



**JAIME EGUIGUREN**

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**Anonymous Artist**

Second half of 16<sup>th</sup> century  
China, Macau

**ALTAR LECTERN**

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Lacquered and giltwood  
28 x 38 x 25 cm

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## A Unique Jesuit Lectern in Chinese Lacquer, Mingling Christian and Chinese Visual and Spiritual Concepts

Ulrike Körber, PhD

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## Introduction

Designed to support liturgical books during Mass and to serve Portuguese Catholic missionaries in the scope of their presence in Asia, this foldable mass book lectern in typology, shape, technique and heterogeneous decorative program reflects the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Christianization of Asian cultures. Yet it is unique with its archangel scene and polychrome decoration among extant examples of such hybrid ritual objects, collectively referred to as Luso-Asian<sup>1</sup>. This type of lectern originally developed on the Iberian Peninsula, inspired by Muslim *Q'uran* stands. In contrast to Islamic models, which hold the *Q'uran* horizontally, those adapted to Christian practice have shorter feet, and front flaps cut so that the upper front panel and the high backrest can support the missal in a vertical position<sup>2</sup>. These small-size and collapsible stands, common items among Catholic missionaries in Asia, were placed on altars to hold a Bible or other religious texts. Their shapes, methods of construction and assembly, as well as their dimensions vary depending on their origins (India, China, Japan, among other possibilities), but all derive from the same Muslim model.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Luso-Asian is generally applied to people of mixed ethnicities from the miscegenation of native Portuguese with multi-ethnic indigenous Asian cultures and their descendants, who still retain cultural aspects of their Portuguese ancestors such as the Portuguese language, the Roman Catholic faith, including distinctive elements of domestic, civic and religious Luso-Asian architecture, as well as Luso-Asian cuisine, and finally art. The term has also been used by various scholars to designate artifacts of heterogeneous character that emerged from the Portuguese presence in Asia. It functions as a preamble for the diversely distinctive artistic and craft creations fruit of the Catholic European presence in Asia under Portuguese patronage, Moreira & Curvelo (1998), Körber (2019).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Flores (1998, p.34), Moreira & Curvelo (1998, pp.543-44), Canepa (2009, pp.262-266).

## Description



Fig. 1 Front side of the folded lectern

This stand (28 x 38 x 25 cm) consists of two assembled wood planks, hinged so that it can be folded flat for transport. The entire surface is covered by a black lacquer coating with gold and polychrome decoration. While its front side depicts themes of a purely Christian and European character, its rear follows a classical Chinese decorative program.

The front of the backrest depicts the Archangel St. Michael dressed as a knight with armor, pauldrons and cape, within a golden sunburst of alternating flaming and straight rays. On his long wavy hair, he wears a headband with a cross. His wings have golden, red and green feathers. Standing on a long-tailed creature of spotted fur – a demon symbolizing Lucifer, the Devil or Evil – he holds in his right hand a spear ending in an astylar cross, which he pushes into the creature's gaping mouth. His left holds an unbalanced scale with human figures in each pan, the lower of which the beast is about to grab by the claws and pull into his gaping mouth. Thus, the archangel appears as both the Defeater of Lucifer and the Weigher of Souls on Judgment Day. (Figs. 1, 2-5)

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Fig. 2 Archangel St. Michael vanquishing the Evil



Fig. 3 Archangel St. Michael's face with headband and a cross

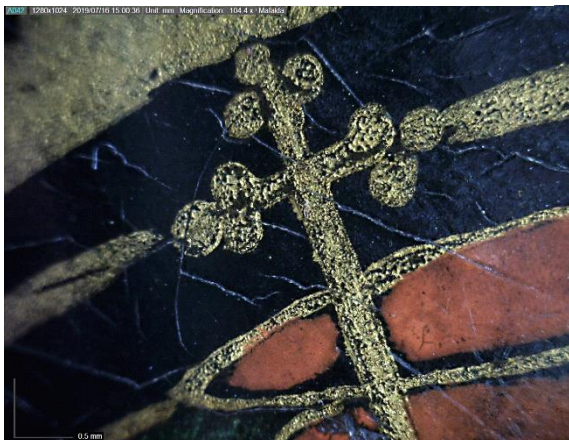


Fig. 4 The Astylar Cross ending of the archangel's

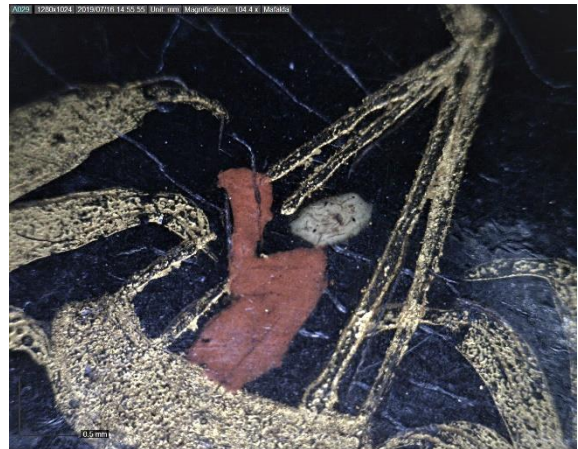


Fig. 5 Detail of the figure in the lower scale

The entire panel is framed by a decorative border of repeating oval and dot motifs within single lines, followed by a thicker gold line along the edge. In the four corner spandrels are branches with red and green fruits and golden leaves. The droplet shaped upper two are likely seedpods, and the lower ones are circular. Between both, on each vertical side is an insect, likely a bee or wasp. The upper fields of the wooden hinge connecting the two planks are decorated with stylized chrysanthemum flowers, while the lower front surfaces depict star and cross-like elements visible only when the lectern is folded.

The upper front panel that supports the missal displays an undulating band with alternating stylized flowers, within double-line borders. Its underside, visible when the lectern is folded, is decorated with

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symmetrical Renaissance-style scrollwork with dolphin heads; the front edge has a decorative band with consecutive spirals with dots.



Fig. 6 Rear side of the folded lectern

The front foot panel displays a fantastic ornament with a circular mask in the center. From the mouth of the latter develop symmetrically on both sides plant motifs with a magpie and strapwork on each side. This scene is framed by a double-line border. Both front and back foot panels have identical cut polylobed arches in their lower part. Though reminiscent of carved lecterns made under Portuguese patronage along the Indian coast, this shape, stems ultimately from Muslim models.

In contrast to the Christian-European motifs on the front, both rear panels display a fully traditional Chinese decorative scheme of auspicious motifs. The upper panel depicts a scene with a longevity stone at the foot, beside a tree peony with flowers in pink, white and gold. On its branches sit three magpies with green-white feather dress,

while a fourth magpie sits on the ground between a daylily and an unidentifiable plant. The left top corner displays a pair of bees or wasps. Again, double-lines border along the edges. The rear foot panel, also framed by two gold lines, is decorated with a stylized lotus scroll in the center and a camellia on each side. (Figs. 6-10)



Fig. 7 Magpie sitting on tree peony branch



Fig. 8 Magpie on the ground



Fig. 9 Bee or wasp on the front side



Fig. 10 A pair of bees or wasps on the rear side

## Christian Iconography, European Renaissance and Mannerist Decoration and Classical Chinese Themes

The overall decorative scheme on this lectern is notably rich in its heterogeneous and intercultural composition. The circular golden sunburst surrounding the archangel (asymbol of the victorious Christ<sup>3</sup>) resembles the Christogram, the emblem used by the Society of Jesus. Within a sunburst it contains the IHS monogram, a cross mounted above and three crucifixion nails below. This monogram adorns the center of numerous mass book lecterns, as well as oratories and other Jesuit <sup>4</sup>items manufactured in Asia. (Fig. 26)

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<sup>3</sup> Mendonça (2010, p.96).

