

SPREADING DESIRE, LINKING THE WORLD

PINTADOS AND THE PORTUGUESE (1500–1850)

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BEGINNING IN 1500, A NEW CHAPTER OPENED FOR INDIAN CHINTZ. For centuries, Europe had received the highly coveted spices—pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon—of Southeast Asia and India via intermediary traders who travelled to the Mameluke sultanate and then crossed the Mediterranean to reach the Italian city states, namely, Venice and Genoa. Bypassing these long traditional routes, in 1498 the Portuguese, led by Vasco da Gama, sailed directly to India around the tip of southern Africa, opening up a direct maritime route to Asia. It

quickly became the major channel for Europe to acquire Asia's spices—and its textiles. At the same time, the Portuguese crossed the Atlantic to establish a colony in America: Brazil.

Indian cotton textiles were one of the new Asian commodities introduced by the Portuguese into western markets after they opened these new sea routes. More so than Chinese silks, Indian cottons, with their great diversity in types and qualities, appealed to wide markets and soon became critical in the emerging transatlantic trade; they were

Detail. Eighteenth-century Portuguese chasuble (see fig. 8.4)

exchanged to acquire captives in Africa, then to clothe both them and their owners in the Americas. Yet Portugal's early and instrumental role in making chintz a truly global fashion, in creating and supplying desire in both hemispheres, is only now becoming apparent through new research and studies.¹

New Cloth, New Terms

Within a decade of da Gama's return from India in 1499, the word *pintado* (lit., painted) had entered the Portuguese lexicon; the first recorded usage found thus far is the 1507 post mortem inventory of D. Beatriz, mother of King Manuel I (r. 1495–1521).² A general term, it was used to reference both painted and printed cottons from India. For a century, this same term *pintado* was employed throughout Europe. It was only replaced by new terms, notably *chintz* from 1600, when the Dutch and then the English displaced the Portuguese as the major European handlers of these goods (on the word *chintz*, see ch. 1, 00 above). Portuguese also incorporated the term *chintz* from around 1642; a dictionary of 1712 defined it strictly as “a kind of painted cloth from India.”³ More commonly, from 1600 to 1750, Indian fabrics were named for their decoration or places of origin, with hundreds of recorded varieties—a testament to the remarkable range of Indian textile products and artisans, but confounding for researchers today.⁴ Those used by the Portuguese in the West African slave trade included names such as *fofolim*, *tafacira*, and *folhinha*; the last, which means “little leaf,” likely refers to a printed or painted cotton, and was widely used by António Coelho Guerreiro during his sojourn in Angola in the late 1600s.

Although the same 1712 Portuguese dictionary failed to list *pintado*,⁵ the term never entirely disappeared, as witnessed by a Lisbon shop sign board publicizing “fabrics of India white and plain *pintadas*” in the early 1800s, a period characterized by the development of a national printing industry and a craze for chintz.⁶

Commerce and Cloth

Arriving in the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese found themselves dependent on Indian textiles and long-standing trade patterns. From the Swahili Coast of eastern Africa to the eastern reaches of the Spice Islands in present-day Indonesia, local traders would only release their spices, gold, and ivory in exchange for Indian cottons. Just ten years after their arrival in India, as evident in the final receipt of the cloth handled by André Dias as factor of Cochin (1507–9), the Portuguese were already purchasing impressive numbers: 7,984 pieces of plain cloth and 55,094 pieces of *pintados*, amounts that reveal the size of their involvement in the Indian cotton textile trade at such an early stage of their presence in Asia.⁷

At the beginning of sixteenth century, only a tiny fraction of these fabrics went to Portugal itself through the Carreira da Índia (Cape Route). Portuguese Crown officials—now stationed throughout the Indian Ocean—purchased Indian textiles in order to transact business in their posts. Beyond demand from the Indian Ocean, and eventually from the home market, *pintados*, among other Indian textiles, soon became a staple commodity in the newly emerging transatlantic slave trade.⁸ Obtaining the correct styles of cloth for all of these markets proved a major challenge. Since no Portuguese fortress in India had a sizable textile production (with the exception of Diu and Daman),⁹ the Crown relied, first, on purchasing fabrics brought to its factories and, later, on actively contracting supplies to meet demand.

