

ments in usage, and from the theoretical point of view the ancestry of the nautical instruments which can be traced back to classical Indian antiquity are the *Rūba al-mujayyab* (Quadrant), the *Rapalagai* (*Kamal*), the *Kolpalagai* (Davis Quadrant), and the *Kaukutty* the *Balisti* or Cross Staff). All, inclusive of *viral* measurements are mutually compatible, and in the case of the Quadrant (known in India since the seventh century AD), the *Rapalagai* and the *Kolpalagai* parallels with pre-Islamic South Asian tradition can be drawn. Moreover a degree of evolutionary linkage can be traced between the Quadrant and the *Kolpalagai*.³²

It thus becomes evident that although the cultural moorings and thought processes may have been rooted in different modes, the two sets of traditions were not mutually exclusive. This would explain why the Portuguese were able to absorb these categories of information and enrich their own capabilities in the rapidly changing frontiers of knowledge.

THE USE OF GROWING ARCHITECTURE AS PROPAGANDA – THE BENGAL COLCHA AT THE ISABELLA STEWART GARDENER MUSEUM IN BOSTON

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In October 2006 I presented a paper on the iconographic programme of the Bengal colcha from the Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum at the XII Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History in Lisbon. Soon afterwards I handed in the first version of the present article. From February to May 2008 the colcha was the core piece of an exhibition at the Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum: “Luxury for Export: Artistic Exchange between India and Portugal around 1600”. In due course Pedro Moura Carvalho published an article on the same colcha on which he had worked at the same time as me.¹ Since the publication of my article was delayed, I asked the editors whether it was possible to respond to the findings of Pedro Moura Carvalho’s article within my article. I am grateful that the editors agreed to do so. This scientific dialogue stresses the importance not only of this specific textile but of Indian textile production for export of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in general.

Bengal textile production in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was extremely rich. The most important commissioners of textiles destined for export to Europe were Portuguese private merchants residing in Hugli near modern-day Calcutta. From there they controlled a large portion of sea trade of the East

³² All these aspects form the subject of the publication, L. Varadarajan (ed.), *The Rahmani of M. P. Kunhikunhi Malmi of Kavaratti, A Sailing Manual of Lakshadweep*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2004.

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¹ P. Moura Carvalho, “Patriotism and commemoration in a Bengali embroidery” in *Luxury for Export, Artistic Exchange between India and Portugal around 1600*, exhibition catalogue, ISGM, Boston 2008, pp. 8-22.

Indian province. Among Bengal's most successful export products were embroidered textiles of a large size, referred to as colchas in the early Portuguese inventories.² The Portuguese and Spanish word "colcha" (colja) has Latin roots: "culcita" – in English means mattress or pillow. One also finds "colxa" or "colches" in the historic Portuguese records. The *Vocabulario portuguez e latino* by Raphael Bluteau defines colchas as a thin bed covers with quilted layers of cotton.³ The modern Portuguese word "colcha" means quilt. The expression colcha is itself a compromise, for the English translation "quilt" or "bedcover" is insufficient and limiting for they were not just used as bed covers but for different decorative purposes in palatial and church contexts. Most colchas changed their function in their life span; the colcha of the museum in Boston one for example originally served as hanging, was sold as a leg cover and now serves as a didactic instrument in a museum. These sumptuously embroidered textiles commissioned by the Portuguese were not only exported to Europe, mainly to the Iberian Peninsula, but also sold in the Iberian colonies in Asia and America. Furthermore, they were traded in India and the Middle East and found their way into Japanese collections. The colchas are among the oldest Indian embroideries that survive today. They reveal evidence of migrating forms and ideas and feature some of the most successful motifs that were developed in the long history of art and transmitted by different cultures in diverse ways.

