Vila Franca de Xira is paradigmatic of the second half of the 18th century, when Oriental themes dominated tile production. See also J. Ribeiro, *O Palácio do Sobralinho ou a Reinvenção de um Paço do século XVIII*, in “Boletim Cultural Cira”, 1998-99, 8, pp. 81-93.
- ⁵ J. Sarmiento de Matos, *Uma Casa na Lapa*, Lisbon 1994, pp. 128-129.
- ⁶ The interest in this decorative theme led to the production of two orders (also from a later stage) that were exported to Brazil and are now no longer in their original locations. The first is in the new Rector's Office at the University of Bahia; the second at a private house in Rua Osvaldo Cruz, 782, São Luís do Maranhão. Cf. J. M. dos Santos Simões, *Azulejaria Portuguesa no Brasil (1500-1822)*, Lisbon 1965, M. Barata, *Azulejos no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1955; J. Valadares, *Azulejos da Reitoria*, Salvador 1953.
- ⁷ The aim of this approach and research, part of my doctoral thesis, was to extend the field of analysis for Baroque tiles and integrate it into the mental and social framework of the age. See M.A.R. Gago da Câmara, “*A Arte de Bem Viver*” – *A Encenação do Quotidiano na azulejaria Portuguesa de Setecentos*, Lisbon 2005.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Barbosa D., *Livro em que se dá relação do que viu e ouviu no Oriente Duarte Barbosa*, with introduction and notes by A. Machado, Lisbon 1946.
- The Book of Duarte Barbosa: an account of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean and their inhabitants, written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed About the Year 1518 A.D.*, trans. M. Longworth Dames, vol. 1, Liechtenstein 1967.
- A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the beginning of the 16th Century by Duarte Barbosa*, trans. Hon. H. Standley, London 1970.

The Orient and Africa as Seen by Western Europeans

Cérémonies et Coutumes Religieuses de Tous les Peuples du Monde, représentées par des figures de la main de Bernard Picart, avec des explications historiques et des dissertations curieuses, Paris 1807-1808, 11 vols. (1st edition: 1723-1743).

Du Halde J.B., Du Halde J.E., *Description Géographique, Historique, Chronologique, Politique, et Physique de L'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise*, The Hague 1736, 4 vols.

Le Comte L., *Des cérémonies de la Chine*, Liège 1700.

Livro que trata das Cousas da Índia e do Japão, ed. Códice Quinhenista da Biblioteca Municipal de Elvas, with introduction and notes by A. Almeida Calado, Coimbra 1957.

Mendonça J., *História de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran Reyno de la China... Cõ un itinerário del nuovo Mundo*, Madrid 1587.

Nieuhof J., *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine, ou Grand Cam de Tartarie, faite par Srs. Pierre de Goyer et Jacob de Keyser*, 2 vols; French translation and commentary by J. Le Carpentier, Leiden 1665.

Secondary Works

Barata J., *Azulejos no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 1955.

Buescu M.L., *O Exotismo ou a estética do diverso na Literatura Portuguesa*, in Falcão A., Nascimento M., Leal M.L. (eds.), *Literatura de Viagem. Narrativa, Historia, Mito*, Lisbon 1997, pp. 565-578

Florenne L., *Pillement Paysagiste en son temps*, in "Médecine de France", 1956, 180, pp. 17-32.

Guérin J., *La Chinoiserie en Europe: Tapisseries, Meubles, Bronzes d'ameublement, Ceramique, Peinture, et Dessins exposé au musées des Arts Decoratifs*, Paris 1911.

Honour H., *Chinoiserie. The Vision of Cathay*, London 1973.

Koutruf Birth, *Chinoiserie: idées de decoration de Chine et du Japon*, Paris 1989.

Impey O., *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration*, London 1976.

Jacobson D., *Chinoiserie*, Paris 1993.

Jarry M., *Chinoiserie, le Rayonnement du goût Chinois sur les Arts décoratifs des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Friburg 1980.

Jean Pillement e o Paisagismo em Portugal no século XVIII (1728-1808), Lisbon 1996.

Marandel L.P., *Boucher et les Chinoiseries*, in "L'œil", 1986, 374, pp. 30-37.

Magucci C., *Imagens da China – Fontes gráficas para os azulejos do Palácio do Sobralinho*, in "Revista Almadan", 7, pp. 141-147.

Matos J., *Uma Casa na Lapa*, Lisbon, 1994.

Ribeiro J.A., *O Palácio do Sobralinho ou a Reinvenção de um Paço do século XVIII*, in "Boletim Cultural Cira", 1998-99, 8, pp. 81-93.

Said E., *L'Orientalisme: l'Orient créé par l'Occident*, Paris 1980.

Simões J. M. dos Santos, *Azulejaria Portuguesa no Brasil (1500-1822)*, Lisbon 1965.

Todorov T., *Nous et les autres*, Paris 1989.

Valadares J., *Azulejos da Reitoria*, Salvador 1953.

Exhibitions

Lumières! Un héritage pour demain, Paris 2006. Directed by Y. Fauchois, T. Grillet and T. Todorov.

O Orientalismo em Portugal: séculos XVI a XIX, Lisbon 1999.