Given the complexities of these trades, the Portuguese eventually conceded to local knowledge and contractors, mostly Indian merchants, either Bania or Saraswat Brahmins,



FIG. 8.1

André Reinoso, *St. Francis Xavier preaching in Goa*, ca. 1619. Oil on canvas, 104 × 165 cm. Note the seated women on the left wearing what are undoubtedly printed or painted Indian cottons. Although working in Lisbon, the artist was known to paint from live models, as well as from Indian fabrics available at the time. (Museu de São Roque/Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa, Lisbon, inv. 096. Photograph by Júlio Marques.)

who monopolized the trade from around 1700 through the 1770s. Though spices had originally been the Crown's core business, their profitably diminished from 1560 on, and the number of crossings decreased and then stagnated until the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁰ For more than a century (1650–1760), the Cape Route thus ran a deficit, which the Crown assumed,¹¹ trying to revive profits through investment in alternative Indian commodities, including textiles; from 1759 to 1766, for instance, the Crown contracted Indian merchants in Goa to provide fabrics from Surat, Diu, Deccan, Coromandel, and Bengal¹² to sell in the home and the Brazilian markets.

Rather than imperial initiatives, it was Portuguese private trade that drove major innovations in the spread of Indian textiles to Europe and beyond. Prevented from selling spices, a royal monopoly, private traders looked to other commodities, notably textiles and dyes. Already in the sixteenth century, private textile trade outstripped that of the Crown. In 1552, João Brandão estimated the net value of the annual cargo of Indian textiles arriving in Lisbon at 14 million réis per ship.¹³ By 1617, this had increased nearly tenfold to 101,668,200,000 réis annually.¹⁴ It is true that textiles amounted only to about 15 percent of a ship's cargo in terms of volume but reached around 92 percent of its total value, together with other goods like diamonds and indigo.¹⁵ In 1739, the Crown seized private capital sent from Lisbon to purchase Indian fabrics amounting to 90 million réis.¹⁶ More than half of this money belonged to Italians (from Genoa and Leghorn) and to French merchants based in Lisbon. The total was probably higher. In 1754, a Portuguese joint-stock company sent 544,959,840,000 réis to buy cotton goods in India.¹⁷ The average private investment in Indian textiles per ship in the mid-1700s attained around 270 million réis; and its value increased with the growth of private shipping after 1770.

The multiple and changing identities of traders over time proved to be a critical factor as well. In addition to private traders, the other most common purchaser of textiles was the Crown official, cleric, or individual living in India who regularly sent “exotic” commodities as presents to family or friends in Portugal. The salvaged cargo of the *Nossa Senhora da Luz* (1615), with more than twenty-six thousand pieces of clothes on board, attests to this.¹⁸ Crew members also partook in this private trade; their “liberties” enabled them to bring Indian commodities on the homebound voyage, which a low estimate in 1552 appraised at twelve million réis per ship.¹⁹ Until 1640, much of the commerce was dominated by the “new Christians,” Jews forcibly converted in 1496; with their closely knit global family networks, they were the first great players in trading Indian textiles.²⁰ They built extensive networks in India to obtain fabrics, investing in other commodities to diversify and reduce their risk, such as indigo in Gujarat and diamonds in the Deccan.²¹ In 1607, their shopping itineraries extended to other Indian regions, such as Coromandel and Sind.²² The vacuum left by this group in the late seventeenth century was filled partly by ship crews who assumed the role of intermediaries, bringing capital from Lisbon-based investors to India, carrying back cargo for them, and selling part of it in Brazil.²³ However, Indian Bania and Saraswat Brahmins, who stepped up as middlemen of Lisbon-based merchants, filled most of the trading void by dominating the trade in Portuguese India until about 1770 and becoming part of a cross-cultural trade with Portuguese, French, and Italian investors.

From 1715, a new wave of Portuguese investors in Indian textiles arose, namely, individual shipowners and financiers and joint-stock companies. These elite businessmen from Lisbon thrived, thanks to their links with the Crown, but only established branches of their family firms in Asia after 1770. Macao and Chinese silk fabrics were their initial objective, but India emerged as another key aim. They revolutionized the India-Portugal trade by integrating the Portuguese South Atlantic ports into their itineraries, calling at Brazil to pick up silver en route to India and selling Indian textiles on the homebound voyage during stopovers in Brazil (Rio, Bahia) and Luanda in Angola. These businessmen consolidated the Portuguese intercolonial market thanks to the rise of Brazil's purchasing power after 1700.²⁴

