A Lustrous Cultural Encounter Through Coromandel Lacquer

A Case Study of Coromandel Lacquer Objects in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic

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Summary

At the start of the seventeenth century, Asian luxury goods had already appeared in the homes of the European middle- and upper-class. Coromandel lacquer from China attracted the European's attention through its colourful decoration and lustrous finish. Studies that have been conducted on Coromandel lacquer are mostly analytical case studies on its material and technique. However, research on Coromandel lacquer through the lens of transcultural art history is scarce. This thesis examines the reception of Chinese Coromandel lacquer in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. An attempt to answer this question is made by discussing how Coromandel lacquer was probably appreciated because of its visual, technique and materiality. To achieve that, this thesis analyses Dutch seventeenth-century still life paintings with black Asian lacquer, followed by two case studies, showcasing the following objects: a Coromandel lacquer chest at the Westfries Museum in Hoorn and the Coromandel screens in the Rijksmuseum lacquer room in Amsterdam. In doing so, evidence is provided for the hypothesis that both black Asian lacquer and Chinese Coromandel lacquer were associated with luxury in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic. Moreover, this paper traces the production and commissioning backgrounds of the studied Coromandel lacquer objects and finds that the production techniques of Chinese lacquer are highly similar compared to its European counterpart. Furthermore, this thesis reveals evidence for a shift in Coromandel lacquer's agency, as the perceived meaning of the objects changes due to cultural and geographical migration.

Introduction

Research aims

This study aims to interpret how can Coromandel lacquer contributes to the transcultural art history between China and the Netherlands in the early modern time. Scholarly sources have looked into the Dutch-Chinese transcultural art history via different materials, including Dutch travel books, porcelain and delftware, as well as Chinese wallpapers. Chinese lacquer has not been discussed in this topic as frequently. Unlike Japanese lacquer, which has received more scholarly attention, as reflected by Christiaan Jörg and Oliver Impey's *Japanese Export Lacquer* (2005) and Teresa Canepa's *Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer* (2015), Coromandel lacquer has mostly been left out of the scholarly discussion, merely being appreciated for its aesthetic and decorative value. In 2002, W. De Kesel and G. Dhont published *Coromandel Lacquer Screens*, which has hitherto been the only English monography on Coromandel lacquer.[1] De Kesel and Dhont not only discussed Coromandel lacquer's application on different objects but also elaborated on the design trend and materiality of Coromandel lacquer. In recent years, Coromandel lacquer has attracted more research interest in terms of its role in cultural history and materiality, as reflected in important contributions by Jan van Campen (2009), Johan de Haan (2009), Nicole Brugier (2015), Christina Hagelskamp (2016), Willemijn van Noord (2020), and Hui Jin (2017).

Adding to the studies mentioned above, this study set out with the aim of interpreting the reception of Chinese lacquer in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Japanese lacquer has been discussed extensively by Oliver Impey and C. J. A. Jörg in *Japanese Export*

[1] In 2015, Nicole Brugier published *Les Laques de Coromandel* to discuss Chinese Coromandel lacquer in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and how they were used to make cabinets or wall covers by the Europeans at the time. Give my limited knowledge in French, this source will not be discussed in details. See Nicole Brugier, *Les Laques De Coromandel*, (Lausanne: Bibliothèque des arts, 2015).

Lacquer and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's "Japanese Export Lacquer" in *Art, Trade, and Cultural Mediation in Asia,* I will not elaborate on Japanese exported lacquer in the Dutch collections. However, Japanese lacquer will be touched upon in chapter one — Asian lacquerware in seventeenth-century still life paintings, given the difficulty of distinguishing different kinds of Asian lacquerware which I will discuss with other terminologies. Chapter one will provide the historical context of the Chinese luxury influx starting from the seventeenth century, in specific VOC's commission of lacquerware. A brief comparison between Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Spa lacquer's materiality will shed light on in what way Asian and European lacquer are different. A print depicting lacquer-making will be discussed through visual analysis. Several paintings are selected to showcase how Asian lacquer appears in seventeenth-century Dutch still life paintings. With visual analysis, I aim to understand why Asian lacquer appeared as a chosen motif by Dutch still life painters.[2] Was Asian lacquer associated with nature and luxury? Was Asian lacquer picked because the colour black represents a deeper connotation in seventeenth-century Dutch society? Afterwards, two Coromandel lacquer examples are chosen as the case studies — a Coromandel lacquer chest at the Westfries Museum in Hoorn (Figure 1), and the lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam now, which used to situate in the Stadholder's palace in Leeuwarden (Figure 2). Although these two Coromandel lacquer objects are not the only two in the Netherlands,[3] they are the most representative of the reception of Coromandel lacquer in the sixteenth and seventeenth

[2] I have chosen seventeenth-century still life paintings with Asian lacquer (Chinese or Japanese) to answer the questions in chapter one since I could not find any painting from the seventeenthcentury Netherlands that depicts Coromandel lacquer. Understanding how the European perceived the materiality of Asian lacquer is also helpful to have more insight into how Coromandel lacquer was probably appreciated in a similar way.

[3] There are at least two more Coromandel lacquer objects in the Netherlands in public collection. One is a set of Coromandel lacquer screen in Museum van Loon in Amsterdam, the other one is a Coromandel lacquer chest in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. It is likely that there are other Coromandel lacquer objects in the Netherlands. However, due to the lack of categorization, it is almost impossible to trace Coromandel lacquer objects based on museums' and galleries' database.

