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In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Chinese silks and porcelain, as well as Southeast Asian spices, ranked at the top of the list of luxury merchandise throughout Europe. As historian Fernand Braudel has written, "At the end of the fifteenth century, the rich forsook gold and silver fabrics for silk, which as it spread and became available to more people, was to emerge as *the* symbol of social mobility."[1] Prior to the sixteenth century, the suppliers of Asian luxury goods to the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Western Europe comprised a succession of regional merchants: Chinese, Moluccans, Indians, Mongols, Persians, Syrians, Turks, Egyptians, and North African Arabs and Berbers, to name just some of them. They rendezvoused in Samarkand, Damascus, Aleppo, Beirut, Alexandria, Baghdad, and Istanbul with mostly Italian middlemen who transported the goods on the final leg of the route to Spain, Portugal, and much of the rest of Europe, by way of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.[2]

The First Circumnavigators: Unsung Heroes of the Age of Discovery. By Harry Kelsey. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016. xix + 214 pp. 32 halftones, maps, notes, index. $35.00 cloth, ISBN 978-0-300-21778-0.). *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400–1830.* By Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xiii + 363 pp. 29 halftones, maps, glossary, notes, index. $39.99 paper, ISBN 978-0-521-68193-3.) Together with his collaborator and wife, Shirley Cushing Flint (also a historian), Richard Flint has been engaged in research on the Coronado Expedition and the early Spanish colonial period in the American Southwest and northwest Mexico for the last 35-plus years. Their ground-breaking documentary research leads the field of current Coronado Expedition research. They are currently completing a lengthy book manuscript called *A Most Splendid Company: The Inner Workings of the Coronado Expedition to Tierra Nueva*.

All these commercial actors, while necessary for Iberian and Western European acquisition of highly desired luxury merchandise, were also the target of resentment and ire from the very people who were the ultimate consumers of the silks, spices, and porcelains in Europe. The principal cause of that bitterness was that each link in the luxury supply chain added a tariff, surcharge, handling fee, or markup to the base price of the goods, so that at the point of final sale in Sevilla or Valladolid or Barcelona or Lisbon such add-ons customarily accounted for more than half the retail price, and sometimes considerably more than that. Writing in 1501, Venetian merchant Girolamo Priuli related this astounding total of added cost: "The mark-up for transit through the countries of the [Ottoman] Sultan and Venice is so great that whatever the spices cost in Calicut [in India] in ducats, the price in Venice has to be multiplied sixty or a hundred times."[3] Understandably, the prices galled both customers and royal officials.

So important was trade in Asian luxuries to the surging Castilian and Portuguese commercial economies that investment in ventures seeking new routes that would bypass the expensive middlemen of the trade in Asian goods became commonplace in the 1400s and 1500s.[4] Beginning in 1430, the Portuguese, with Prince Henry the Navigator (*infante Enrique el navegante*) in the vanguard, got a jump of more than half a century on their Iberian cousins. It cannot be said with certainty that Prince Henry's activities were aimed specifically at establishing trade with Asia. But heavily supported by Portuguese royal funding, ships sent south along the West African coast with his aid and that of his relatives edged farther and farther southward in fits and starts during the fifteenth century. Initially the mercantile attraction was gold, ivory, and slaves from the southern portion of the western bulge of Africa. It was not until decades after the prince's death did Portuguese traders succeed in sailing little-by-little around the African continent and reach Calicut on the western coast of India in 1498. At Calicut, and later at Hormuz, Goa, and Melaka, the Portuguese rendezvoused with Southeast Asian traders whose inventories included spices from the Maluku/Molucca Islands and silks and porcelains from China.[5] As a consequence, Lisa Jardine writes, "The prices of Asian luxuries fell precipitously in Europe and the profits to Portuguese merchants soared."[6]

In contradistinction to the halting and haphazard trajectory of the Portuguese approach to Asia, it was clear from the beginning that Spaniards had a specific goal in mind after 1492: the establishment of direct trade with China and the Maluku and Banda (Spice) Islands. Very few original, holograph manuscript versions of documents that relate to Columbus's voyage of 1492 are known to exist. A closely contemporaneous copy of a passport provided to Columbus by the Catholic sovereigns of Castilla and Aragón for his use during the voyage

specifies that he was being sent "with three equipped caravels over the ocean seas toward the regions of India [meaning South and Southeast Asia]."[7] Even more explicit is the abstract of the journal of Columbus's first voyage prepared by Bartolomé de las Casas. The prologue to the abstract reads in part, quoting Columbus's own words, "Because of the report that I had given to Your Highnesses [Isabel and Fernando] about the lands of India, and about a prince who is called Grand Khan . . . you thought of sending me, Christóbal Colón, to the said regions of India, to see the said princes and the peoples and the lands. . . . And you commanded that I should not go to the East by land, by which way it is customary to go, but by the route to the West."[8]