The new players further revolutionized the type of textiles traded, offering more variety in order to appeal to all social groups in Portugal and in her far-flung empire, as evident in the cargo of the *Santo António e Justiça*, which was sold in Bahia, Brazil, in 1757. The types and qualities of the items sold ranged from embroidered and lined satin bedspreads with fringe (9,600 réis) to plain cotton cloth (100 réis); varieties of chintz ranged from fine (4,000 réis) to midfine (3,000 réis) and coarse (1,500 réis).²⁵

Chintz and the Cloth of Commerce

It is difficult today to identify the physical characteristics of the pieces that travelled in Portuguese ships, due to confusing terminology and the lack of surviving objects and visual documentation. Among the rare surviving visual sources depicting chintz are André Reinoso's 1619 paintings of the life of St. Francis Xavier (fig. 8.1). This well-known cycle, located in St. Roque Church, Lisbon, depicts St. Francis preaching in Goa, with several attendees dressed in varying patterns of Indian chintz from either Gujarat or the Coromandel Coast. Reinoso painted from live models in Lisbon, as well as from Indian fabrics available at the time (evident from the goods salvaged from the *Nossa Senhora da Luz*²⁶).

In Portugal, Indian cotton fabrics held the allure of the novel, the exotic, and the prestigious. Upon the death of D. Beatriz, the “painted Indian clothes” in her wardrobe were recycled to make clerical vestments as stoles and maniples.²⁷ This repurposing reveals several important points. First, highly valued in Portugal, Indian chintz was repurposed in



FIG. 8.2

Linings for a Chinese painted silk hanging. India and France (?), eighteenth century. Painted and printed cottons, 278 × 213 cm. Very few Indian chintz have survived in Portugal. The linings here reveal a mosaic of painted and printed Indian cottons, as well as a patch made of a later factory print. (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, inv. 2135.  A.)

its use, meaning, and form, and given away when it was worn out or no longer fashionable. Figure 8.2 shows a prime example, a Chinese silk painted cloth with flowers, phoenix, and butterflies, lined with three different kinds of printed cottons: a *chafarcani* (a bar of floral patterns typical of Coromandel) and what seems to be a much-later industrial print made for the Japanese market (*sarasa*; on *sarasa*, see ch. 7 above).²⁸ Second, repurposing was a trickle-down process that spread the consumption of Indian printed cottons. Initially the privilege of the wealthy, the consumption of Indian chintz by a larger share of the population rose during the sixteenth century due to the increase in its trade. In addition to goods sold at market, the parcels sent from people in India to their relatives, friends, and protectors in Europe also helped to increase new tastes and consumer habits, as the goods salvaged from the *Nossa Senhora da Luz* show. This trickle-down pattern continued to be felt in Portugal probably until 1715. New marketing techniques further contributed to “mass consumption,” such as ads published in the Lisbon Gazette announcing the arrival of East Indiamen or leaflets printed with the description of the commodities of the cargo ships for sale (fig. 8.3).²⁹ Finally, and tragically, despite the vicissitudes of the other markets, the transatlantic slave trade generated a steady demand and reliable market for inexpensive cottons.

Chintz was first desired for interior furnishing, from aristocratic homes to more humble abodes. Inventories made between about 1650 and 1800 reveal that, as elsewhere in Europe, high-income Lisbon families used chintz all over the house, as curtains, slipcovers, table sets, wall and door hangings, and bedspreads, with colourful branches or flowering trees on white grounds.³⁰ The wealthy owned Indian chintz worth 2,200 réis on average, compared to 720 réis for those of more modest means.³¹


Ironically, although Portugal was the first to trade in Indian chintz, it was one of the last to adopt it as “mass fashion.” Unlike the British and Dutch, Portuguese consumers truly embraced chintz as garments only in the late eighteenth century, coinciding with the rise of wages in Portugal, notably in the first half of the century (1700–50).³² As dress, therefore, chintz became fashionable in Portugal only after 1750, and its signature item was the kerchief. Portugal had another market niche for chintz in its use as church vestments. As early as 1510, there is evidence for ecclesiastic apparel made from pintados in t 

FIG. 8.3

Cargo list of the ships *Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres*, *St. José*, *King of Portugal*, and *St. Ana*, *Queen of Portugal*, 1756. Printed on paper, 29 × 20.1 cm. This cargo list reveals the wide variety of Asian textiles on offer in 1757 in Lisbon, including at least three qualities of chintz (*chitas* and *palampus*) from the Coromandel Coast.

(Centro de Documentação António Alçada Baptista, Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, inv. ASIA 09:339 LIS. © Fundação Oriente/ José Manuel Costa Alves.)