Netherlands. Both objects depicted the same motif – *a spring morning in the Han Palace,* which is a popular theme in the Qing Dynasty China. Both lacquerwares were made in China during the same period (Kangxi Reign 1660 to 1720) and were probably shipped to the Netherlands shortly after their production. Moreover, both lacquerwares were collected by Dutch owners and displayed in Dutch interiors between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries which reflect a transcultural provenance in early modern China and the Netherlands. Therefore, they are selected for the two case studies for this thesis.

In chapter two and three, I will examine how Dutch collectors appreciate Chinese lacquerware between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. By doing so, I aim to unveil more of Coromandel lacquer's materiality and manufacture, discuss Chinese Coromandel lacquer and its European counterpart's similarity, indicate Chinese Coromandel lacquer and the gender role it shadows in seventeenth-century Dutch interior, and convey the influence of Chinese Coromandel lacquer's agency due to geographical and cultural relocation. Moreover, the paper aims to shed light on who purchased Chinese lacquer in the early modern Netherlands, how Coromandel lacquer was displayed in the domestic sphere and how the objects may have ended up in the Dutch Republic.

Historiography

The forthcoming historical literature review will chronologically outline previous contributions on the topics of Chinese Coromandel lacquer, global and transcultural art history between China and the Netherlands, and iconography and Chinese motifs. Most of the forthcoming studies are descriptive in nature, focusing on selected case studies. Since *Xiu Shi Lu* and *A Treatise of*

Japaning and Varnishing will be covered in chapter two, they are excluded from the forthcoming overview.

The earliest scholarships that touched upon Chinese lacquer emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century. It seems that Victoria and Albert Museum in London has contributed to the early stage of researching Chinese art. The V&A Museum assisted *Chinese Art* by Stephen W. Bushell in 1904 and *Catalogue of Chinese Lacquer* by Edward F. Strange in 1925.[4] In the case of *Chinese Art*, a chapter was dedicated to the history and manufacture, but Coromandel lacquer was not mentioned as one of the techniques. *Catalogue of Chinese Lacquer* was built upon the previous studies on Chinese art done by the V&A Museum with some examples of Chinese motifs.[5] Surprisingly, the catalogue covers several types of lacquer, even ones like Coromandel lacquer, but not Coromandel lacquer itself.

In 1961, Hugh Honour provided one of the first academic definitions of *chinoiserie* in *Chinoiserie: The Vision of Cathay.* Approaching from a "strictly European standpoint," Honour tended to understand how Western artists perceived and depicted the chinoiserie from the early modern era to the nineteenth century.[6] Honour suggested that chinoiserie is the European attempt of imitating Chinese art based on a utopian vision of China, rather than how China really is. Honour also defines *chinoiserie* as "the expression of the European vision of Cathay;" the

[4] S.W. Bushell and Victoria and Albert Museum, *Chinese Art*, Chinese Art, v. 1 (H.M. Stationery Office, 1904).
[5] Edward F. Strange and Victoria and Albert Museum, *Catalogue of Chinese Lacquer* (London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1925).
[6] Hugh Honour, *The Vision of Cathay*, (London: John Murray Ltd, 1961), 1

definition was shaped by early travellers such as Marco Polo and Friar Odric, whose works achieved exceptional fame with the open door to imagination.[7]

Similarly, Michael Sullivan shared his thoughts on *chinoiserie* relating to French art in 1973. In *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, he said, "it is clear that *chinoiserie* has very little to do with China. The arrival of Chinese arts and crafts in the seventeenth century worked no transformation on French art; rather were the exotic imports themselves transformed, beyond recognition, into something entirely French."[8] As Sullivan believed, *chinoiserie* impacted all the imported goods from Asia and turned them into a French style, instead of giving the French art a Chinese touch.

Moving towards the second half of the twentieth century, Chinese lacquer already became a stable candidate for scholarly contributions to furniture or decorative art. In 1977, Oliver Impey published the book *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration*, where he defined the term *chinoiserie* and extensively discussed all kinds of exported art, including textile, painting, sculpture, porcelain, and metal. It is important to note that Impey defines the term *chinoiserie* as "the European idea of what oriental things were like, or ought to be like." According to Impey, the impact of lacquer on European taste is more profound than furniture made with other materials. Impey elaborated on the categories of exported lacquer from Japan and China, where he spent a short section on Coromandel lacquer as one of the exported lacquer types in Europe starting from the sixteenth century. Besides, Impey mentioned that

[7] Honour, *Chinoiserie*, 7- 13
[8] Micheal Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art: From the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day.* (New York Graphic Society Ltd. 1973), 12

Coromandel lacquer screens' thick planks made splitting and reusing for decoration possible. Although the part on Coromandel lacquer is rather brief, Impey's observation of lacquer's influence on European art has opened the gate to approaching Chinese lacquer in the context of material culture.[9]