During the decades following Columbus's momentous voyage, many other Spanish-licensed enterprises sought China and the Malukus. A partial listing of those whose intended destination was unequivocally Asia includes the three later voyages by Columbus, the expeditions led by Ferdinand Magellan and Francisco García Jofre de Loaysa, as well as those led by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Ambrosio Alfinger, Alonso Saavedra de Cerón, Sebastian Cabot, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, Ruy López de Villalobos, and Miguel López de Legazpí.[9]

Columbus's feat, performed by sailing west rather than east, provoked tensions and disputes between the Portuguese and Castilian royal courts. The potential for serious confrontation was diminished at least for a while by the signing of the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which established a negotiated line of demarcation between "to-be-discovered" Spanish and Portuguese territories, which lay 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. Three and a half decades later, another treaty, signed at Zaragoza, was needed to extend the line to the opposite side of the earth. That boundary was placed 297.5 leagues east of the island of Maluku in the southwestern Pacific Ocean.[10] Eventual results of the two treaties were to make Brazil Portuguese and the Philippines Spanish territories.

But that was easier said than done. Decades of incursions across the treaty lines were to pass before anything resembling stability was achieved. That long period of intense competition for trade in Asian luxuries, later to be joined by the English and Dutch East India Companies, is detailed in two excellent, recent books: Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400–1830* (2015) and Harry Kelsey, *The First Circumnavigators: Unsung Heroes of the Age of Discovery* (2016).

What these works make clear is that the establishment, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, of new eastward (Portuguese) and westward (Castilian) routes to Asian entrepôts where silks, porcelains, and spices could be readily purchased was the result of complementary actions undertaken not only by

Europeans but by Asians, especially Chinese, Indian, and Muslim traders. This profitable trade definitely did not come about by European initiatives alone.

In central and western Asia, decline and interruption of trade in luxury goods from the Far East to Europe was the result of Ottoman intervention beginning in the early 1400s. In South and Southeast Asia, though, expansion of Muslim presence and influence stimulated increased maritime trade throughout that region. Debin Ma explains, "The rather abrupt withdrawal of the Ming [Chinese] naval presence in the Pacific waters at a time of rapidly growing private trade in the mid-fifteenth century opened the way for the arrival of the first European power, Portugal, which by 1488 found its way to East Asia, by bypassing the mighty Ottoman barrier and rounding the Cape of Good Hope."[11] The Andayas elaborate on the expansion of this trade:

> The sixteenth century saw a continuing growth in seaborne traffic [in South and Southeast Asia]. Indian merchants and their cargoes of textiles were still central to the economy of many ports around the Bay of Bengal, and the arrival of the Europeans was an important factor in extending existing networks, but in regional terms the Chinese were the driving force behind this increased trade. Despite the [Chinese] imperial ban on overseas commerce, ships from the southeastern provinces of Guangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong continued to sail to the 'Southern Ocean [South Pacific].'[12]

According to the Andayas, the Portuguese capture in 1511 of the port of Melaka on the southwestern coast of the Malay Peninsula "was a significant step towards Portugal's goal of dominating the spice trade, which they planned to achieve by seizing the principal nodes of the global trade network—Goa, Melaka, Hormuz, and Aden."[13] Such a conception of the eastward expansion of Portuguese trading presupposes a greater amount of centralized, long-range planning than was typical of contemporaneous Spanish expeditions in the American Indies. Portuguese activity in Asia during the first half of the sixteenth century was, in fact, controlled more closely by the royal court than was the case in the Spanish Americas. Indeed, late-seventeenth-century historian Manuel de Faria y Sousa records many events in South and Southeast Asia undertaken through the personal direction of King Manuel of Portugal: the dispatch of armadas and men-at-arms and the establishment of fortresses at Quiloa, Goa, and Malaka between 1506 and 1511, for example.[14] By the middle of the sixteenth century, though, "official Crown voyages were largely displaced with concessions granted to a few favored *fidalgos* (nobles), who were permitted to ply a specific trade route in return for payments to the Crown."[15] This practice brought the colonial procedures of Portugal and Spain into closer alignment.