² For colchas see the following articles (selection): C. Bunt, "An Indo-Portuguese Embroidery in the Bargello" in *Burlington Magazine*, November 1942, p. 277; M. M. de Cagigal e Silva, *A Arte Indo-Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Edições Excelsior, 1966; M. Estabrook-Moeller, "An Indo-Portuguese Embroidery from Goa" in *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, August, 1948, pp. 117-132; M. J. de Mendonca, "Alguns tipos de Colchas Indo-Portuguesas na Collecção do Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga" in *Boletim do Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisboa, 1949; and by the same author "Bordados Indo-portugueses, novas aquisições do Museu de Lisboa" in *Boletim do Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga*, Lisboa, 1955; A. Geijer, *Oriental Textiles in Sweden*, Kopenhagen, Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1951; G. Garde, *Portugisere og Indere, Silkebroderede billedscener fra 17. Arhundrede*, Kopenhagen, Arbog for Dansk Kulturhistorik Museumsforening, 1970; J. Irwin, "Indo-Portuguese Embroideries of Bengal" in *Art and Letters, the Journal of the Royal India, Pakistan & Ceylon Society*, vol. XXVI. No. 2, 1952; by the same author: "Indian textile Trade in the seventeenth century, Part 3, Bengal", in: *Journal of Indian Textile History*, No. 3, Ahmedabad, Calico Museum of Textiles, 1957, pp. 59-74; and "Indian Textile Trade of the seventeenth century, Part 4, Foreign Influences" in *Journal of Indian Textile History*, No. 4, Ahmedabad, Calico Museum of Textiles, 1959; Exhibition Catalogue: *Embroidered Quilts from the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga – India, Portugal, China sixteenth/eighteenth century*, London, Kensington Palace, 1978; F. Passos Leite, "Texteis Indo-Portugueses" in *Vasco da Gama e a Índia*, vol. III, 1998, p. 361; Crill, R. "Angels and Elephants" in *Apollo*, Nov. 2004, pp. 87-91; T. Pacheco Pereira, "À volta de alguns bordados indianos monocromos" in *Oriente*, No. 15, 2006, pp. 44-57; L. Varadarajan, "Indo-Portuguese Textiles – New Orientations" in *Indo-Portuguese History: Global Trends*, Goa and Lisboa: CHAM, 2005, pp. 251-260.

³ Raphael Bluteau, *Vocabulario portuguez e latino*, Coimbra, Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus, 1712, vol. II, p. 367.

This article focuses on a Bengal colcha that is today housed in the Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum in Boston (Inv. Nr. T20e4).⁴ Because of its style and content this colcha can be attributed to the Bengal production for the Portuguese in the Satgaon/Hugli region. Due to its unique iconographic programme it is probable that the textile was a special commission by or for dignitaries living in the *Estado da India* or in Portugal. Unfortunately it is not known who commissioned it. Due to its design this textile is undoubtedly one of the most interesting and telling pieces of the Bengali group. In the following text I will explore the unusual iconography of the colcha, propose a date for the work and demonstrate its complex political meaning in the context of the first half of seventeenth-century Iberia.

The dimensions of the textile are 267 × 201 cm, comparable to a middle sized carpet. Its base is constructed with blue silk in plain weave and light yellow silk is used for the embroidery. The main stitch used is chain stitch. The colcha – originally used as a hanging as the vertical orientation of the design suggests – was acquired by Ms Gardener in 1897 in Paris from the Emile Peyre Collection for 1010 Francs.⁵ The collector sold the textile as a Spanish cover in blue and white.⁶ The base of this textile is of blue silk which was actually not uncommon even though in most cases the base consisted of white cotton. There still exist at least four Bengal colchas with the same blue base material. One is from the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon and another is in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, while two others were quoted by Pedro Moura Carvalho in his article.⁷ Besides, there are several other Bengal colchas with a coloured base. The textiles were dyed blue with indigo, probably in Sarkej in Gujarat. The dyed silk was then transported via land or sea to Bengal for further processing. In Bengal the blue silk fabrics were sewn together to the size of the colcha, lined with layers of cotton, and embellished with embroidery. The execution of the embroidery on this colcha is somewhat coarser than that of the finest examples of the Bengal group which is due to the use of a thicker thread for the embroidery.

The basic organisation of the colcha is subdivided by a structure of thin borders with delicate floral scrolls, as in many other Bengal colchas. These thin borders with floral scrolls distribute the colcha into three surrounding borders and a large middle-field. In the middle-field the strictly symmetrical distributing

⁴ Thanks to discussions with colleagues before and during the conference in Lisbon last year I came to the conclusions presented in the text. For their support in putting the bits and pieces together I would like to thank Angela Barreto Xavier, Celina Bastos, Helder Carita, Anísio Franco, Lia Markey, Roopanjali Roy, Paulo Varela Gomes, Maria João Vilhena.

⁵ A. Cavallo, *Textiles-Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum*, Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardener Museum, 1986, p. 200.