In 1970, the former curator of the Rijksmuseum, Theodoor Lunsingh Scheurleer, wrote a paper "Stadhouderlijke Lakkabinetten" on the lacquer cabinets in the Netherlands. Lunsingh Scheurleer's scholarship is the first attempt to discuss the Chinese lacquer screen's reception in the early modern Netherlands. The paper is rather descriptive, where Lunsingh Scheurleer covered the Rijksmuseum lacquer room (originally in Leeuwarden) and a letter from Constantijn Huygens to Princess Mary about some Chinese lacquer screens made into a lacquer cabinet. Rather than illustrating the decorative function of lacquer screens, Lunsingh Scheurleer's interpretation of Huygens's letter reflects different reception of Chinese lacquer screens in the seventeenth century. Princess Mary probably represented most of her contemporaries, who perceived the Chinese lacquer screens as a decoration that could be dismantled to assemble a lacquer cabinet and showcase their wealth. On the other hand, Constantijn Huygens's letter shows genuine respect and interest for Chinese art, which is not common during the early days of cultural encounters. Lunsingh Scheurleer's scholarship sets a footstone for researching lacquer rooms in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.[10]

[9] Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (New York: Scribner's, 1977), 111 – 128

[10] Thedoor Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Stadhouderlijke Lakkabinetten", *Opstellen voor H. van de Waal,* (Amsterdam/Leiden: Scheltema & Holkema, 1970), 164 – 173.

In 2009, Jan van Campen revisited the topic of Huygens and Princess Mary and discussed Coromandel lacquer's import to the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, as well as the popularity of Coromandel lacquer in Europe in his article "'Reduced to a heap of monstruous shivers and splinters': Some Notes on Coromandel Lacquer in Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries". Van Campen pointed out the problems of studying Coromandel lacquer through archival documents, especially due to the lack of description in historical records.[11] In the same year, Johan de Haan's article "The Leeuwarden Lacquer Room: A Royal Puzzle" contributed an intensive study on the layout of the lacquer room in Leeuwarden (now the Rijksmuseum lacquer room).[12] Both Van Campen and De Haan's articles provided essential information for this thesis.

The former director of the National Palace Museum (Taipei), Chou Kung-chin, devoted one of the most significant scholarships, *Kuan Cai "Spring Morning in Han Palace" Lacquer Screen in the Early Period of Qing Kangxi Reign and Chinese Lacuqering Technique's Spread in the West*, on Coromandel lacquer and its spread in Europe. Rather than writing a survey book on Coromandel lacquer, Chou chose a narrative, *the Spring Morning in a Han Palace* (汉宫春晓), as the motif to focus on. Chou covered the origin of Coromandel lacquer, the stylistic comparison of Coromandel lacquer, Coromandel lacquer's trade to the West, and Coromandel lacquer's circulation in Europe. In the chapter "The Discussion on Coromandel Lacquer Screens with '*A Spring Morning in the Han Palace* before 1695," Chou discussed the origin of the narrative *A Spring Morning* with several Coromandel screens as case studies, including the screens in the Rijksmuseum's lacquer room. Chou suggested that based on the striking similarity

[11] Jan van Campen, "'Reduced to a Heap of Monstruous Shivers and Splinters', Some Notes on Coromandel Lacquer in Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries." *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin 57,* no.2 (2009): 136 – 149.
[12] Johan de Haan. "The Leeuwarden Lacquer Room: A Royal Puzzle." *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (2009): 150–69.

of the narrative's composition, the screens were probably produced in the same workshop. Chou's case studies also support her hypothesis that sketches, or design books were used to produce Coromandel lacquer. Chou's research also provided a new understanding of the production centres of Coromandel lacquer. Before Chou, no one has summarized it as complete. One problem in Chou's writing is that she thought the Coromandel screens in the Rijksmuseum's lacquer room were from two sets. In fact, the wall is decorated with three dismantled Coromandel screens. For some reason, the book has not been translated into English, which is unfortunate.[13]

Up to this point, apart from Chou Kung-chin's book on Coromandel lacquer's spread in Europe and the US, and the complete analysis by Theodoor Lunsingh Scheurleer, the topic of Coromandel lacquer and its reception in the early modern Netherlands has not received any in-depth attention in English scholarship. In 2002, De Kesel and G. Dhont offered a thorough survey of Coromandel lacquer in *Coromandel Lacquer Screens.* The book is still the only monograph on Coromandel lacquer in English up until today. The authors discussed the evolution of Chinese lacquer, the emergence of Coromandel lacquer, and the visual patterns on Coromandel lacquer screens. One argument they made is that screens prepared for export were presumably not dated, but this does not indicate that all the undated screens were for export. They confirmed the argument by explaining that some Coromandel screens made for the Chinese domestic market were also undated. Additionally, the authors suggested that the screens that survived until today do not distinguish date-wise in terms of quality. De Kesel and G. Dhont's

[13] Chou, Kung-shin 周功鑫. *Qing Kangxi qianqi kuancai "hangongchunxiao" qipingfeng yu zhongguo qigongyi zhi xichuan.* 清康熙前期款彩 "漢宮春曉" 漆屏風與中國漆工藝之西傳[Kuan Cai "Spring Morning in Han Palace" Lacquer Screen in the Early Period of Qing Kangxi Reign and Chinese Lacuqering Technique's Spread in the West] (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1995).

observation of the exported and domestic Coromandel lacquer provide new insight on determining the provenance of the Coromandel lacquer objects that I will cover in this study.[14]

