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cõposto por el. R. padre frey
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de sam Domingos.
Dirigido ao muito poderoso Rey Dom
Sebastiam nosso senhor.

Impresso com licença. 1569.

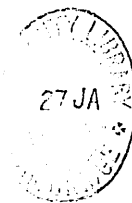
The title-page of the first European book on China
(The *Tractado* of Gaspar da Cruz, Evora, 1569)

SOUTH CHINA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Being the narratives of
GALEOTE PEREIRA
FR. GASPAR DA CRUZ, O.P.
FR. MARTÍN DE RADA, O.E.S.A.
(1550-1575)

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Treatise in which the things of China are related at great length, with their particularities, as likewise of the kingdom of Ormuz. Composed by the Rev. Father Fr. Gaspar da Cruz of the Order of Saint Dominic.

Dedicated to the most powerful King Dom Sebastian Our Lord.

Printed with licence, 1569.

the other, with the land jutting out a great space into the Indian Sea, wherein lie the aforementioned kingdoms.

Hence it is clear how the Laos or Siões mões have on the side of the Indian Ocean so many kingdoms running along towards China, and confining with the said kingdoms, and consequently trading with the same.

This kingdom of the Laos, or Siões mões, was subdued by the Bramas (of whom we will speak presently) in the year of fifty-six;¹ and among some which they brought captive to Peguu they brought some Chinas which the Laos held captives, as one Jorge de Mello, who went for Captain of the voyage to Peguu, affirmed unto me. And though commonly there be no wars between these Laos and the Chinas, because of the great mountains that are between them, on the which the Chinas have good strongholds on that side in the province of Camsi,² which doth confine with these and with the Bramas; and in the strongholds they have continually men in garrison for the defence of those parts; there be notwithstanding, continually assaults on the one side and on the other; whereby the Laos might have some Chinas captives.

Before that these Laos were subdued by the Bramas, they carried to Siam, and to Camboja, and to Peguu some very good musk³ and gold, whereof is affirmed to be great store in that country; and these people having musk, makes us conjecture that the great store of musk which the Chinas have, they get it from the many beasts that are in the confines of this kingdom, in the province of Camsi, from whence they bring it.

The musk is the flesh and blood of certain beasts, which they say to be as big as foxes,⁴ the which beaten with strokes and killed, they tie the skin with the flesh together in lumps, the which they cut after the flesh is rotten, and so they sell it, which the Portugals

¹ Burmese. Cf. Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, I, 149. For the Burmese invasion of Laos in 1556, cf. Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 165-166; Le Boulanger, *Histoire du Laos Français*, pp. 76-80.

² Kuangsi.

³ Portuguese *almiscla*, from the Arabic *al-misk*, derived in its turn from the Persian *muishk* or Sanskrit *muska* (*mushka*), 'testicle.' *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 599; Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, II, 27.

⁴ The musk-deer whose principal habitat is the Himalaya and the mountainous regions of Western China (*Moschus moschiferous*, L.). Musk is an excretion of the navel of this animal and Cruz's traditional account of how it was obtained is erroneous.

do call musk-cods. And when it cometh fresh, presently it appeareth to be rotten flesh and blood; the rest they sell loose, holding these cods for the finer musk.

Returning to the Laos, whereof we were speaking, this is the ware which they brought to the above said kingdoms, carrying in return cotton-cloths and other things they had need of.

This people is not very brown; they wear their hair all cut round underneath, and all the rest above ruffled, raising it many times upwards with their hands, that it remaineth to them like a cap, and serveth instead of one, for they wear nothing on their heads. They go naked from the middle upward; and from the thighs downwards they wear certain cotton-cloths girt about them and all white. The women go covered from the breasts to the half leg; they have their faces somewhat like the Chinas; they have the same heathenish ceremonies as do the Pegus, the Siões and the Cambojas; the priests of their idols do wear yellow clothes girt about as the rest of the people, with certain folds and seams in which they hold their superstitious charms. I saw many of this people in Camboja, who had remained there from the year before by the way of traffic; and that year that I was there, they came not because of the wars wherein (as I said) they were subdued by the Bramas.¹

These Laos came to Camboja down a river many days' journey, the which is very large and they say has its origin in China, as do many others which run into the sea of India.² It hath eight, fifteen and twenty fathom of water, as I myself saw by experience, in a great part of it. It passeth through many untilled and deserted countries of great woods and forests, where there is innumerable elephants and many buffaloes, of which I saw many wild in that country, and Merus,³ which are like good mules, and certain great cattle which in that country they call Badas,⁴ of the which the male have a pointless and blunt horn in their forehead, and some of the horns are spotted with singular colours, and others all black,

¹ The Burmese occupation was a short-lived one. Le Boulanger, *Laos Français*, pp. 76-80.