⁶ A "couvre-pieds espagnol, blanc et bleu..." as quoted in P. Moura Carvalho, "Patriotism and commemoration..." in *Luxury for Export...*, pp. 8-22.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

scheme seen on the other Bengal colchas was omitted and a different design was applied: a big architectural façade of a triumphal arch, which was taken from a European print model as were many other motifs on the colcha. The decoration of the borders, however, is very similar in style and content to other Bengal colchas. Hunting scenes are depicted in the outermost border. From the beginning of colcha production in Bengal, hunting scenes held an important position in their decoration and were the most frequently employed border decorations. The theme of the hunt developed out of an already existing European and local Bengalo-Islamic tradition that were fused and endowed with fantastic imagery. The hunting scenes represent a typical intercultural and courtly theme. Different kinds of hunts are depicted in the hunting borders on the Bengal colchas: hunts with hounds or hunters in small groups capturing bears, tigers, unicorns, lions (sometimes winged), griffons, gazelles, dragons and buffalos, men on elephants and horses or hunters engaged in a falcon hunt. The hunters wear European dress; they are armed with spears, shields and muskets. Usually a small pond with buffalos, ducks, fish and flowers is situated in the middle of each side of the border. The corners of this border are accentuated by self-sacrificing pelicans that refer to the pelicans in the middle-field.

The second border shows a seemingly random selection of scenes one also encounters in other Bengal colchas. Single scenes of mythological characters adorn the space of this second border. They enhance the otherworldly aspect of the colcha and were chosen for their general mythological and decorative value rather than for their concrete content. There are six Greek gods on their zodiacal chariots but no inscriptions identify them as the seven planets of the zodiac. Through their presence they allude to the zodiac, depicted elaborately on other colchas,⁸ but they do not represent it since they are randomly dispersed along the four sides of the border, the zodiac signs in the wheels of the planetary chariots are incorrectly attributed and one planet-god is missing. Additionally, different mythological figures ride diverse fantastic animals alongside the six gods, Hercules fights a dragon and two scenes fragmentarily depict the story of an archer, who by shooting the snake that is wrapped around an eagle's body, liberates the eagle. This scene can be interpreted as a fight between good and evil, and could also allude to the Christian theme of the Resurrection.⁹ To the right of the middle-field, still within the border, are two small episodes with men jumping

⁸ For example a colcha in the Fundação Medeiros e Almeida in Lisbon. See: B. Karl, "O encanto da monocromia – Uma colcha da Fundação Medeiros e Almeida em Lisboa", in *Oriente* 6 (2003), pp. 56-66.

⁹ This episode of the archer liberating the eagle from the snake is illustrated on a colcha from the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, (Inv. Nr. 616-1886). This colcha is part of the group of the Solomon colchas with the zodiac. It is interesting that two quite unique features of the Solomon-zodiac group, the zodiac and the story of the archer, were used in the colcha of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. This illustrates the closeness of production.

on or standing on bulls. Bull fights have a long standing tradition in the Mediterranean, especially on the Iberian Peninsula and images of it may have inspired the craftsmen. This border is further accentuated by four medallions depicting kings placed into each corner. They are recognisable as Portuguese Kings by the cross of the Portuguese Order of Christ, the successor order of the Templars in Portugal, on their shoulders. This shows them as defenders of the true faith. In 1603 Friar Bernardo de Brito published the book *Elogio dos Reis de Portugal com os seus mais verdadeiros Retratos* (Eulogy to the Portuguese Kings with their authentic portraits).¹⁰ The portraits in the book are very similar to those on the colcha and very likely served as models for the embroiderers and provide the first indication for the colcha's date: 1603, the date the book was published. Into the middle of each side of the second border four fortresses manned by soldiers are located. The medallions including the simplified royal portraits as well as the fortresses overlap into the innermost border connecting both. Each of the abridged fortresses shows a ground plan with walls and four towers armed with canons, seen from above. Forts as tools of dominance and control were built along the Portuguese sea routes in Africa, South America and around the Indian Ocean in order to secure the trade routes of the *Estado da Índia* with Lisbon. They are depicted in connection with the portraits of Portuguese kings and can therefore be interpreted as representing the Portuguese dominance over its different dominions with a special emphasis on the sea represented in the third border.

The innermost border is decorated with maritime scenes, which are also linked to the idea of the dominance of the oceans. The border is full of fantastic and hybrid creatures of different cultural origins divided by a twisted undulating rope; under its arches are busts of women with mussels and small fish and hybrid figures with goat heads. Beyond the intersecting rope a miraculous world of maritime monsters and figures opens up: a winged female figure with two fish in her hand and one fisherman standing on a fish throws out his net and yet another uses a harpoon. The model for this scene may have been daily life along the shores of the river Ganges. Moreover, there is Fortuna holding her sail into the air, fantastic hybrid figures with heads of goats and a stag, a satyr and a centaur with bow and arrow (both do not actually have much to do with water), and winged mermaids. The hybrid figures represent a fusion of elements from the rich grotesque tradition of the European Renaissance and local features. The middle of each side is marked by a realistic caravel that has a small sailing boat attached. Nonchalantly, the presumably Portuguese sailors brave the dangers of the sea in this rich combination of creatures. Mermaids or sirens set in the four corners are each playing a musical instrument (stringed instruments,