<sup>4</sup> The Society of Jesus was a religious congregation founded in 1534 in Paris by Ignatius de Loyola and some co-founders, among which was Francis Xavier, later responsible for the missions in India and Japan. Solely for men, this religious congregation was approved by Pope Paul III in Rome in 1540 and was inspired by a military structure. Their aims were the renewal of the clergy, combating Protestantism and converting non-Christians to expand the Roman Catholic faith, cf. Bailey (2007, p.169).

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In contrast to the usual motif, this missal stand depicts the archangel scene. Might it also derive from a Jesuit commission? Not only the typical sunrays, but also the presence of the archangel himself seem to confirm this assumption.

Saint Michael – the most popular of Christianity’s seven archangels with the most defined personality – is a warrior, a knight, the arch-strategist of the heavenly militias, and the defeater of Evil, Satan, the Devil, depicted variously as a dragon or other horrific creature with devil horns, wings, claws, or a long snake-like tail. Saint Michael is also the driver of the dead whose souls he will weigh on Judgment Day. He can appear standing on the ground, floating in the air, or even riding a horse, dressed either in a long robe, chainmail or with a knight’s helmet; holding a spear, a sword, a shield or a scale, depending on which of his characteristics is addressed. His shield might bear the image of the cross or the Latin words “QUIS UT DEUS” (“Who [is] like God?”) – both a sign of victory of Good over Evil.<sup>5</sup> The Roman Church considers him its defender. There are numerous 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century engravings of this archangel made by Italian, Flemish, German, or French engravers and draftsmen. (Figs. 11-13)



Fig. 11 Michael beats the dragon, Hieronymus Wierix (1553-1619) after Maerten de Vos, 1585, © Rijksmuseum Amsterdam



Fig. 12 St. Michael defeating the Devil and weighing the souls, Raphael Sadeler II (1584-1627/32), after Peter Witte, 1604, © Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

<sup>5</sup> Giorgi (2003, pp.364-365), Réau (2007, pp.67-71).



Fig. 13 St. Michael vanquishing the Devil, Mario Cartaro (1540-1620), in Boorsch & Spike (1986, p.417)

Around the world and through the centuries numerous chapels, shrines and churches have been devoted to this archangel. A recurring motif in Jesuit churches both in the facades and interiors, veneration of angelic cults played an important role from the very beginning of the order's official founding in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola and his six companions Francisco Xavier from Navarre, Alfonso Salmeron, Diego Laínez, Nicolás Bobadilla from Castile, Peter Faber from Savoy, and Simão Rodrigues from Portugal. Alongside the Guardian Angel, St. Michael was of special importance.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Osswald (2013, pp.237, 282-283).

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An engraving by the Italian artist Mario Cartaro shows a Mannerist altar with the painting of St. Michael vanquishing the Devil. **(Fig. 13)** On its triangular pediment are two angels presenting the coat-of-arm of pope Pius V. (1566–1572). The frieze underneath consists of seven triglyphs, with the metope fields in

between filled by two Keys of Heaven, a symbol of papal authority, and four Jesuit emblems.



Strapwork ornaments with ribbonlike elements, scrollwork, grotesque masks, fantastic creatures, or dolphin heads were common in early Renaissance and Mannerist prints in a variety of ornamental variations. **(Figs. 14, 15)** Their presence in this decoration clearly alludes to European prints and pattern books, either religious or ornamental, which may have served as an ornament template. European Christian art, print and pattern books, were brought to Asia to serve as models for various ornamentations.

Fig. 14 Ornament with fantastic creatures and dolphins, Master IG, in Koch (1980, p.175)



Fig. 15 Ornamental foliage with a mask and fantastic dolphins, Enea Vico (1523-1567), in Spike (1978), p.293

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With the overall European ornamentation on the lectern's front in mind, the plants in the four spandrels that border the Christogram do not seem to be identifiable European species. This is not surprising considering that the motifs were copied by Chinese artisans to the finished lacquer surface. Sometimes foreign elements were replaced by well-known native ones. However, while the lower two suggest any sort of circular fruit, such as apple or peach, the teardrop shape and coloration of the upper ones suggest the Chinese chestnut (*Sterculia monosperma*) that originates to the Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi and Yunnan. Apart from their use in Chinese herbal medicine, it is believed that these nuts can exorcise evil spirits and bad luck.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the decoration of this lectern, a southern Chinese symbolic plant combines with the Christian motif to enhance the main theme.



Fig. 16 Plant depicted in the upper spandrels of the lectern's front



Fig. 17 Chinese chestnut (*Sterculia monosperma*)

Generally, motifs in Chinese art are symbols that convey meaning or messages based on homophones or puns, inherent in the make-up of the Chinese language and script. The principle scene on the rear – the tree peonies with two pairs of magpies – expresses “repeated good news and wealth”. The tree peony (Pinyin: mǔdānhuā) – the King of Flowers in Chinese culture – symbolizes “prosperity” and “prestige”, as well as “wealth”, “royalty”, “rank”, “status” and “nobility”. The combination with a lotus (lián) symbolizes “glory” and “rank”, or “connected power and wealth”.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I kindly acknowledge Julie Chang for this information and her assistance in identifying this plant.

<sup>8</sup> Welch (2008, pp.34, 36), Osselt (2011, pp.92, 196-97).

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Magpies (Pinyin: què, xǐ or xǐquè) have many auspicious associations, among them “joy”, “stability”, “celebration”, and “great happiness”. Because the character for the word shares the pronunciation with the character for “happiness” (xǐ), magpies are considered “good fortune birds” and signal “impending good news”. A pair of magpies means “double happiness” while two pairs may signal the classic Chinese delightful wish of “four happinesses” (sweet rain after a long drought; meeting an old friend in a foreign place; the wedding night in the nuptial chamber; the sight of one’s name on the golden placard as a successful graduate). As messengers of good news, they are frequently added to a composition to express the wish “to come”.<sup>9</sup> Rocks or stones (Pinyin: shòushí) denote “longevity” and “solidarity” and, microcosms of the universe, they represent “permanence”.<sup>10</sup> Combined with day lilies (Pinyin: xuāncǎo) in the phrase xuān shòu yán líng, literally means “day lilies and longevity stone prolonging life”.<sup>11</sup> And bees or wasps (Pinyin: fēng) symbolizing industriousness, share a homophone with “salary” (Pinyin: fèng), and “abundant, plentiful” (Pinyin: fēng).<sup>12</sup> Camellias (Pinyin: chahua, shānchá) – the flowers of the tea plant native to the southern provinces are a symbol of “winter” and of “endurance”, due to their early bloom. Additionally, they symbolize “good luck”, “longevity” and “prosperity”.<sup>13</sup> In all this composition conveys a positive message.