Regarding the study of the trade of Chinese commodities to the Netherlands, *Silk Thread* (2015), written by the Rijksmuseum's curators Tristan Mostert and Jan van Campen, is a significant work. The book not only discusses how the Dutch appreciated Chinese artifacts but also portrays the cultural interaction that took place between southeast China and the Netherlands in an increasingly globalized society. Mostert and Van Campen used visual material as a vehicle in order to tell a complete story. In the meantime, they also included archival materials, such as VOC letters indicating requests for ordering lacquer from Canton, to illustrate the demand for Chinese lacquer in the eighteenth century. Moreover, Mostert and Van Campen explain that the VOC employees were allowed to bring home goods as souvenirs or for commercial purposes based on the regulation. However, the employees often brought more than the permitted amount of goods with them. Since such private sales were probably not traceable in any record, this could be one of the reasons that Coromandel lacquer is not mentioned as much in archival documents.[15]

Another scholarship that supports the framework of my thesis is *Foreign Devils and Philosopher*, edited by Thijs Weststeijn. The book contains works from different authors addressing various topics through the global-historical framework. Within the book, Willem van Noord's chapter "The 'Unhappie Ruines' of Princess Mary II's Lacquer Screen: Sir Constantijn

[14] W. De Kesel, and G. Dhont. *Coromandel Lacquer Screens* (Gent: Snoeck-Ducaju, 2002).
[15] Tristan Mostert and Jan van Campen. *Silk Thread: China and The Netherlands from 1600* (Amsterdam: Ruks Museum/Vantilt Publishers, 2015).

Huygens's Plea to Preserve a Chinese Artefact, 1685 – 1686" built upon Lunsingh Scheurleer and Jan van Campen's discussion of Constantijn Huygens and Princess Mary's letters, and further analyzed two different attitudes on the set of Chinese lacquer screens mentioned in the letters. The in-depth information that Van Noord provided on the now lost Chinese screens sets a stepstone for this thesis and future research on the circulation of Coromandel lacquer in seventeenth-century China.[16] Thijs Weststeijn's chapter "China, the Netherlands, Europe: Images, Interactions, Institutions and the Ideal of Global Cultural History" demonstrates the significance and potential of studying material culture in the sense of global history, which inspired this thesis to take the transcultural approach.[17]

Theoretical Framework and Terminology

Chinoiserie

The idea of collecting beautiful or rare objects was not a new phenomenon in the seventeenth century. As early as the Roman empire, collectors had laid their eyes on imported silk, spices, woods, furs, and even exotic animals for the arena while collecting Greek antiquities.[18] The nature of collecting had changed since the development of sea trading of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century. Anything East Asian was sold with a risen price even though the actual value was little. Porcelain and spices were not the only wanted goods; gold jewelry, woods, seashells, parrots, textiles, drugs, and amber were in almost the same level of demand.[19]

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[16] Willemijn van Noord, "The 'Unhappie Ruines' of Princess Mary Ii's Lacquer Screen: Sir Constantijn Huygens's Plea to Preserve a Chinese Artefact, 1685–1686" in *Foreign Devils and Philosophers: Cultural Encounters between the Chinese, the Dutch, and Other Europeans, 1590-1800*, East and West, volume 6, ed. Thijs Weststeijn, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 148–204.
[17] Thijs Weststeijn, "China, the Netherlands, Europe: Images, Interactions, Institutions and the Ideal of Global Cultural History" (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 1–23, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004418929_002.
[18] Oliver Impey, *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 53
[19] Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 55

Collecting curiosities reached its height in the later sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands.[20]

The fascination of Asia, especially China, was not only from the novel items brought through the VOC. Travelogs and translations of Chinese literature also contributed to the interest in the Middle Kingdom. *An Embassy from the East- India Company of the United Provinces* by Johan Nieuhof, recorded Nieuhof's experience in China. *An Embassy* was first published in Dutch in 1665, and it was translated into English in 1679. As part of the group, which was sent to China by the Dutch East India Company, he was requested to record illustrations of all the cities, palaces, temples and other noteworthy architectures in the most authentic way.[21] At the end of *An Embassy,* a hundred and fifty images depicting China and Chinese culture through Nieuhof's observation were attached. China was viewed through a fantasy filter by the Europeans because of the unattainable distance at the time. Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy* breaks that phenomenon and presents the real China to Europe. Another influential source on China was written by the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini, who lived in China from 1643 to 1651. Rather than writing about his experiences in China, he applied his topographical knowledge of China through collaborating with Blaeu, a cartography firm in the Netherlands. The atlas of China based on Martini's contribution was later featured in the renowned *Atlas Maior*.[22] These prints and maps served as a major source of inspiration for the phenomenon of chinoiserie, which peaked in the eighteenth century.

[20] Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 56
[21] Klootwijk, "Curious," 261
[22] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread*, 99

In this section, I will provide an overview of the interpretation and usage of the term *chinoiserie* and how it intertwines Asia and Europe and their cultural exchange. The definition of *chinoiserie* has been fluid since it was first termed by scholars. Depending on the angle and approaches, *chinoiserie*'s meaning shifts as it could be interpreted either within the European or the Chinese context. In *Chinoiserie: the Vision of Cathay* (1961), Hugh Honour defined *chinoiserie* as "the expression of the European vision of Cathay." Honour suggested that *chinoiserie* is how the European view China, instead of how China really was. [23] As mentioned in the histography, Oliver Impey argued that *chinoiserie* is "the European idea of what oriental things were like, or ought to be like" in his publication *Chinoiserie: The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration* in 1977. Similar to Honour, Impey also believes *chinoiserie* is a European perspective of East Asia.[24] Mostert and Van Campen also contributed to *chinoiserie* in the *Silk Thread.* Rather than defining the term, Mostert and Van Campen gave several cases of how the Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acquired information about China. For example, many maps and prints of China attracted people's attention as they were made by someone who lived in China, notably the atlas of China in *Atlas Maior* by the Italian Jesuit Martino Martini and Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East- India Company of the United Provinces* in 1665.[25] Mostert and Van Campen pointed out that such books were unexpectedly influential in Europe and were the central inspiration of *chinoiserie*. Besides Impey's definition of *chinoiserie,* Mostert and Van Campen's examples granted a new approach to the interpretation of the phenomenon. And recently, Hilda Groen included a thorough discussion of *chinoiserie* in her unpublished master's thesis on the Chinese wallpaper in the country house Oud-Amelisweerd