¹⁰ Friar Bernardo de Brito, *Elogio dos Reis de Portugal com os seus mais verdadeiros Retratos*, Lisboa, Pedro Crasbeeck, 1603. I am grateful to my colleague Anísio Franco for showing me this publication.

plucked instruments or wind instruments) in order to evoke the maritime dangers and refer to Ulysses' Odyssey. Some of the wind instruments are long and bent, clearly showing the Indian influence. The picture of Asia as a continent of riches, miracles and monsters was formed by fantastic travel accounts like that of Marco Polo or the romance of Alexander the Great. In the 16th and 17th centuries, images of the sea – especially on maps – were full of fantastic beings, as were medieval bestiaries, yet another source of inspiration. The open sea was seen as an unknown and uncanny place, fascinating and terrifying, promising profit and destruction at the same time. The ocean's incalculable powers – shown as monsters – were dominated here on the colcha by the Portuguese sailors represented in the caravels and sung about in Luís de Camões' *Lusiadas*.¹¹ This highly influential epic mirrors the same spirit. The exceptional presence of kings and fortresses in the borders besides the Bengal colchas "classical" features of hunts, maritime scenes and mythological scenes endow this part of the colcha with a special meaning: The borders represent an abbreviation of the Portuguese dominions on land and at sea under their ideal rule.

The design of the middle-field has nothing in common with the other colchas of the Bengal production as it is dominated by a single large triumphal arch. This arch is endowed with branches and medallions and is an example of growing architecture recalling ephemeral festive architecture. Ephemeral triumphal arches, similar to this one (but without the branches), were erected for special occasions, such as festive entries. The stone arch of the viceroys in Goa is just one non-ephemeral example of this in the Portuguese overseas context. The arch embroidered on the colcha is one of the rare instances in which the exact model for the embroidered colcha can be identified. The model of this particular arch is in a print from the book *Viaje de la Catholica Real Magestad del Rei D. Filipe III. N.S. al reino de Portugal* (Journey of the Royal Catholic Majesty, King Philip III to the Kingdom of Portugal) published in 1622 by João Baptista Lavanha, the royal chronicler and cosmographer who had prints made and meticulously described the programme of the entry in the book. The *Arco dos Flamengos* (Arch of the Flemish) from this entry into Lisbon was almost exactly copied by the embroiderers in the middle-field of the colcha.¹² The publication date of the book, 1622, provides the *terminus post quem* for the dating of the textile. As will be explained later the *terminus ante quem* for the production in my opinion is 1640 – the date of Portugal's independence from Spanish rule.

In 1619 the city of Lisbon was sumptuously decorated for the *entrée solennelle* of King Philip III of Spain, who ruled Spain, Portugal and their overseas possessions. Topics like the ideal ruler, the eternal justice of the sovereign and

¹¹ Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, Porto, Porto Editora, 2006.

¹² My colleagues from the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Celina Bastos, Anísio Franco and Maria João Vilhena pointed this source out to me.

the legitimacy of his dynasty were typical subjects for triumphal arches like this one. Central to the entire programme of King Philip III's entry to Lisbon was the idea of the universal dimension of his dominions, the king should be reminded of Lisbon's central position in his seaborne Empire and as Europe's gate to the oceans of the world. This is also one of the central messages of the colcha's programme. During the rule of the Habsburgs, Lisbon felt neglected by the Spanish kings who resided far away in Madrid. The city was "hoping for Your long awaited royal presence."¹³ Besides the arches of institutions, such as the inquisition or guilds, there were the arches of the foreign merchants featuring, in the Lisbon entry, such as the Flemish, who at that time were in an awkward situation due to the continuous wars of independence in the Netherlands. This conflict was the subject of the programme of their festive architecture depicted on the print and then transposed onto the colcha. The triumphal arch of the Flemish stood in the former Rua Nova, the main street, which ran parallel to the river Tagus. The three-storied architectural structure with lateral volutes on its top was typical for the early Baroque, influenced by Sebastiano Serlio's treatises, and was decorated with sculptures and paintings of emblems, allegories, sibyls and the personifications of the seventeen provinces of *Gallia Belgica* – the Netherlands. Only nine of the provinces remained loyal to the Spanish king, the others wanted secession. Through a mechanism, supported by ropes connecting the coat of arms in the centre with personifications of the provinces, one could cover and uncover an allegory of Discordia (representing the war of secession). By operating a mechanism Discordia would vanish when the king approached. A Latin inscription on the arch expressed the Flemish merchants' desire for the peaceful reunion of their home country under the aegis of the King of Spain.¹⁴ Clearly the Flemish merchants were concerned; after all, in order to flourish and successfully conduct their business between Lisbon and the Netherlands they needed a definite end to the wars. Apart from the personifications of the provinces, the personifications of virtues, allegories and emblems were distributed all over the arch. They are all explained in detail in Lavanha's description in the book. The uppermost figure on the printed arch represents the blindfolded Cupid riding on a lion, an image also seen on some other Solomon colchas; The Latin inscription SIC FORTIA VINCIS (in this way you win over the strong) underneath the Cupid is only visible on the print but was not transposed to the colcha and is to be understood as an appeal to the king to win the war in the Netherlands not by the force of arms but through the power of love – advice the Spaniards did not follow. In 1648 the United Provinces of the Netherlands were