This auspicious scene is not accidental but done intentionally to illustrate unequivocally the optimistic Christian message of salvation. It exemplifies the Jesuit practice of adapting to the host cultures they intended to convert. Its components are among several flora and fauna motifs that simultaneously carry symbolism in Christian and Chinese culture. For example, the lily symbolizes Christ, “chastity” and “purity”, or the Immaculate Conception.<sup>14</sup> Bees and wasps, symbols of industry and tirelessness worldwide, to Christians also represent Christ and his Clemency, and the Virgin Mary. Their appearance in spring symbolizes rebirth and their sting reminds of Christ as a judge.<sup>15</sup> In Christian iconography the peony may allude to the thornless rose, an attribute of the Virgin Mary, the angels and blessed souls in heaven, as well as a symbol of “love” and “purity”.<sup>16</sup> The dolphins, often entwined in Renaissance

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<sup>9</sup> Welch (2008, p.77), Osselt (2011, pp.188-89).

<sup>10</sup> Welch (2008, p.64), Osselt (2011, pp.188-89).

<sup>11</sup> Welch (2008, p.26).

<sup>12</sup> Welch (2008, p.91), Osselt (2011, pp.172-73).

<sup>13</sup> Welch (2008, p.23), Osselt (2011, pp.174-75).

<sup>14</sup> Impelluso (2003, p.85-89), Battistini (2005, p.108).

<sup>15</sup> Impelluso (2003, p.334), Werness (2006, p.40).

<sup>16</sup> Impelluso (2003, p.118-127).

emblems as shown earlier, connote the sacrificial Christ, and are a symbol of “faith”, “water” or “fortune”.<sup>17</sup>

## Lacquer Technique

A material analysis confirmed what its lacquer coating and decorative program already suggested. Typical Chinese materials and techniques were employed in its making.

The composition of the foundation layer consists of an iron-rich clay mixed with tung or perilla oil, and blood (probably pig’s blood). The use of lacquer substitutes in foundation layers – a cheaper and faster production method – is traditionally Chinese. This composition corresponds to the foundation layers of many other Chinese lacquered Luso-Asian objects from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as to Chinese export lacquerware from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>18</sup>

Over the foundation follow two lacquer layers. The sap has been identified as laccol lacquer, derived from the lacquer producing tree *Rhus Succedanea*, a species home to southern Chinese provinces.<sup>19</sup> The lacquer was mixed with a drying oil (tung or perilla), as well as some starch and protein.

The polychromy was made in litharge oil painting technique (*miaoyou*), using a heat-bodied drying oil (tung or perilla) as agglutinant, litharge, and other pigments. Historically, this technique allowed a wider range of color than the lacquer sap itself. Litharge was used for white areas of magpies, peonies and the cross crowning the archangel’s head. Cinnabar was used for the red elements of the fruits, the archangel’s dress and mixed with litharge for the pink peonies. The green coloration was made by adding malachite. All these pigments are used in traditional Chinese lacquer craft, while the techniques are mentioned in the 16<sup>th</sup> century *Xiushi lù* (Treatise on Lacquer) with 17<sup>th</sup> century comments, the only extant Chinese source on this craft.

Beside a foldable tabletop in Vienna,<sup>20</sup> ones owned by Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand II of Tirol (1529-1595) at Ambras Castle near Innsbruck, which top surface presents a blue coating of tung oil and indigo

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<sup>17</sup> Impelluso (2003, p.350), Werness (2003, p.142).

<sup>18</sup> Körber (2019), Petisca (2016).

<sup>19</sup> Körber (2019).

<sup>20</sup> Inv. No. 4958, Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, on loan at Museum für Angewandte Kunst Wien.

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stained litharge, no other Luso-Asian lacquered items with this oil painting technique are known. (Figs. 18, 19)

Most of the gold decoration was executed in gold leaf (tiejinqi), attached onto a thin orpiment pigmented mordant layer. Gold powder was used for shading in the depiction of the archangel's dress on the front, and on the rear to depict the longevity stone as well as to indicate the ground (nijin huaqi). The mordant layer for the powder has not been analyzed. (Figs. 20, 21)



Fig. 18 Detail of Magpie in gold leaf, needle drawing and white oil-litharge painting, 104.4-fold magnification

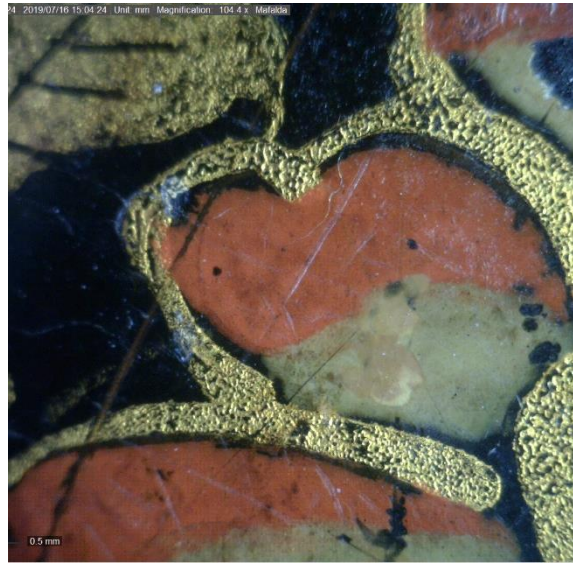


Fig. 19 Detail of peony in gold leaf, white and pink oil-litharge painting, 104.4-fold magnification

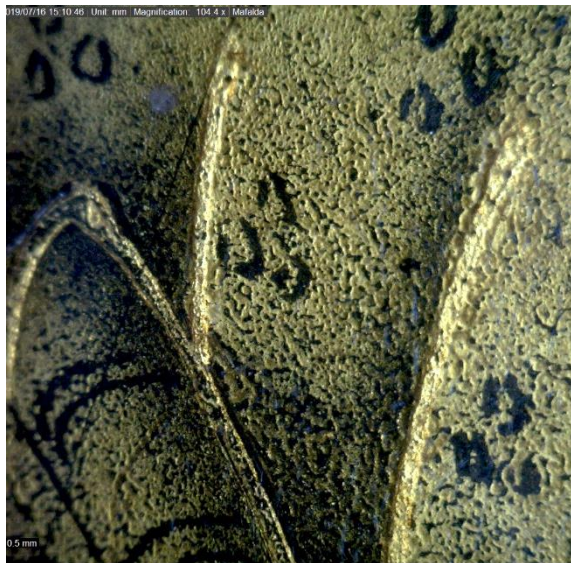


Fig. 20 Contrast between gold leaf and powder, 104.4-fold magnification



Fig. 21 Detail of the archangel's dress with shading in gold powder, 104.4-fold magnification

## Historical Contextualization

The Portuguese State of India or Portuguese India – a growing network of several coastal presences in port-cities with factories, trading posts, and Portuguese settlements – evolved in consequence to the maritime voyages conducted by the Portuguese crown from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century onward. It encompassed a territory stretching between the African East Coast and the China Sea, coastal regions of the Indian and Pacific Ocean, including the Japanese archipelago. Interlinked by various maritime trading routes and part of an extensive mercantile network, this structure assured access to multiple different regions and a wide exchange with a myriad of local cultures. The principal goal of this large expansion and progress into maritime Asia was the direct access to the trade of spices and other lucrative merchandise, along two other main intrinsic circumstantial concomitants: the extension of the Crusades against the Muslims and the spreading of the Catholic faith.