[23] Honour, *Chinoiserie,* 7- 8
[24] Impey, *Chinoiserie,* 111 – 128
[25] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread,* 99

in Bunnik.[26] Groen did not approach *chinoiserie* from the traditional canon in which *chinoiserie* is a European phenomenon. Instead, Groen interpreted chinoiserie in relation to Chinese wallpaper, where chinoiserie represents "[a response] to the Western appeal for scenes of Chinese daily life, agriculture and nature." In recent scholarly discussions *Beyond Chinoiserie: Artistic Exchange between China and the West during the Late Qing Dynasty (1796-1911* by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Jennifer Dawn Milam, *chinoiserie* refers to the trend of using certain Chinese figurative and decorative motifs, forms, and techniques (or imitations).[27]

By definition, both the Westfries Museum lacquer chest and the Rijksmuseum lacquer room cannot fit in the canon of *chinoiserie;* they were both probably made in China and then collected by Dutch owners who appreciated the visual or the idea of Chinese decorative art as such. However, since they arrived in the Dutch Republic when collectors were fascinated by "the idea of China," and they were displayed in the seventeenth-century Dutch interiors with collectibles from other remote places, they filled the fantasy for seventeenth-century Dutch collectors, and they were the vehicle to gain a deeper understanding of Asia. Therefore, *chinoiserie* will be used in terms of the Coromandel lacquer's reception in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. The context of these two lacquerwares and their collectors made them two rich examples of cultural encounters between China and Europe.

[26] Hilda Groen, "Glimpses of the Unfamiliar World: An inquiry into the eighteenth-century Chinese wallpapers at country house Oud-Amelisweerd in Bunnik," Master's thesis, (Utrecht University, 2020).
[27] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Jennifer Dawn Milam, eds., *Beyond Chinoiserie: Artistic Exchange between China and the West during the Late Qing Dynasty (1796-1911),* East and West: Culture, Diplomacy and Interactions, volume 4 (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2019), 9.

Lacquer and Chinese Lacquer in Imperial Chinese History

The origin of the term "lacquer" is "lac," a term that derives majorly from two branches.[28] The Anglo-Norman *lac, lak,* the Middle French *lacque,* and the post-classical Latin *lac, lacca,* and Hellenistic Greek *λακχά* are among the first group. The second is about the Arabic *lakk* and its derivations: the Persian *lāk* and the Sanskrit *lākshā.*[29] These various origins all mean a kind of dye. Both Hellenistic Greek and post-classical Latin are more precise, referring to a plant used in dyeing. The word "lac" represents a dark red resinous material generated by certain scale insects as a protective coating. Such insects can be collected on twigs and branches of infected trees that are native to South Asia and the Southeast Asian mainland.[30]

Lacquer artisanship has been established a long time ago in history. Genuine lacquer is made from the sap of three types of trees (*rhus vernicifera,* also known as the *rhus verniciflua*) in Asia.[31] The Latin nomenclature (vernicifera = varnish bearing; vernciflau = varnish flowing) provides a clue to the role of the tree sap in varnishing the surface of objects.[32] The oldest record of collecting lacquer in China comes from *Zhuang Zi* (庄子), a Daoist literature written by Zhuang Zhou in the late Warring Period (476 – 221 BC).[33] In "*Ren Shi Jian*," Zhuang zi suggested "[the] cinnamon tree can be eaten, and therefore it is cut down. The varnish tree is

[28] Cheng He, "Understanding the Fragrance of Lacuqer in Early Modern Europe," *University of Toronto Art Journals* 9, no. 1 (2021): 69.
[29] "lac, n.1". OED Online. June 2022. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/Entry/104777 (accessed July 27, 2022).
[30] Ibid.; He, "Understanding," 69.
[31] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "Japanese Export Lacquer" in *Art, Trade, and Cultural Mediation in Asia, 1600-1950,* ed. R.A.G. Reyes. (London: Palgrave Pivot, 2019), 22.
[32] Kaufmann, "Japanese Export Lacquer," 22.
[33] "Qishu he qiqi: duxing yu huali zaici jiaozhi 漆树和漆器：毒性与华丽在此交织" [Lacquer Tree and Lacquerware: a Mixture of Toxin and Splendor], last motifided on May 8, 2018, https://www.guokr.com/article/447039/ (accessed on June 25th, 2023)