¹³ N. Senos, "Na esperança de vossa real presença desejada: el arte y un poder presente en la Lisboa filipina" in *Reales Sitios*, vol. 40, 2003, p. 59.

¹⁴ Lavanha, *Viaje de la catholica real Magestad...*, Madrid, Tomas Junti, 1622, fols. 38. Including an elaborate description of the programme of the triumphal arch.

officially declared independent. The Spanish coat of arms tops the composition on the print, visually representing the subjection of the Flemish merchants under the rule of Philip III.

The embroidery on the colcha is not as detailed as the printed model. In the embroidery the general outline and structure of the printed arch was maintained but its decoration was much simplified. Inscriptions and details, especially the emblems, were not included in the colcha or were modified. The local embroiderers very probably neither understood the complex Latin inscriptions nor their political allusions and implications. However, the merchants themselves who were in charge of commissioning the colcha were surely aware of the significance of the entry of Philip III into Lisbon of which the arch was a vital part. Royal politics directly influenced the merchants' field of action. Their daily bread depended on being informed and being able to navigate in a politically favourable atmosphere. Where the details of the print were adapted – they were in fact mostly substituted by scrollwork – they were so simplified that their meaning cannot be identified anymore and thus lost their concrete significance. The person standing under the archway giving the proportion of the arch in the print was enlarged on the colcha but has no other meaning whatsoever for the iconography, neither in the print nor in the embroidery. On the colcha the arch was combined with a genealogical tree, represented by eight branches growing out of the architecture. This addition significantly affects the meaning of the iconographic programme. The branches growing out of the architecture were additions of the commissioner and transform the arch into a genealogical tree. Surely the most important and propagandistically successful concept of combining an arch with a genealogical tree is the printed triumphal construction of Albrecht Dürer's *Ehrenpforte* for the Emperor Maximilian I, a forefather of Philip III, from the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ By transforming the arch from the solemn entry into Lisbon into a genealogical tree it was integrated into this tradition that served to heighten the prestige of the dynasty depicted – the Habsburgs.

On the arch of the embroidered colcha the three-storied structure of the printed model was maintained. The first storey consists of three archways that are separated by pilasters. Figures are depicted above two of the openings like on the model print. On the colcha these allegorical figures lost their exact meaning through the omission of details and the inscriptions that were present on the print. The second storey is separated from the first by a cornice decorated with figures. Within the second storey there are unrecognisable emblems and statues that on the print alluded to the rule of the Habsburg dynasty. The medallion between the two is dominated by the personification of Discordia surrounded by small

¹⁵ Thomas Schauerte, *Die Ehrenpforte für Kaiser Maximilian I*, München, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001.

coats of arms that through omission of explanation and details are not attributable anymore. A balustrade with four statues marks the third storey. Two volutes are to the sides of a square in which the blindfolded Cupid is riding on a lion. The large, slightly modified, coat of arms of Portugal is placed under the gable. On the print the Spanish coat of arms was depicted but in the original entry a Portuguese coat of arms crowned the arch of the Flemings. The print emphasised the Spanishness of the king, whereas during the actual entry and on the colcha the importance of Philip III's Portuguese dominions was emphasised. The choice of the coat of arms (Spanish or Portuguese) on the different media (the ephemeral arch, the print and the embroidery) is in my view not a provocation and also not an annulment of the political message but represents a shift of importance in the context.¹⁶ On the arch in Lisbon the Portuguese side of the king's dominions was stressed as he was guided through the country's most important city. In Lavanha's book (not to forget he was the official court chronicler, the book was printed in Madrid), the Spanish coat of arms was chosen in order to illustrate the union of the king's dominions emphasising Spain and since the colcha was produced in a region close to the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* again a Portuguese coat of arms, stressing the Portugueseness of the empire, was chosen to crown it. The importance shifted each time but the over all dominance of the Spanish King was not questioned by the choices since he was legally the monarch of both kingdoms. Had the choice been an affront or a scandal, Lavanha and others would surely have reported it in a different manner.