From the earliest voyages onward, Catholic missionaries accompanied these voyages, often functioning as intermediaries between the southern Europeans and local rulers. The missionary campaign further was an important tool to gain and maintain the Portuguese crown dominance in these new territories. Under papal patronage<sup>21</sup> the Portuguese King D. Manuel I became the head of the Roman Catholic Church in the Portuguese territories overseas, nominating bishops or licensing religious orders and individual clergy for the passage to Portuguese India<sup>22</sup>. The Franciscans were the first religious order to reach Asia as early as the first voyages (1500/ established in 1511), followed by the Dominicans (1503/1548), whereas almost half a century later the newly formed Society of Jesus – or Jesuits – reached India in 1542, and the order of St. Augustine in 1572.<sup>23</sup> Overall, Catholic missionaries played a significant role as purchasers of all kinds of furniture, imagery and religious utensils. The demand of portable objects and supplies was particularly increased with the growing extension of the Portuguese State of India along with the advance of Catholic missions further into Asia. Beside liturgical textiles, paintings, sculptured images, gold- and silversmith work, the existence of numerous portable liturgical objects and furniture does help to account for the dimension of missionary organization and its rapid progress throughout Asia. These artifacts comprise oratories, mass book lecterns, reliquaries, retable or host boxes, many of which are embellished with the Jesuit IHS-monogram or heraldic devices of different religious orders.

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<sup>21</sup> The papal bull *Ineffabilis et summi* from 1497, issued by Pope Alexander VI, permitted the Portuguese crown the evangelization of populaces eastern from the Cape of Good Hope, cf. Correia (2011, p.58).

<sup>22</sup> Boyajian (2008, p.30).

<sup>23</sup> Bailey (2007, p.169), Curvelo (2009, p.32), Correia (2011, p.61), Lopes (2011, p.121).

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In Asia missionaries faced totally different cultures, artistic traditions and respective attitudes to sacred art.<sup>24</sup> Above all, mainly the Jesuits acted like soldiers in this counterreformatist religious venture. They started a visual campaign, by the means of sculptures, paintings, engravings and print media. In the various regions, they met with different preconditions, and with their further progress into Asia, the number of missionaries has increased, as well as the application of new missionary methods adapted to the different host cultures.<sup>25</sup> The principle tool for evangelization used by the Jesuits, was art, including engravings after Italian or Flemish masters, oil paintings, and illustrated religious books, which functioned as visual representations of the sacred narratives and facilitated the spread of the Catholic faith.<sup>26</sup>

The Society of Jesus became the most active Catholic congregation to proselytize in Asia. Soon after their arrival they established numerous missions on the Indian subcontinent, reaching Japan in 1549, and later China. Macau, where their first residence was founded in 1562, followed by the Diocese in 1575, this port-city became the Jesuit strategic center for the mission in Japan and China, and specialized in the training of missionaries up to the university level. In 1594 Alessandro Valignano founded the St. Paul's College (Colégio de São Paulo) on the hill named after the saint, next to the Our Lady of the Assumption church (Nossa Senhora da Assunção) built in 1565 and rebuilt between 1601 and 1640 as the church known as Mater Dei (Madre de Deus).<sup>27</sup>

Particularly the Jesuits encountered in the dissimilar regions of India, Japan and China sundry conditions and developed a method of accommodation, which facilitated the conversion of the respective heathens<sup>28</sup>. Each cultural sphere required a different method and varying grades of approximation and adaptation, which is manifest in the resulting religious architecture, furnishings and religious implements. They began borrowing symbols from the indigenous arts, and established connections between local and Christian imagery, which led to a diversity of results combining familiar domestic motifs with Christian symbols. To facilitate proselytizing, they adapted Japan and China's ancient lacquer tradition, with its close association with religious ritual. This approach led to the tolerated inclusion of the religious visual imagery of the "other" beliefs into the Roman Catholic context, creating different forms of syncretism.

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Flores (1998, pp.33-39), Pina (2001), Brockey (2001; 2007), Osswald (2003), Bailey (2004; 2007), Curvelo (2007a), Correia (2011), Lopes (2011).

<sup>25</sup> Pina (2001), Bailey (2007), Lopes (2011).

<sup>26</sup> Bailey (2007, p.170).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Silva (2000, p.87), Curvelo & Bastos (2001, pp.427-28), Bailey (2007, p.171), Curvelo (2007a, p.351; 2007b, p.275).

<sup>28</sup> Brockey (2001; 2007), Pina (2001), Curvelo (2007a, pp.235ff; 2007b, p.280), Bailey (2007; 2009), Lopes (2011), Correia (2011).

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This is illustrated by the lectern's decorative program and the fact that beside announcing a Jesuit theme, the back decoration conveys familiar Chinese auspicious messages.

In China, the Jesuits did not experience the same progress and success as in Japan, with 130,000 converts already in 1579. After initial complications, they learned that instead of representing themselves as Buddhist monks, who did not have a high reputation, they were only accepted by the Emperor and the intellectuals if they would adapt to the local tradition. Therefore, the study of Chinese language, script, and classical texts became an indispensable prerequisite for gaining permissions to establish Jesuit missions in mainland China. By the end of the 1590s the Jesuits themselves had adopted the policy of cultural accommodation towards Confucianism, used the nomenclature of Buddhist monks, behaved like the literati and started to grow their hair and beards. Christian terms and teachings were adapted to traditional Chinese concepts, being presented rather as a moral and philosophical doctrine.<sup>29</sup>



Fig. 22 The Façade of the Mater Dei church in Macau after its restoration in 1993, in Couceiro (1997, p.117)

The religious and cultural syncretism in 17th century Macau are exemplified in the ruins of the Jesuit Mater Dei church left by a great fire in 1835.<sup>30</sup> (Fig. 22) Nowadays only the imposing staircase and the articulated facade are extant with prominent columns, obelisks, figures in niches and a triangular

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pina (2001, pp.63-66), Colla (2009, p.218).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Couceiro (1997), Moreira & Curvelo (1998, p.568), Silva (2000, p.87), Bailey (2007, p.171), Curvelo (2007a, pp.351, 359; 2007b, p.275), Lopes (2011, pp.292-298).