useful, and therefore incisions are made in it."[34] The verb "incise" reflects how the tree sap was collected — two incised cuts form a "v-shape". A shallow container, usually a shell, is used to collect the tree sap at the bottom of the v-shape. The collection of lacquer sap takes a long time, and it causes irreversible damage to the tree. Any false execution could cause the death of the lacquer tree. On average, one kilogram lacquer tree sap needs to be collected from 3000 lacquer trees.[35] Due to the time-consuming and deficient production, lacquer has long been regarded as a luxury in Chinese history to indicate the identity, social class, and political power of the owner. One of the earliest literal references to using lacquer is in *Hanfeizi* (韩非子) written by Han Fei (韩非 280 – 233BC), a philosophical text from the third century. In Chapter "十过 Shi Guo", Han wrote, "Shun passed the throne to Yu, who made some vessels for rituals. The vessels were painted with black lacquer on the outside and coated with red lacquer on the inside […] these items are more luxurious than the past, which makes thirty-three ancient Chinese states unhappy."[36] The text implies the status lacquer stands in society in Emperor Shun's time – a luxury that was owned and used by ancient emperors. In China, the oldest piece of lacquerware is a wooden lacquer-painted bowl that belongs to Hemudu Culture from 7,000 years ago, found in Zhejiang Province.[37] In the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period (770 – 221 BC), lacquerware began to appear on a larger scale due to not only lacquer tree cultivation but

34 "桂可食，故伐之；漆可用，故割之。" from Zhuangzi : Inner Chapters : "Man in the World, Associated with Other Men" Chinese Text Project, English translation by James Legge, accessed July 1, 2023, https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/man-in-the-world-associated-with

35 "Qishu: zhongguo qiqi qiyi guangyao qianqiu 漆树：中国漆器漆艺光耀千秋" [Lacquer Tree: Chinese Lacquer and Its Technique's Glory in History], last motified April 19, 2021, http://www.forestry.gov.cn/main/5534/20210515/141411303150387.html (accessed June 23rd, 2023).

36 "舜禅天下而传之于禹，禹作为祭器，墨染其外，而硃画书其内，缦帛为茵，将席颇缘，触酌有采，而樽俎有饰。此弥侈矣，而国之不服者三十三, " translated by myself, from "Hanfeizi 韩非子: Shi Guo 十過 : 7 : Parallel Passages," ed Donald Sturgeon, Chinese Text Project, accessed July 1, 2023, https://ctext.org/text.pl?node=1934&if=en&show=parallel.

37 Jian, Hang, and Guo Qiuhui, trans. Zhu Youruo and Song Peiming, *Chinese Art and Crafts*, (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2006), 54

also official bureaucracy. Zhuang Zhou, one of the Daoist philosophers in the late Warring Period, was appointed as "an official in the lacquer garden" (漆园吏 *qiyuanli*). In recent years, Scholars have had disagreements on whether a "lacquer garden" is a specific location or a lacquer cultivation site.[38] In one of the archaeological discoveries in Hubei, China, in 1975, archaeologists found *Shuihudi Qin Bamboo Texts* (睡虎地秦简) from the Qin Dynasty (221 – 206 BC), which records Qin laws and public regulations (Figure 3). Some of the bamboo slips recorded Qin's official regulations on lacquer gardens:

> 漆园殿，贳嗇夫一甲，令、丞及佐各一盾，徒络组各廿给。漆园三岁比殿，贳嗇夫二甲而法(废)，令、丞各一甲。[39]
> "if the lacquer garden receives a low evaluation in the assessment, the leading lacquer garden official needs to pay a set of armour or a fine of the same value as a set of armour. The lower-ranked lacquer garden officials (Ling, Cheng, Zuo) pay a shield or a fine equal to the value of a shield. The rest lacquer garden worker pays twenty belts (used to connect armours) or an equivalent fine. If the lacquer garden ranks low in the assessment three years in a row, the leading lacquer garden official is charged with two sets of armours (or the equivalent) and dismissed. The lower-ranked lacquer garden officials (Ling, Cheng, Zuo) are charged for one armour (or the equivalent).

Although the lacquer garden's function remains unclear, the regulations from the Qin Dynasty regarding the lacquer garden show how established the industry of lacquer tree cultivation and potential lacquer manufacture were in early Chinese history.

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[38] Burton Watson, "Introduction," in *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, vii–xxxii, trans Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013) http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/wats16474.3. Accessed on June 24th, 2023

[39] The English translation is done by myself. See "Shuihudi qinjian yiwen 睡虎地秦简译文 [The translation of Shuihudi Qin Bamboo Texts]." Originally written and carved in Qin Dynasty (221 BC – 207 BC) China, last accessed July 1st, 2023, https://www.gushiwen.com/dianjifanyi/5612.html.

Chinese *kuancai,* Coromandel and Bantam

As the maritime trading network between Europe and Asia developed, it became a significant aspect of the economy in Europe. The trading also introduced Chinese and Japanese lacquerware to Europe. Polychrome lacquer from China was known as "Bantam work" in late seventeenth-century England and "Coromandel lacquer" in early eighteenth-century France.[40] The terms were adopted by early European traders due to their misunderstanding. The European traders believed that this significant commercial port on India's east coast was the actual producer of these lacquers rather than merely a transshipment hub. Coromandel lies between the Godava River and Nagapatnam on the east coast of India. Contrary to what its name suggests, Coromandel lacquer really originates in China. The European colonial settlements on India's Coromandel coast in the southeast served as an important midway point.[41]

Coromandel is not the only name adopted by the Europeans based on geographical location. For example, *china ware*, a generic term that was already used by Johan Nieuhof in 1665 to describe porcelain, was derived from China. The term for lacquer, japanning, is also appealed by another less accessible country in the sixteenth century, Japan.[42] The phenomenon of naming luxury commodities after geographical places demonstrate the co-relation between the collecting culture and the curiosity about exotic geography in early modern Europe.[43] In *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World,* Benjamin Schmidt suggests that