On each side of the coat of arms of the colcha is an allegory and four more statues are crowned with large tear shaped forms. Out of the architectural structure grow eight branches that end in medallions with eight portraits of Portuguese kings similar to those on the border. All in all there are twelve kings in medallions on this colcha (four in the second border and eight around the arch) but in my view it is not clear which Portuguese kings exactly are depicted because there are no inscriptions added and their facial features are all very similar.¹⁷ The number twelve bears symbolic meaning, reminiscent of the twelve Kings of Judea or the twelve Apostles. Eight images of Kings are in a more prominent position, they are placed into the small medallions growing directly out of the arch. Not incidentally, the royal Portuguese dynasty of Aviz (1385-1580) consisted of eight kings¹⁸ and, as mentioned above, the portraits in the medallions were copied from Friar Bernardo Brito's royal Portuguese portraits. Thus it is quite clear that the embroidery was meant to depict the Aviz kings. In the spaces between the branches with the royal medallions are musicians and dancers,

¹⁶ P. Moura Carvalho, "Patriotism and commemoration..." in *Luxury for Export...*, pp. 8-22.

¹⁷ In his article Pedro Moura Carvalho proposes a more exact attribution of the kings.

¹⁸ Avis dynasty (1385-1580): D. João I, D. Duarte, D. Afonso V, D. João II, D. Manuel, D. João III, D. Sebastião and D. Henrique.

flowers and birds. They endow the field with a paradisiacal atmosphere. In addition to that, symbols like the sun, moon and stars were added to the sides of the top of the triumphal arch. These symbols were clearly understood as Christian on the Bengal colchas and were usually shown there in connection with the Virgin Mary. Another familiar Christian feature is the prominently placed self-sacrificing pelican present in the two upper corners of the middle-field and in the four corners of the outermost border.

The pelican features already in the medieval Physiologus as a symbol for self-sacrifice and *caritas*, both virtues of Christ's sufferings on the cross as redeemer of the world, but it also stands for the resurrection and the Eucharist. The pelican is a symbol of Christ who sacrificed his blood for humanity.¹⁹ It is one of the most popular motifs seen on art objects commissioned by the Portuguese in Asia and it was closely linked to missionary activities. Animal symbols were frequently used in the Asian missions. Between India and Japan the missionaries encountered native religions in which animals had a special importance or were even sacred.²⁰ By adjusting to the local traditions the Catholic faith was more easily understood by the indigenous people, to whom it may initially have been difficult to imagine worshipping a crucified and tortured body on a cross. Besides, as a symbol used for the Asian missions the pelican embodied the virtues of the missionaries, who were sacrificing themselves by spreading the true religion. In the Portuguese context the pelican is closely linked to D. João II, King of Portugal (1455-1495), whose personal symbol was the pelican which was linked to his motto: "*pola lei e pola grei*", (For law and people, meaning: I, the King, sacrifice myself for law and people – like Christ). Alongside the coat of arms and the cross of the Order of Christ, the specifically Portuguese version of the Templars that was created after the latter's extermination, the pelican became one of the symbols of the Aviz dynasty.

Secular and sacred meet in the symbol of the self-sacrificing pelican. The two possibilities do not exclude each other but complement each other and provide a certain ambivalence to the symbol, standing for the conquest of territory and souls of the newly "discovered" dominions. In this context the pelican is interpreted as a mythological, national and Eucharistic symbol stressing the messianic myth of the Portuguese expansion. D. João II was not the only ruler to use the pelican but he strengthened the symbol by linking it to his personal motto. Interestingly and fittingly, Philip II was compared to the pelican in the context of the war of independence of the Netherlands. The royal Spanish chaplain Pedro Cornejo for instance likens his king to the mythical bird when he

¹⁹ E. Kirschbaum, u.a. (ed.), *Lexikon Christlicher Ikonographie*, Rom, Herder, 1968-1972, vol. 3, p. 390.