OPPOSITE

FIG. 8.4

Chasuble. Coastal southeast India, India, for the European market, eighteenth century. Cotton, hand-drawn, mordant-dyed and resist-dyed, 114 × 71 cm. The chasuble and its associated maniple and stole were painted to shape, carefully following Catholic design strictures. (Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, inv. 4578 TEC. c. Jose Pessoa. DGPC/ADF.)

Lista da Carga de tres Navios, pertencentes a Negociação Portugueza da Affia, e China, que chegaram ao Porto da Cidade de Lisboa; a saber Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres, Capitão Manoel Martins da Fonseca, que entrou em 4. do corrente mez de Setembro de 1756. S. Joseph Rey de Portugal Capitão João Xavier Telles, e Santa Anna Raynha de Portugal, Capitão Antonio Quarefina Figueira em 8. do dito mez.

<i>Generos da China.</i>	
241800 arrateis. de chá Buy.	176 Pelfas. ditas de Daga bordadas.
165880 ars. de dito Sanló.	702 ps. de Parindams.
14560 ars. de dito Ayfon.	805 ps. de Sanas.
4420 ars. de dito Seuchon.	2459 ps. de Garras.
19630 ars. de dito Canfu.	836 ps. de Tangebez.
6240 ars. de dito Sequim.	174 ps. de Nainlookes de Daga.
3380 ars. de dito Gobim.	474 ps. de Scerhaut tennas.
368 Caixões de Louça de diferentes qualidades.	233 ps. de Allibabies de Daga bordadas, e lizas.
38 Caixões com varios charoés.	1352 ps. de Mulmulles diversos.
9 Colchas bordadas.	921 ps. de Dimitins.
6 Vestidos de feda bordados para lenhoras.	766 ps. de Sucias.
11 Vestias bordadas.	175 ps. de Choquelles.
4310 Leques de diferentes qualidades.	198 ps. de Nilles de ulmara.
9930 Pentas de tartaruga, e Madreperola.	100 ps. de Tipaes.
506 Paliteiros de tartaruga.	212 ps. de Totachelles.
342 Caixas para tabaco de cobre emaltrado.	965 ps. de Caridarins.
48 Ditas de louça.	99 ps. de Gingoés de ulmara.
40 Ternos ditas de Tartaruga.	427 ps. de Buitaques.
Hña porção de páu china branco.	9 ps. de Chorrohunes de Seda.
<i>Da costa de Choromandel.</i>	
1560 Pelfas. de Zuartes.	1303 ps. de Hamamons.
940 ps. de Selampuris azuis.	66 ps. de Armezim riscados.
630 ps. de ditos brancos.	6858 ps. de Bassias.
2561 ps. de Eleffates de divers. qualid.	378 ps. de Coupins.
20147 ps. de Lenços de varias fortes.	32 ps. de Herfures.
975 ps. de Betilhas.	180 ps. de Dufutins.
400 ps. de Dimitins.	1642 ps. de Fottas de 4 pannos.
360 Cobertas de hum pano.	161 ps. de Abacais.
298 ditas de 2 pannos.	101 ps. de Achibanes.
9406 ps. de Gingoés de varias qualidad.	12 ps. de Chardarbanes de riscas.
20 ps. de Valpinas vermelhas.	20 ps. de Seda empréta para vestidos
40 ps. de ditas azuis.	56 ps. de Serfukes.
120 ps. de cambaya vermelha.	20 ps. de Rectas de feda.
120 ps. ditas azuis.	494 ps. de Chitas.
1954 ps. de chitas de varias qualidades	403 ps. de Desuquesais.
52 ps. de Palampus de 1 pano.	307 ps. de Nainfuques de Daga.
621 ps. de Morins de diferentes qualidades.	231 ps. de Jungal tanjebr.
<i>De Bengala.</i>	
6503 ps. de Calfas diversas.	194 ps. de Surfugeres.
2219 ps. de Dorias.	199 ps. de Dongris de Patana.
	100 ps. de Penhascos de ulmara.
	13939 ps. de Lenços diversos.
	911 ps. de ditos de feda.
	1240 ps. de ditos de algodão brancos.
	3825 arrateis. de Seda em rama.
	3709 ars. de Trincal.
	764877 ars. de Salitre.
	66787 ars. de Pão sapam.

Estas fazendas se vão rematar da data desta a dois mezes. Lisboa 10 de Setembro de 1756.