[40] Lucia Burgio, Shayne Rivers, Catherine Higgitt, Marika Spring, and Ming Wilson. "Spherical Copper Resinate on Coromandel Objects: Analysis and Conservation of Matt Green Paint." *Studies in Conservation* 52, no. 4 (2007), 242

[41] Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), accessed November 15, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central., 228

[42] In *Inventing Exoticism,* Schmidt mentioned how the term "china ware" was already used by Johan Nieuhof in 1665. However, no original source of Johan Nieuhof has been cited on this matter. Due to my limited Dutch, I also failed to Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism,* 228

[43] Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 228

publications on early modern geography affiliate a sense of materiality which portrays them as a type of consumable material art. Meanwhile, material arts also refer to print geography.[44] Schmidt suggests,

> This overlap not only encompassed a shared nomenclature, which allowed place names on early modern maps to double as rich vocabulary for early modern material arts. It also meant shared motifs and a common trove of iconographic material; shared design strategies and overlapping modes of production; shared atelier practices and mutual habits of borrowing and replication; and productive exchanges among media, which encouraged a shared aesthetic of exoticism to develop and circulate broadly among disparate early modern sources.[45]

The making and understanding of "exotic" commodities enrich one another.[46] By illustrating a wide range of exotic objects, the geographical travelog and books also provided the motifs used to embellish and promote the development of particular commodities.

Japanning

Due to the popularity of lacquer in Europe, Asian imported lacquerware can never meet the demand.[47] With the increasing interest in Asian luxuries and semi-luxuries, European craftsmen established their own imitation of Asian designs in many fields, including porcelain, textile and lacquer.

The English term 'Japanning' refers to European craftsmen's imitations of lacquer and other decorative surfaces using their own materials and techniques.[48] The term derives from "japan," meaning a varnish of exceptional hardness that originated in Japan, along with other similar

[44] Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 229
[45] Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 229
[46] Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*, 229
[47] Huth, *Lacquer*, 1
[48] Katja Tovar Azuero, "The development of English Black Japanning 1620-1820," Victoria and Albert Museum, last modified January 31, 2013. http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-52/the-development-of-english-black-japanning-1620-1820/.

varnishes.[49] Besides the development of lacquering production, written methods and techniques such as recipe books give another approach to interpreting European lacquer. In the book *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* in 1688, John Stalker and George Parker provide instructions on making japanning extensively and thoroughly.[50] With recipes and design patterns Stalker and Parker included, both professional craftsmen and amateurs can make the japanning on their own. Japanning was a popular past-time for educated ladies in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, as reflected in the epistle of *A Treatises,* and *The Ladies Amusement or Whole Art of Japanning Made Easy* by Robert Sayer in 1760.[51] Another influential manuscript was written by Father Filippo Bonanni, *Treatise on the Varnish Commonly Called Chinese (Trattato sopra la vernice detta comunemente cinese)* in 1720.[52] The manuscript includes Bonanni's recipe for ideal varnish based on his own scientific experimentation and a compilation of twenty-eight other publications.[53] Today, the term 'japanning' has been used frequently by scholars to describe European imitation lacquer. In the seventeenth century, Stalker and Parker used 'japanning' to refer to European-imitated lacquer in England. Due to the language difference, the term was probably not used to describe other European imitation lacquer, such as

[49] "Japan, n.". OED Online. June 2022. Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100759?result=1&rskey=bVmcb1& (accessed August 05, 2022).
[50] See John Stalker and George Parker. *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing*, (London and Oxford: Mr. Richard Woods Sci House,1688), 36. Accessed on Aug 14th, 2022 https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/treatisejapanin00stal
[51] Julie Bellemare, Design Books in the Chinese Taste: Marketing the Orient in England and France, 1688–1735, *Journal of Design History*, Volume 27, Issue 1, (March 2014), 6.
52 Filippo Buonanni, Techniques of Chinese Lacquer: The Classic Eighteenth-Century Treatise on Asian Varnish (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2009).
[53] In the eighteenth century, many treatises focused on lacquer and vanishing and gained extensive popularity, especially Father Filippo Bonanni's manuscript, *Treatise on the Varnish Commonly Called Chinese (Trattato sopra la vernice detta comunemente cinese)* in 1720. Within the century after it was first published, the manuscript already had seven editions and was translated into four languages. Bonanni's interest in lacquer benefited from his science background. He attended Collegio Romano in Rome, where he studied with the German Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher, who was a linguist, scientist and geographer. Besides, Bonanni was also really familiar with not only Father Kircher's publication *China monumentis,* but also other early works such as Father Martino Martini's *Novus atlas sinensis.* Both books mentioned a certain tree sap was used to overpaint furniture and other items in China.

imitation lacquer from now Netherlands and Spa in Belgium.[54] The imitated lacquer technique was produced in the Dutch Republic as early as the first decade of the seventeenth century. In the seventeenth century, Willem Kick was the most eminent imitation lacquer craftsman in Amsterdam. His lacquerware shop operated from 1609 to the 1640s.[55] No evidence reveals the usage of the term 'japanning' in the Amsterdam region in the seventeenth century. In Southern Netherlands, the name 'bois de Spa' appeared in archival documents including notarial deeds and gift purchase lists in Spa as a referral to local lacquer craftsmanship with *chinoiserie* decoration.[56]

These three topics – *chinoiserie,* Chinese *kuancai* (Coromandel) and japanning are the stepstones of the framework of my research. Given the transcultural nature of my research case studies' materiality and geographic and cultural relocation, it is crucial to understand how "Coromandel" and "japanning" implies *chinoiserie.* They represent a circulation of knowledge, people, and culture in early globalization in the transcultural art history context. These three topics also resonate with the Dutch image of China – the "richest country in the world" – in relation to material culture and cultural exchange.[57]

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[54] Impey, *Chinoiserie*, 116.