Throughout the sixteenth century, the participants in most Spanish-led expeditions in the Americas financed those enterprises themselves. There were very few exceptions—including Columbus's four voyages and the expeditions to La Florida led by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and don Tristán de Luna y Arellano (1560s), all of which enjoyed substantial royal financial backing. The royal chronicler of the Indies, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, reported around 1540, "Almost never do their Majesties put their wealth and money into these new expeditions, instead only permits and high-sounding words."[16] That also meant that the choice of destination was usually made by the private organizers of each expedition. Furthermore, coordination and continuity of plans for Spanish-led expeditions was almost nonexistent. At least at first, Portuguese colonial expansion in Asia was much-more disciplined than the corresponding Spanish activities in Nueva España, Peru, or Río de la Plata.

After 1550 or so, though, Portuguese and Spanish practices in regard to planning and funding of expeditions increasingly converged. There were other ways, too, in which the expeditionary behavior of parties of conquest and reconnaissance from both Portugal and Castilla echoed each other. Two things in particular resonate for historians of Latin America. First, both Spanish and Portuguese expeditions were in frequent—sometimes nearly continuous—violent conflict with the indigenous peoples of the regions in which they operated. Second, both Spanish and Portuguese expeditions routinely relied on allies recruited from recently subjugated indigenous populations or from disaffected factions within indigenous communities. This use of native allies has been considered by some in the past as an innovation made by Spaniards in the Americas. Wider familiarity with the Iberian past, however, makes it clear that the same strategy was regularly employed during the eight-hundred-year-long *reconquista* (roughly AD 700–1500) of the territory that has become Spain and Portugal, as well as during Iberian expansion to the Canary Islands and North Africa, well before encounter with the Indies, both East and West, at the end of the fifteenth century.

In this limited space I can provide only a suggestion of the details that await thorough comparison. Fighting between the expedition led by Ruy López de Villalobos and indigenous peoples of the Islas del Poniente (Philippine Archipelago) was almost incessant and massively destructive of human life: American, European, and Asian. This paraphrase of a contemporary description of the first battle on the Philippine island of Mindanao in April 1543 is typical: "Boatloads of islanders ambushed the Spanish mariners and in a fierce battle drove them away, with many killed and wounded on both sides."[17]

During the remaining five years of the "Villalobos" voyage, battle deaths among Europeans, American Natives (*indios*), and Asians (also called *indios*)

were appallingly high.[18] Only about a fourth of the European expeditionaries survived the enterprise. None of the *indios amigos* from Nueva España are known to have lived through the whole voyage. It is harder to estimate conflict deaths among the Pacific islanders, but the total must have been large, given the documentary descriptions of slaughter. Both the frequency of fighting and the large number of casualties recall the Spanish reports of conflict that occurred in the course of most expeditions of reconnaissance and conquest in the Americas during the sixteenth century.

Similar accounts of brutal fighting pepper the documentary record of Portuguese penetration of Asia in the 1500s. As only two examples, the Andayas have written, first, "Sri Lankan chronicles are replete with accounts of Portuguese atrocities and cruelty toward Buddhists [in the 1550s], the most egregious act was the seizure and public destruction in Goa of this revered [sacred Tooth] relic. . . . In the religious disruption that followed Portugal's steady arrogation of territory in Sri Lanka, scriptures were lost, many monks disrobed, and monasteries destroyed or abandoned."[19] Second, decades earlier in 1511, Melaka on the Malay Peninsula, a major node along the maritime trade route between China and the West, was subjugated by a combined Portuguese and Asian force "following a month's siege and ferocious hand-to-hand fighting."[20]

The historical record of Spanish and Portuguese extension of sovereignty in Asia and their similar involvement in the Americas provides detailed accounts of the use of indigenous allies, as in this information from the *Relación anónima* of the Villalobos voyage: "concerning personal servants [probably a euphemism]—blacks and Indian men and women—they took more than 400."[21] The true role of those "servants" is revealed in this description of fighting in the southern Philippines during the spring of 1543: "the [Asian] Indians began shooting arrows from land, wounding most of our [American] Indians, many of whom died from their wounds later."[22] Correspondingly, during their bloody attack on Goa, along India's west coast, the Portuguese "sailed once more into the harbour . . . with twenty-eight ships carrying 1700 soldiers, accompanied by a large number of native troops belonging to Timoja and the Raja of Gersoppa."[23]

Despite the important similarities between Spanish and Portuguese organizational and operational practices in Asia during the latter half of the sixteenth century, there were significant differences also, as the Andayas point out. "Most noteworthy," they write, was the fact that the Portuguese "expended far less energy and fewer resources" on converting Asian populations to Catholicism.[24]

The convergence of Spanish and Portuguese methods in Southeast Asia by the 1540s to 1560s was due, at least in part, to extreme isolation from the home societies and governments. In the case of the Spanish settlers/conquerors in the Philippines, the viceregal capital was in Mexico City nearly nine thousand miles

away, mostly over open ocean. The Portuguese viceregal capital of the Estado da India—which ostensibly covered all of South and Southeast Asia—was at Goa on India's west coast, about three thousand miles from Ternate in the Maluku Islands. That distance, though considerably shorter than the distance between Manila and Mexico City, was over heavily traveled waters, exposing travelers to many possibilities of hostile encounters.