² Mekong river which rises in Thibet and has an estimated length of about 2,800 miles.

³ Meru, a species of deer, *Rusa Aristotelis*. Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, II, p. 50.

⁴ *Bada* (*Abada*), an old Portuguese name for the rhinoceros. *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 1; Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiático*, I, pp. 1-4. From the Malay *bādak* which is pronounced *bāda* by the Bugis and Makassars.

others of a wax colour; but they have no virtue, but only for the hemorrhoids or piles; and after the elephant there is no other greater beast; the hair of it is brown and it is footed like an elephant, the head like a cow, and on the chest a great lump of flesh that falls from around the nape, whereof I did eat when travelling in those parts. There are also many other wild beasts.

There be some thorny trees, like lemons and oranges, and many wild grapes through those woods.

When these Laos do return to their country, it takes them three months, as they go against the stream. This river causeth a wonder in the land of Camboja, worthy of reciting.

Coming near to a place which they call Chudurmuch,¹ which is twelve leagues from the principal city of Camboja, it maketh a passage to another river which cometh from a great lake that is in the uttermost parts of Camboja, and that hath Siam on the other side; in the midst of the which, its bigness being great, you can see no land on neither side; and this river passeth by Loech,² which is the principal city of Camboja, unto Chudurmuch. The waters of this river, which is also very great, the most of them do pass to the river that cometh from the Laos, near to Chudurmuch, and the rest do run down the river directly to the sea, when the great winter floods do come, which happen when it rains not in the lands of Camboja. The many waters which do come by the river that cometh from the Laos, which there they call the river of Sistor,³ do make a passage right against Chudurmuch, to the river that passeth through Loech, with so great fury, that where the waters of Loech did run downward, by multitude of the other that entreth into it, they are turned back and run upward with a great current; in sort that it overfloweth all the country of Camboja, whereby all the country is not travelled in the time of these floods, but in boats, and they make their houses all with high lofts, and

¹ Khmer *Chademuk*, *Chordemuko*, from the Sanskrit *Caturmukha*, 'the four faces', arms or ways, an old name for Phnom Pénh. Admirably situated at the junction of the Tonlé Sap and of two arms of the Mekong, it is the great market for all the products of Cambodia. Cabaton, *Relation du Cambodge*, p. 95, n. (3).

² Lovek, on the Tonlé Sap river, a little above Phnom Pénh. It was fortified and ornamented by Ang Chan I, who made it his capital, the old Khmer capital of Angkor Thom being too exposed to Siamese raids.

³ Sithor, Srei Chor (contraction of Srei Santhor), a town and province of the region of the Tonlé Tòch (an arm of the Mekong), 32 km. NE. of Phnom Pénh. A. Cabaton, *op. et loc. cit.*

underneath they are all overflowed; and often these floods are so high that they are forced to make higher rooms with canes, to keep their household stuff in, and to lodge themselves. This river runneth upwards from July to September, and with the passing from the river that cometh from the Laos (or from the river Sistor, which is its proper name) of so many waters to the river of Loech, it doth not fail to run to the sea, making below very great arms, and goeth very high, overflowing many countries downward, but not so much as above.¹ The Portugals did show me in Loech a great hill of earth in a field, over the which they affirmed that in the time of the floods a great ship that was made in the country did pass without touching, which ship might well have sailed from India to Portugal.

The cause of this miracle in my opinion is that these rivers are very large and big, whereby in the season of the spring-tides of the sea, such a mass of sea waters enters with the tides upstream that it repels somewhat the currents which run in the river Loech above, since its current is not so impetuous as is that of the river of Sistor and of the two of Chudurmuch downwards, for which reason it runs sometimes with more force and sometimes with less, according to the state of the tides.

And even though this digression hath made us depart from our theme, it did not seem good to me to fail to record it as a notable thing. And returning to our chief intent, and sufficing what is said above of the Laos, who after the Cauchins-chinas confine with China, beyond these Laos follow the Brames, who are a great people, and very rich of gold and precious stones, chiefly of rubies. It is a proud nation and valiant. These are now lords of Peguu, the which they subdued by force of arms some years before they subdued the Laos.² They are men of good complexion, well made, and brown. They have Peguu and a part of Bengala³ adjoining the Indian Ocean. It is a country very scarce of victuals. They apparel themselves as we said of the Laos, but that their clothes are fine,

¹ The Mekong, like the Nile, is subject to an annual flood. The waters begin to rise in May, attain their maximum in October, and then decrease until March. At some places the difference between flood-mark and ordinary level is as much as forty feet.

² The Burmese conquest of Pegu was completed in 1539.

³ Bengal was frequently raided by the Arakanese and occasionally by the Burmese.