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monastery of Santa Clara in Coimbra.³³ Although some were tailored in Portugal, others were made in India, carefully following Catholic strictures, such as an eighteenth-century chasuble, stole, and maniple, painted to shape with Indian motifs (fig. 8.4); such religious items powerfully attest to the genius and flexibility of Indian artisans.³⁴

Epilogue: *Chita*

Portugal, like other European countries, unable to ever fully control the trade in Indian chintz, eventually turned to creating industrial imitations of it, known as *chita*.³⁵ The first cotton printing mill began production in 1775 (in Azeitão) and was quickly followed by other factories in Lisbon, Leiria, Porto, and neighbouring areas.³⁶ Brazil produced cotton to feed the looms, but home production failed to meet demand. Portugal thus continued to import Indian cottons for both its domestic market and its colonies—especially Brazil, the main consumer from 1796 to 1807.³⁷ In 1807, the French invasion of Portugal cut off its American supplies of cotton, threatening to extinguish the industry forever.

However, such was the demand for *chita*, Portugal's factory-made colourful fabrics that mimicked Indian patterns and colours, that the industry recovered in 1815. To this day, these prints remain a common household good in Portugal and have been used in Brazil, Mozambique, and Angola as a living testament to the earliest Western-Indian entanglements.³⁸

- 1 Ferreira, "Asian Textiles."
- 2 Freire, "Inventario," 71.
- 3 "Chitas – São huns pannos pintados da India." For the 1642 attestation, see Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Orfanológicos, letra F, maço 120 (B), no. 1, fol. 17v. For the 1712 dictionary, see Bluteau, *Vocabulario portuguez e latino*, 1:293. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are ours.
- 4 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Açores, caixa 1, doc. 12, fol. 6v, 7, 43v, 52v.
- 5 Bluteau, *Vocabulario portuguez e latino*, 6:516.
- 6 "Fazendas da India branca e pintada cha." Madureira, "Inventários," 97.
- 7 Freire, "Cartas de quitação."
- 8 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Índia, caixa 9, doc. 2. On António Coelho Guerreiro's sojourn in Angola, see António Coelho Guerreiro, *O "Livro de rezão" de António Coelho Guerreiro*, 1684–92, facsimile, with an introd. by Virginia Rau (Lisbon: Companhia de Diamantes de Angola, 1956), fol. 18v, 19v, 20v, 21v, 22v, 23v, 24v; Lopes and Menz, "Vestindo o escravismo."
- 9 Bocarro, *O livro das plantas*, 75–76, 96.
- 10 Guinote, Frutuoso, and Lopes, *As armadas da Índia*, 27–36.
- 11 Cunha, "A Carreira da Índia," 705–39.
- 12 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, codex 1150, fol. 9–26.

- 13 Brandão, *Grandeza e abastança*, 59.
- 14 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, Índia, caixa 8 [4a], doc. 136.
- 15 Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia*, 42.
- 16 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, codex 491, fol. 30r–30v.
- 17 Cunha, "Goa em transição," 767.
- 18 Viana, *Arquivo dos Açores*, 105, 113, 117.
- 19 Brandão, *Grandeza e abastança*, 59.
- 20 Boyajian, *Portuguese Trade in Asia*, 46–48, 64–65, 81–82, 141–42.
- 21 Cunha, "A economia," 487–99.
- 22 Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon, codex 2702, fol. 49–51.
- 23 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, codices 491 and 682. The new Christians progressively left the Indian Ocean trade for the South Atlantic due to dwindling profits in Asia and to escape persecution from the Inquisition.
- 24 Cunha, "A Carreira da Índia," 429–649.
- 25 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon, codex 682.
- 26 Guy, "One Thing," 19.
- 27 Freire, "Inventario," 71.
- 28 Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, inv. nos. 4578 TEC, 4579 TEC, and 4580 TEC.
- 29 Museu do Oriente, Lisbon, inv. ASIA 09:339 LIS.
- 30 Watt, "Whims and Fancies," 87.
- 31 Madureira, "Inventários," 98.
- 32 Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, 64, 74, 93–94.

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- 108; Costa, Palma, and Reis, "The great escape?," 4–5, 12, 15–19.
- 33 Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo, Lisbon, Corpo Cronológico, pt. 1, maço 10, doc. 10.
- 34 Crill, "Local and Global," 100.
- 35 Trentmann, *Empire of Things*, 70, 77.
- 36 Custódio, "Notas históricas."
- 37 Pedreira, "Indústria e atraso económico," 247.
- 38 Ferreira, *Lenços e colchas*, 8–16.