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pediment. Its architecture, as a replica of the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, follows the style of the Italian Mannerism. Its intrinsic sculptural decoration shows a confluence of Christian and Chinese imagery, with a narrative directed to the Chinese. Depicting a very original composition of an imagery where European and Chinese elements merge together, on the left of the third order is a large volute with the figure of a lying demon and an inscription in Chinese characters: "The demon incites man to do evil", underneath a frieze with fruits and a reliquary in the center.<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 23) The depiction of the demon, although with additional horns and bat wings, appears similar to that on the missal stand, both show the same claws, long tails and gaping open mouths full of teeth. (Fig. 24)

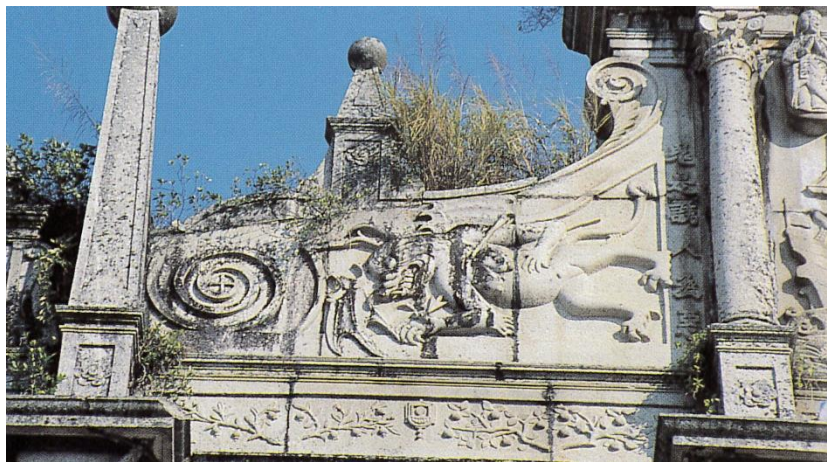


Fig. 23 Detail of the Mater Dei facade, large volute on the left side of the third order with demon figure and inscription in Chinese characters, in Couceiro (1997, p.126)

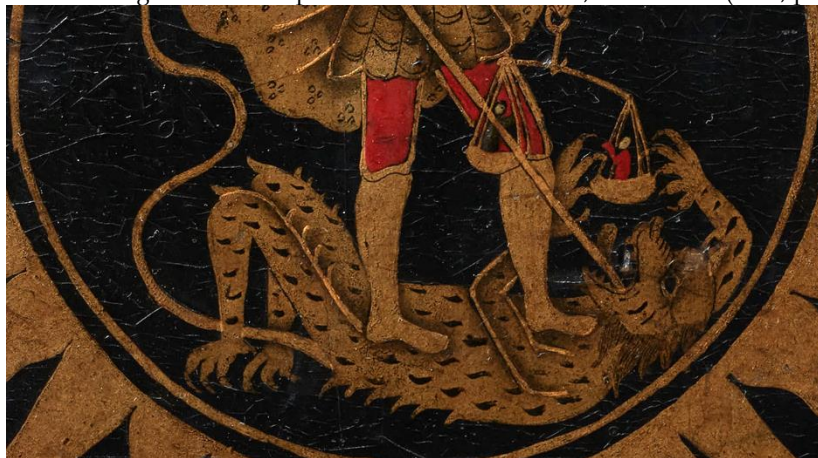


Fig. 24 Detail of the demon with spotted fur, claws and a long tail

Historic descriptions account for the rich interior of that church. Two chapels and two altars were ones flanking the high altar, one of which was dedicated to Archangel St. Michael. Only one painting from this

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<sup>31</sup> Couceiro (1997, 127).

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altar is extant which depicts Archangel St. Uriel with a flaming sword in his right hand and a monstrance in his left. **(Fig. 25)** This painting is attributed to Jacobo Niwa (1579-1638), son of a Chinese father and Japanese mother, and was a trainee in the Jesuit painting seminary.

Certainly, there was also a painting of Archangel St. Michael, which must have fallen victim to the flames. However, the existence of the altar dedicated to the Archangel St. Michael, as well as the entire iconography of the Mater Dei facade, illustrate the importance of St. Michael, as leader of the archangels, in the role of a fighter in the name of God - a mission which is equivalent to the Jesuit's own understanding.<sup>32</sup>



Fig. 25 Archangel St. Uriel, School of Giovanni Niccolò (1560-1626) and attributed to Jacobo Niwa (1579-1638), 17th century, Museum of Ruins of St. Paul, Diocese of Macau, in Couceiro (1992, p.92)

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<sup>32</sup> Curvelo (2008, p.67).

## Luso-Asian lecterns

Within this typology of liturgical items, there are many Indo-Portuguese examples with carved wooden structures,<sup>33</sup> as well as lacquered Japanese Namban lecterns.<sup>34</sup> Even more numerous, these commonly display decorations of makie in gold and silver, combined with mother of pearl inlay. Many exhibit the emblem of the Society of Jesus, such as the mass book lectern from the Basilica Pontificada della Santa Casa of Loreto, Italy.<sup>35</sup> (Fig. 26)



Fig. 26 Jesuit Namban lectern with the Jesuit emblem and IHS monogram, Museo Antico Tesoro Santa Casa de Loreto (Inv. No. C.N. 1221), © Kobayashi Koji

The quantity of surviving liturgical items embellished with the Christogram reflects the Jesuit practice of putting the arts in the service of faith. However, also a considerable number of examples with a Chinese lacquer coating is known. Among the Chinese-lacquered mass-book lecterns there are several which ornamentations mimic the decorative scheme and techniques of Japanese Namban lacquerware, combining mother-of-pearl inlay with gold decoration (leaf or powder). These are commonly classified as Namban lacquer.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Körber (2019, p.206).

<sup>34</sup> Impey & Jörg (2005), Canepa (2009, pp.262-266).

<sup>35</sup> Körber (2019).

<sup>36</sup> Körber (2019, 2017), Körber et al. (2016).

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There is one Chinese lacquered missal stand, of slightly smaller dimension (28.5 x 29 x 30 cm) from a private collection that displays the emblem of the Augustinian Order. (Fig. 27) Despite of the different religious emblem, the arched section of the foot panel is of identical shape and there are remains of the same decorative band of consecutive spirals and dots on the edge of the shorter front flap. Its gold decoration was produced using solely gold leaf and powder.

Fig. 27 Lectern with the emblem of the Order of St. Augustine, Private Collection

In the late 1570s Spanish Augustinian friars from Manila penetrated the interior of mainland China to study Chinese literature. While the first Augustinian house on Chinese soil was established only in 1681, Portuguese Augustinians served in Macau Portuguese between 1586 and 1712. It is likely this missal stand has been produced in or near Macau, the contemporary base for any missionary religious order or congregation to work in China.



Fig. 28 Luso-Asian lacquered writing box, Private collection



Fig. 29 Detail of the top surface of the front side with identical decorative border of ovals and dots

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The overall technical and decorative characteristics of this lectern's lacquer embellishment correspond to a larger group of Luso-Asian items of different typologies, secular and religious use, embellished with Chinese lacquer.<sup>37</sup> Many of these items display the same type of decorative friezes, including simple or double-line borders, consecutive spirals with dots, or wavy bands with spirals or stylized flowers. A Luso-Asian writing box in a private collection, for example, displays the same decorative border of repeating oval and dot motifs. (Figs. 28, 29)

In all, the formal and technical analysis of this unique missal stand, including its iconography, historical background, the comparison of motifs and similar objects, combined with the material study of its lacquer decoration, it can be concluded that its manufacture was commissioned by members of the Society of Jesus in southern China (likely Macau or its surroundings) in the scope of the Jesuit mission in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, or within the first half of it.

In its heterogeneous composition, and presenting such a cross-cultural decorative scheme, it perfectly demonstrates the practice of adaptation that was employed in the Jesuit missionary work on Chinese soil.

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Körber (2019).