²⁰ Markus Neuwirth, "Pelikan und Sonne als Zeichen der Expansion" in *Die Ästhetik des Staunens*, Habil., Innsbruck, University of Innsbruck, 1999, unpublished.

accuses the rebellious inhabitants of the Netherlands of supporting a liar and a hypocrite, William of Orange, instead of a mighty ruler who would preserve them (those blind and ungrateful children, possibly identified with the blindfold Cupid) "with blood from his own bosom like the pious pelican".²¹ Especially in the context of the programme of the arch on the colcha this parallel is telling. The self-sacrificing pelican can be read in direct connection with the Aviz kings depicted on the colcha but also alludes to the war of independence of the Netherlands and the just rule of the Spanish kings there. The surrounding decoration alludes to an ideal state and the Golden Age concept depicted similarly on other colchas.

The relationship between the three arches is full of tension: On the one hand there is the real arch, on the other two hands there are the print in the context of the *entrée solennelle* and the embroidered textile. The same form has been employed on three different media: ephemeral architecture, print and embroidery. We have seen what of the iconographic content was retained from the print and transposed onto the colcha. This affected the programme of the colcha. The commissioner surely knew the meaning of the iconography of the printed arch. By adding and by omitting information the iconography was modified. Not completely however, the figure of Discordia and Cupid retained their prominent positions. The branches including the portrait medallions of the Portuguese kings newly charged the architecture with content. The Netherlands merchant's programme thematising the problem of secession was adapted to the Portuguese situation and placed against the background of the general programme of the entry, the glorification of the Habsburgs and drawing of attention to the city of Lisbon.

Like the Netherlands, Portugal was part of the Habsburg Empire and felt neglected by the central authority. The two countries' reaction to this "neglect", which had oppressive tendencies, was different but shared similar results: eventually both countries became independent. The Spanish authorities were aware of the consequences a split on the Iberian Peninsula could have. As close relatives of the Portuguese dynasty, the Spanish Habsburgs had inherited the throne of Portugal and saw themselves as rightful heirs in continuity with the Aviz dynasty depicted on the colcha.²² Philip II's mother was an Aviz princess, he united the Iberian Peninsula, a dream that had been cherished by the Aviz kings. However, the long absence of the king from Lisbon and the subsequent loss of importance of the formerly glorious city fomented tendencies of independence within the

²¹ Pedro Cornejo, *Antiapología o contra defensa en dos partes dividida...*, quoted from: Rodriguez Perez, Y., "The Pelican and its ungrateful Children: The Construction and evolution of the Image of Dutch Rebelliousness in Golden Age Spain" in *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 11, Nos. 4-5, 2007, pp. 285-302.

²² Fernando Bouza Álvarez, *Portugal no tempo dos Filipes*, Lisboa, Edições Cosmos, 2000.

Portuguese nobility headed by the Braganza family, the future royal dynasty. The programmes of the entry as well as the colcha include these feelings of neglect and abandonment.²³

The period during which the print and the colcha were produced was troublesome for Portugal. The country sought to attract the attention of the king who resided far from Portugal in Madrid. The programme of the festive entry as such emphasised the eminent importance of Lisbon and its overseas dominions and was destined to make this clear to King Philip III of Spain who was celebrated as the rightful heir of the Portuguese throne. Portugal wished to regain the importance that it had during the time of the Aviz dynasty as an independent and noteworthy kingdom with its seaborne empire. The colcha's allusions to the Golden Age (the paradisiacal surroundings, the hunt, the Christological symbols) during the reign of the Aviz dynasty and especially to the reign of D. João II are apparent.²⁴ Not incidentally, around that time, the literary term *saudades* was replete with symbolism.²⁵ In this context it was the collective longing of the Portuguese people, facing neglect within the Spanish Empire, for the return of their past Golden Age under the Aviz. Ironically the time period in question, the seventeenth century is considered to be the Spanish *siglo de oro*.

On the colcha the iconography of the print was transformed from a plea for peace by Flemish merchants to a call for attention of the Portuguese including an indirect threat of secession given the choice of the printed model. By adding the portrait medallions of the kings, the programme took a dynastic dimension and was adapted to the Portuguese political situation. Wearing the insignia of the Order of Christ, the kings were depicted as fighters for the true faith in their dominions represented in the borders. Their possessions were considered a bastion of Catholicism in all parts of the world where they were present. This is not only stressed by the kings in medallions as fighters of the true faith but also by the repeated use of the pelican a symbol for Christ. Due to the apparent political content of the textile, the person it was destined for was probably the Spanish king himself, as were the entry and the print, since he was considered to be the rightful heir of the Aviz dynasty and Philip II was occasionally interpreted as yet another "pelican". It was a call to the king to lead Portugal into a new Golden Age. However, it is not known whether he ever saw the textile and given the political developments – Portugal became independent – even if he saw it he did not seem to take the advice given seriously.