As the Andayas have written, "Although Goa was [beginning in the early 1500s] the administrative and religious hub of the [Portuguese] Estado da India [meaning all of Southeast Asia], it did not exercise direct control over Portuguese settlements. Operating essentially as independent entities in obtaining and dispensing revenues, governors and captains of these settlements were encouraged to reach economic and political arrangements with local traders and rulers."[25] In much the same way, officials in Mexico City had very tenuous influence on and control over such Spanish settlements as Manila (Philippines), Santa Fe (Nuevo México), and Santiago de Guatemala. And around the world communities such as Culiacán (Spanish) and Ternate (Portuguese) came into being incidentally, on the way to China and the Spice Islands.

Perhaps the most immediate value of *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia* and *The First Circumnavigators* for historians of the Americas is the reminder that comparisons with sixteenth-century Spanish and Portuguese activities in Africa and Asia can enlighten understanding of Luso-Hispano practice in the Americas during that era. Relatively frequent and easy travel of individuals between the Americas and Africa-Asia, and vice versa, tended to globalize colonial behavior of the two rival European states. Although commercial and geo-political competitors, representatives of Spain and Portugal mirrored each other in many ways. Those many similarities caution us to consider worldwide perspectives in trying to understand developments in Guadalajara or Quito or São Salvador.

Notes

1. Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, vol. 2, Civilization and Capitalism: 15th–18th Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 178. Emphasis added.

2. For a map, see Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 70–71; Debin Ma, "The Great Silk Exchange: How the World was Connected and Developed" in *Pacific Centuries: Pacific and Pacific Rim History Since the 16th Century*, ed., D. Flynn, L. Frost, and A. J. H. Latham (Abingdon-on-Thames, England: Routledge Press, 1998), 9; and Ralph Kauz, "Trade and Commerce on the Silk Road after the End of Mongol Rule in China, Seen from Chinese Texts," *The Silk Road* 4 (winter 2006–2007): 54–58.

3. Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 80, 290.

4. Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, 80; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492–1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 89.

5. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Southern Voyages*, vol. 2, The European Discovery of America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 3–6.

6. Jardine, *Worldly Goods*, 288–90.

7. Text transcribed in Alice B. Gould, "Nueva lista documentada de los tripulantes de Colón en 1492," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid)* 90 (1927): 544; and translated in Samuel Eliot Morison, *Journals and Other Documents on the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: Heritage Press, 1963), 31.

8. BN (Madrid), *vitrina* 6, N.7, fols. 1r–1v, transcribed and translated in Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr., ed. and trans., *The Diario of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492–1493* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 16–18.

9. Both the Magellan and Loaysa voyages, as Harry Kelsey points out, turned into unintended circumnavigations of the globe. Harry Kelsey, *The First Circumnavigators: Unsung Heroes of the Age of Discovery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), xvii.

10. Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492–1763* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 42 and 199.

11. Ma, "The Great Silk Exchange."

12. Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 147.

13. Ibid., 151.

14. Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *Asia Portuguesa* (Lisboa: Bernardo da Costa Carvalho, 1703), 71–149.

15. Andaya and Andaya, *History of Early Modern Southeast Asia*, 135.

16. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Historia General y Natural de las Indias*, ed. Juan Pérez de Tudela Bueso (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1992), 4: 300.

17. Kelsey, *The First Circumnavigators*, 81.

18. Quotation marks appear around Villalobos in this sentence because the man himself died two years before the voyage ended.

19. Andaya and Andaya, *History of Early Modern Southeast Asia*, 145.

20. Ibid., 151.

21. *Relación anónima,* BN (Madrid), Res. 18, transcribed in *El viaje de don Ruy López de Villalobos a las islas del Poniente, 1542–1548*, ed. Consuelo Varela (Milano: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino-La Goliardica, 1983), 35–115. Translation by the author. Kelsey, relying on a second copy of the *Relación anónima*, uses the figure of forty American Natives. British Library, Add. 9944, cited in Kelsey, *The First Circumnavigators*, 63.

22. *Relación anónima*, 77. Translation by the author.

23. H. Morse Stephens, *The Rulers of India: Albuquerque* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 85. The author of this passage couches his description in anachronistic, formal terms—"native troops," for example—of the military and diplomatic operations he was familiar with from his own day.

24. Andaya and Andaya, *History of Early Modern Southeast Asia,* 138–40.

25. Ibid., 138.