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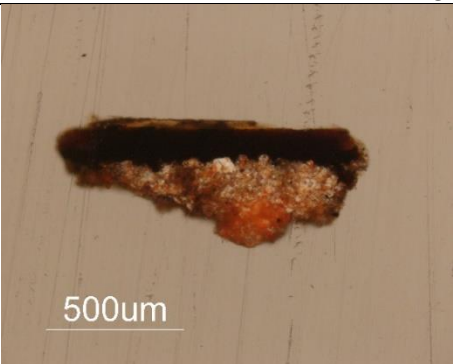
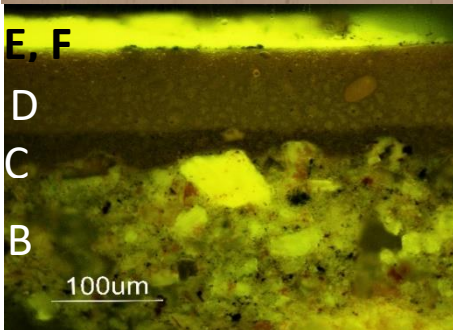
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SAMPLE IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION	
OBJECT: Lacquered lectern	OWNER: Gallery Jaime Eguiguren, Art & Antiques, Buenos Aires
SAMPLES: EM-JE	SAMPLING: Ulrike Körber, June-July 2019
	
SAMPLE NO.	DESCRIPTION
EM-JE-01	Rear, white polychromy, detached flakes (Oil or lacquer binder? Py-GC-MS)
EM-JE-02	Right edge, black lacquer (Cross-section, SEM-EDS)
EM-JE-03	Lower front panel, gilded black lacquer (Cross-section, SEM-EDS)
EM-JE-04	Rear, black lacquer (Lacquer type, composition? Py-GC/MS)
EM-JE-05	Front, detached green paint layer archangel's wing (Py-GC-MS)
SCIENTIFIC TEAM AND LABORATORY	
Cross-Sections Opt. Microscopy Interpretation	Dr. Ulrike Körber
XRF, SEM-EDS	Mafalda Costa, Laboratório HERCULES, Universidade de Évora, Évora, Portugal
Py-GC/MS	Dr. Ana Manhita, Laboratório HERCULES, Universidade de Évora, Évora, Portugal

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SAMPLE	LAYER COMPOSITION		
EM-JE-02	TMH-PY-GC/MS	SEM-EDS, XRF	CROSS-SECTION (Visible and blue light)
E, F:	Shellack and wax layers from restoration		 
D: Black lacquer	Laccol lacquer (Arlenic acid, C <sub>17</sub> ), Tung or perilla oil (Glycerol, P/S 1.24, A/P 0.87), Protein (Pyrrole), Starch (Furfural),	- organic composition	
C: Black lacquer		- organic composition	
B: Ground	Tung or perilla oil (Glycerol, P/S 1.48, A/P 0.24), Blood (non-specific protein markers for blood, sulfur compounds, sterols), Tannins	<b>SEM-EDS:</b> Al, Si, Zr, Ca, Fe  <b>XRF:</b> Al, Si, K, Ca, Ti, Ba, Mn, Fe, Pb, Sr, Y, Zr, Nb	

## SEM-EDS Analysis

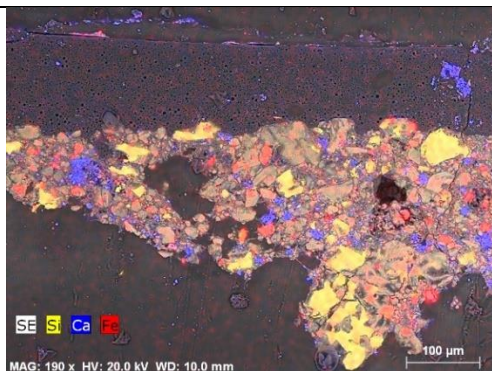


Fig. 1 Silicate (Si), calcium (Ca), iron (Fe)

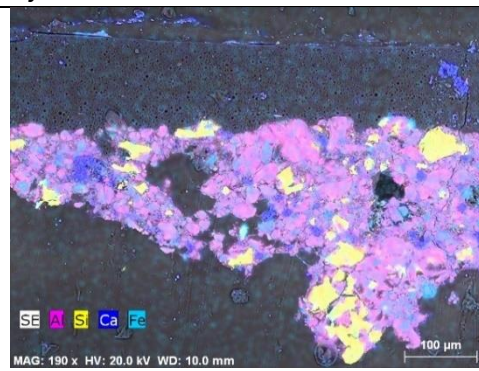


Fig. 2 Aluminum (Al), silicate (Si), calcium (Ca), iron (Fe)

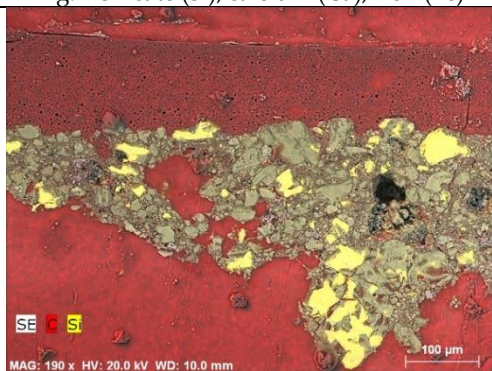


Fig. 3 Silicate (Si)

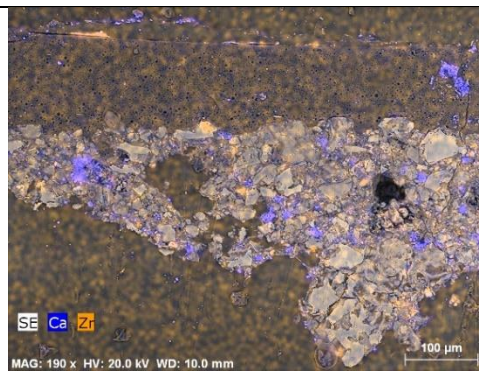
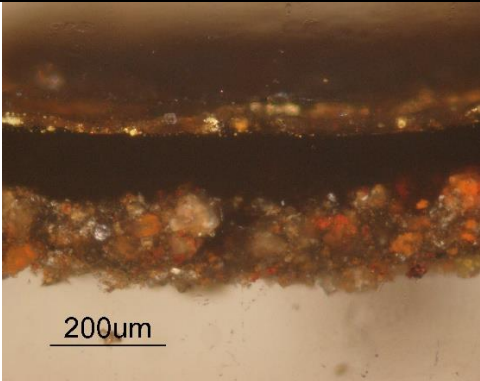
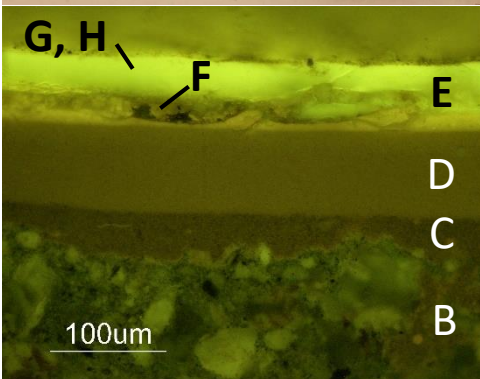