²³ N. Senos, "Na esperança..." in *Reales Sitios*, pp. 48-61.

²⁴ A. de Oliveira, "Para a história do embargo à publicação da obra de D. Agostinho de Vasconcelos, vida y acciones del Rei Don Juan el Segundo" in *O Instituto*, No 139, 1979, pp. 17-33. By the same author: "A censura historiográfica no período filipino: uma nota para o seu estudo", in *Revista Portuguesa de História*, n.º 22, 1987, pp. 171-184.

²⁵ See also: L. Eduardo, *Die Mythologie der Saudade*, Frankfurt a. Main, Suhrkamp, 2001.

As for dating the piece, I think the latest possible date of production is the early 1630s.²⁶ After 1640 when Portugal became independent again the choice of a programme exalting the Spanish kings would not make sense any more. In addition to that, the conquest of Hugli, near where the colchas were produced, by the Mughal forces in 1632 interrupted colcha production for at least two years since a large part of the Portuguese population was forcefully "diverted" to the Mughal Emperor's capital. What happened during their absence is not quite clear. It is certain that they returned soon after but had to share their influence and trading rights with other European merchants. This political change would undoubtedly have affected colcha production even if old patterns and designs could easily be reapplied if the right craftsmen were present. Another matter is taste. I think that around that time the "classical" Bengal colchas were not so popular any more since their designs no longer corresponded to high Baroque taste. This is also a question of market saturation. Instead of Bengal colchas, the more colourful floral colchas from Gujarat were preferred from the late 1630s onwards.

The composition and political references to the contemporary political situation on the Iberian Peninsula render the iconographic programme of this colcha unique and raise the question as to whether there were more colchas with such an overtly political content and whether the colcha was part of an ensemble. One has to keep in mind that the models, in the form of the image in the printed book, and ideas that shaped the colcha had travelled halfway around the globe in order to be produced. In order to be understood properly by the viewers, the finished product had to travel all the way back to Portugal, unless it was used in the Portuguese colonial context.

²⁶ Pedro Moura Carvalho has suggested that the colcha dates from after 1640.



Fig. 1. Bengal colcha (Inv. Nr. T20e4).
Courtesy of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

TRABALHOS ARQUEOLÓGICOS RECENTES NO CONVENTO DOS AGOSTINHOS DE VELHA GOA E A QUESTÃO DA SEPULTURA DA RAINHA KETEVAN OU GUATIVANDA

SIDH MENDIRATTA *

Entre Janeiro e Junho de 2004, uma série de sondagens levadas a cabo pelo *Archaeological Survey of India* nas ruínas do convento de Nossa Senhora da Graça de Velha Goa permitiu identificar o local da capela do capítulo dentro das estruturas conventuais. Este texto tem por objectivo essencial descrever o contexto e acontecimentos em torno desse achado, nos quais o autor se encontrou directamente envolvido.¹

A importância da capela do capítulo dentro da casa-mãe da Congregação Oriental da província portuguesa dos Agostinhos prende-se com a edificação de uma narrativa missionária daquela ordem; constituía um “panteão” dos mártires e missionários notáveis da epopeia evangélica da ordem no Oriente, contendo as suas respectivas urnas.² Entre aqueles considerados mártires, contava-se a

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¹ O autor efectuou em Goa o trabalho de campo para a sua Prova Final de Licenciatura “Memórias de um levantamento – O convento dos Agostinhos de Velha Goa”. Durante esse período (Setembro 2003 a Junho de 2004), estabeleceu-se uma colaboração com o *Archaeological Survey of India*, que financiou o trabalho arqueológico; com a Fundação Oriente, que patrocinou as despesas relativas ao levantamento topográfico; e com o *Goa College of Architecture*, que providenciou apoio técnico na fase de protecção e musealização das estruturas postas a descoberto.

² O convento dos Agostinhos estava situado no Monte Santo em Velha Goa. Foi fundado em 1572, tendo sido completamente reconstruído a partir de 1597. As suas dimensões são comparáveis às de S. Vicente de Fora em Lisboa. O convento foi encerrado em 1835, tendo sido posteriormente ocupado pelo hospital da Misericórdia e pelo Arsenal da marinha, antes ficar abandonado.