Fig. 4 Calcium (Ca), zirconium (Zr)

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SAMPLE	LAYER COMPOSITION		
	EM-JE-03	TMH-PY-GC/MS	CROSS-SECTION (Visible and blue light)
G, H:	Organic varnish and wax layers from restoration interventions		
F: Gold leaf	-	- Gold leaf: Au, Ag, Cu	
E: Bole layer	-	- Orpiment (As, S)	
D: Black lacquer	Same as EM-JE-02-C,D	- Organic composition	
C: Black lacquer		- Organic composition	
B: Ground	Same as EM-JE-02-B	SEM-EDS: Al, Si, Zr, Ca, Fe	

## SEM-EDS Analysis

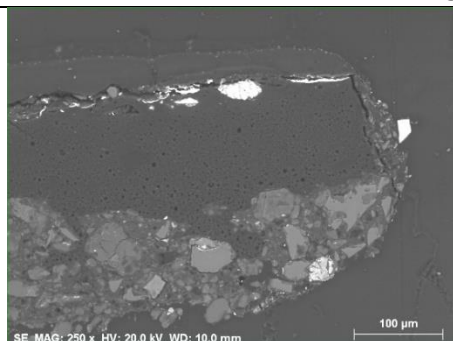


Fig. 5 Mapa

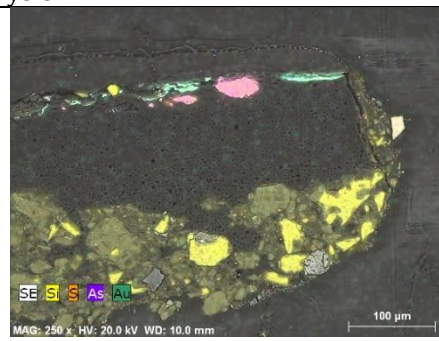


Fig. 6 Silicate (Si), gold (Au), and orpiment (As, S)

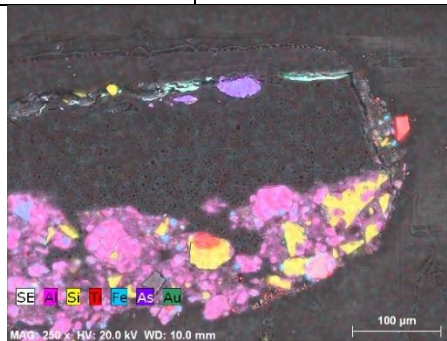



Fig. 7 Aluminum (Al), silicate (Si), titanium (Ti), iron (Fe), gold (Au)

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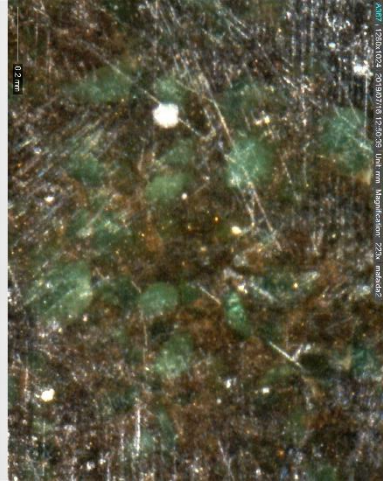
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## PYROLYSIS-GAS-CHROMATOGRAPHY/MASS-SPECTROMETRY ANALYSIS ON SAMPLES OF POLYCHROME PAINTING

### WHITE

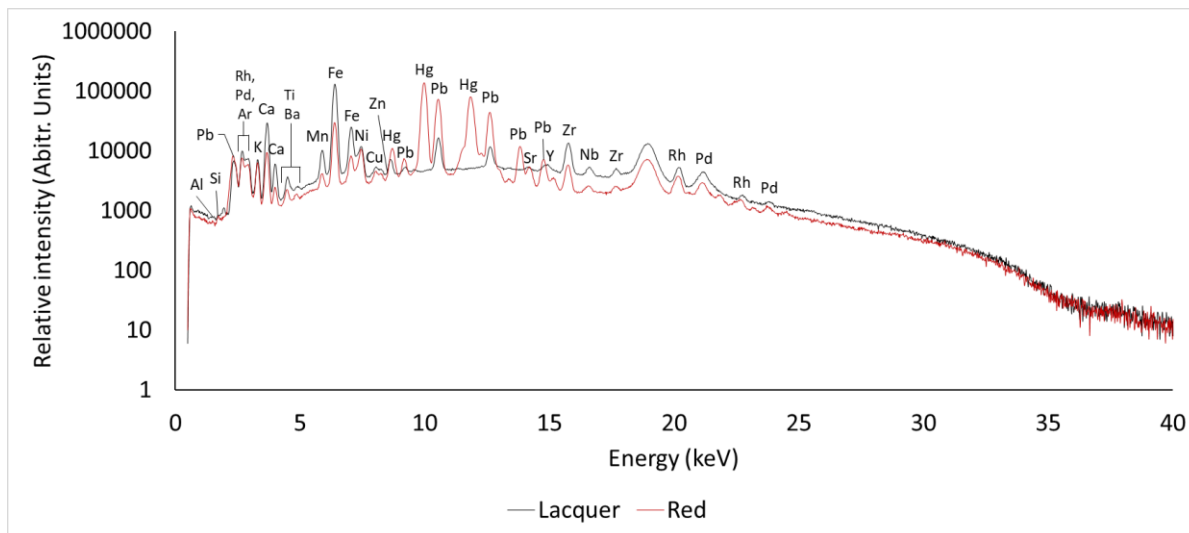
SAMPLE	LAYER COMPOSITION		
EM-EJ-01-E	TMH-PY-GC/MS	XRD	IMAGEM (Dino lite, 223*)
<b>F: White layer</b>	Perilla oil (Mono- and dicarboxylic fatty acids, P/S 2.05, A/P 0.04), Protein (non-specific protein markers), Starch (Furfural), Camphor (Camphene markers)	- Pb	

### GREEN

SAMPLE	LAYER COMPOSITION		
EM-EJ-05-	TMH-PY-GC/MS	XRD	IMAGEM (Dino lite, 223*)
<b>F: Green layer</b>	Bodied tung oil (Glycerol, P/S 1.03, A/P 0.92), Protein (non-specific protein markers), Pine resin (Pinaceae markers), Sterols	- Cu, Pb, (Au?)	

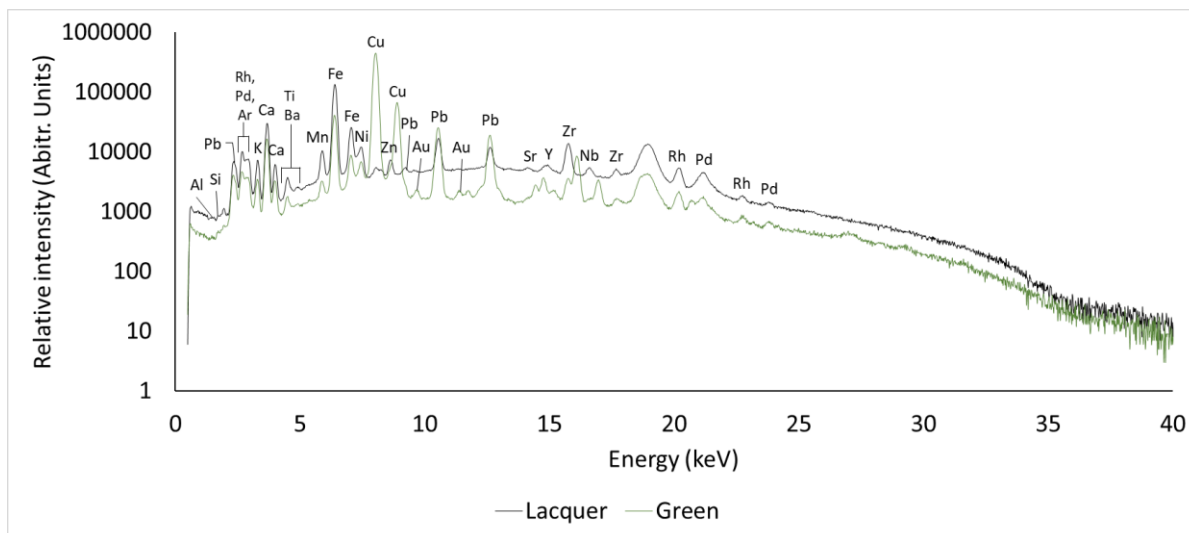
## PORTABLE X-RAY FLUORESCENCE ON POLYCHROME AND GOLD DECORATION

### 1. RED:



Red polychrome used a blend of cinnabar and white litharge, confirmed by the presence of mercury (Hg) and lead (Pb).

### 2. GREEN:

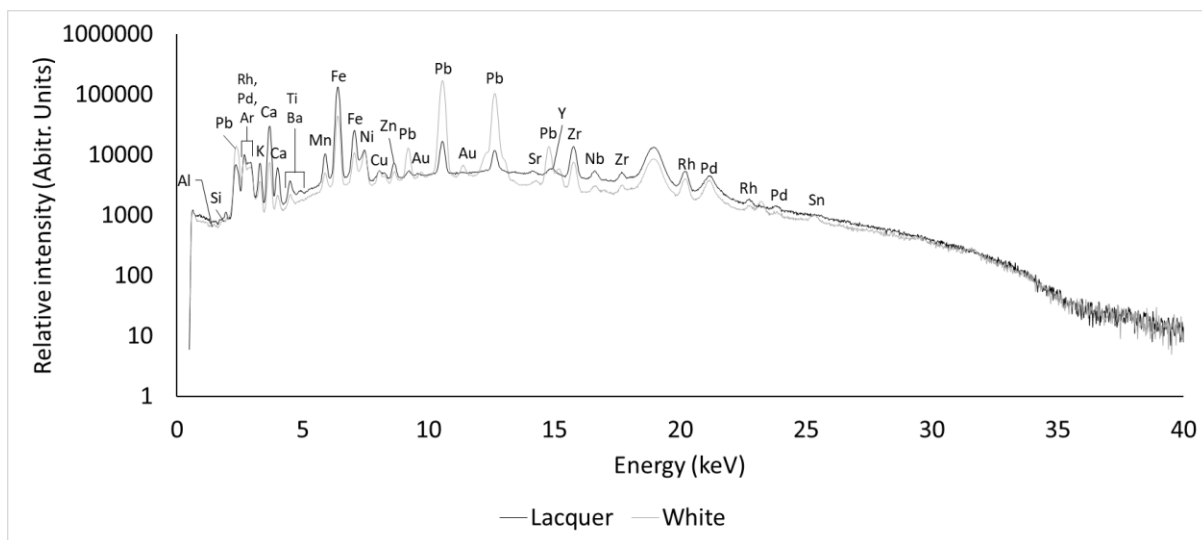


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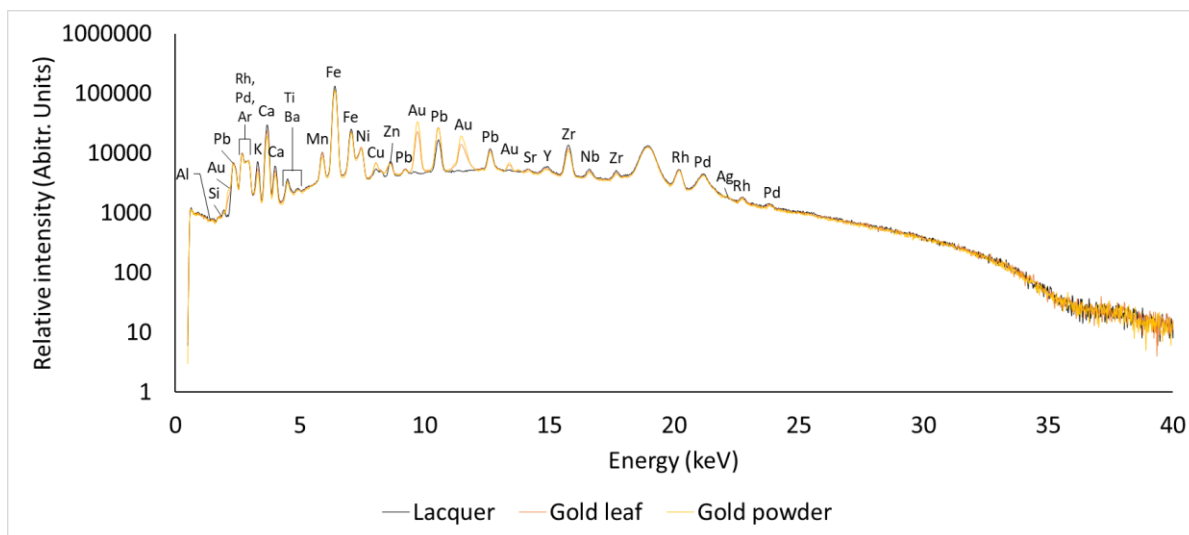
The presence of copper (Cu) indicates that for the green polychromy has been used the pigment malachite.

## 3. WHITE:



For the white polychromy was used lead monoxide (litharge), indicated by the presence of lead (Pb). Litharge, cinnabar and malachite are typical pigments used in Chinese lacquerware.

## 4. GOLD LEAF AND POWDER



As confirmed by SEM-EDS analyses both gold leaf and powder contain gold (Au), copper (Cu) and silver (Ag), even though the XRF spectra only shows a tiny peak for silver (Ag).

The fact that the intensity of gold (Au) is higher in gold powder may derive from the powder layer being thicker than gold leaf.

## 5. BLACK LACQUER:

In comparison with the electron microscop analysis (SEM-EDS) it is apparent that the two lacquer layers are of a purely organic composition.

As seen in the x-ray fluorescence spectra (gray line), the analysis of the black lacquer shows the presence of aluminum silicates (Al, Si), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), titanium (Ti), barium (Ba), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), lead (Pb), strontium (Sr), yttrium (Y), zirconium (Zr), and niobium (Nb). These derive from the underlying foundation layer. In principle they should have used a clay source with heavy minerals confirmed by the presence of Y, Nb and Zr. In the spectra Sr partially replaces Ca in minerals and Ba must also be replacing K.

Research Report

by

**Ulrike Körber, PhD**

Conservator of Wood, Furniture and Asian Lacquer, Research Scholar

Lisbon, October 2019

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