[55] Annemarie Klootwijk, "Curious Japanese Black: Shaping the Identity of Dutch Imitation Lacquer," *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek Online* 66, 1 (2016), 254. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/22145966-90000788

[56] Steyaert, Delphine, Louise Decq, Vincent Cattersel, Emile Van Binnebeke, Charles Indekeu, Wim Fremout, and Steven Saverwyns. "Japanning in Spa at the End of the Seventeenth Century to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century: Historical Context and Materials for Lacquered *Bois de Spa*." *Studies in Conservation* 64, no. sup1 (May 6, 2019), 15. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2019.1581484.

[57] DjoekeVan Netten, "The Richest Country in the World: Dutch Knowledge of China and Cathay and How to Get There in the 1590s" in Thijs Weststeijn, ed., *Foreign Devils and Philosophers: Cultural Encounters between the Chinese, the Dutch, and Other Europeans, 1590-1800*, East and West, volume 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 24- 56.

Methodology

Difficulty due to terminology

The deficiency of standardizing the reference of lacquerware increased the difficulty of searching it in archival records. Several terms have been used to describe lacquerware, such as *schutsel, verlakte blaadjes, lacca nigra,* and *verlackte.*[58] Moreover, in many cases, lacquerware was not defined as "Chinese" or "Japanese." The more generic terms "Asia" or "(East) India" were also used interchangeably to denote oriental items in the sixteenth century.[59] Thus occasionally, "India" was used to indicate not only objects from East Asia, but also chinoiserie objects made in the West, such as imitated lacquers made by European craftsmen.[60] The lack of classification of Chinese and Japanese goods is not uncommon in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. Although, in some cases, it seems that Japanese and Chinese lacquer were distinguished. For example, the Royal Danish Collection in Copenhagen has inconsistent identification of Japanese and Chinese lacquer. In 1674, "Indian" was used to refer to most of the lacquer. But in 1689, some lacquer was called "Japanese" and the rest "Indian" even though they were not Japanese.[61]

Archival research

In this study, I aim to unwrap the reception of Chinese Coromandel lacquer in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlands – in particular the lacquer room in the Stadholder's palace in Leeuwarden (now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam) and the Coromandel lacquer chest belonged to the Carbasius family (now in the Westfries Museum, Hoorn). To recreate a full picture of Coromandel lacquer in the Netherlands, I will also include a list of lacquerwares, for sure and

[58] All the Dutch and Latin terms I mentioned have appeared in archives referring to lacquer. See appendix for Chinese lacquerware present in the Low Countries in the seventeenth century.
[59] Van Netten, "The Richest Country," in Weststeijn, ed., *Foreign Devils,* 27
[60] Impey and Jörg, *Japanese,* 283
[61] Many objects in the Royal Danish Collection in Copenhagen are preserved, which are used as visual evidence to identify whether the lacquer was Japanese or not.

possibly Coromandel, that are documented in archival materials (appendix 3). The archival materials range from historical birth records and inventory documentation to notary lists and registration documents in the National Archief database. Because the Westfries chest has never been studied thoroughly, part of the study is to investigate the object's provenance. In order to achieve that, I consulted archival materials at Westfries Archief in Hoorn with the help of Peter Swart. I started with the donor family's genealogy and inventory lists using the Westfries Archief's database. Based on the materials from the Westfries Archief, I recreated the Carbasius family genealogy. I found that from the 1680s to 1723, at least five members of the Carbasius family worked for the VOC, and three of them were on VOC vessels to Batavia. For the Dutch trading archive, I will consult the National Archief's online database and the Westfries Archief in Hoorn. Huygens Institute also provides a significant amount of information when I need to trace certain VOC vessels between Canton, Batavia and the Netherlands. For trading within China, I will use records of towns and counties in China. Most of them are found online, thanks to the *Chinese Text Project.* All the sources above will provide a rich context regarding the trading history between China and the Netherlands. Furthermore, the context will help unwrap the reception of Chinese lacquer in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Netherlands.

Comparative Studies of Technical Treatises

A comparison will be performed between the Chinese recipe book *Xiu Shi Lu* and the European recipe book *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing*. Even though *A Treatise* is not the only lacquer recipe book produced in Europe in the seventeenth century, the book is selected for the comparative study for the following reasons. Firstly, it was arguably the most popular lacquer

recipe book of its time.[62] Secondly, evidence suggests that this book influenced Dutch craftsmen to adopt the designs from this book in their works.[63] This can serve as a starting point for the future comparative study of Dutch and Chinese lacquer. I am aware of the significant differences between the Chinese and the European recipe books. For example, the book is written for amateur audiences, as John Stalker and George Parker declared. On the other hand, *Xiu Shi Lu* was most likely written for Huang Cheng's contemporary craftsmen. Nevertheless, I am intrigued by the discovery of how the materials and techniques differentiate and whether they have any common grounds.

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis will be a research method that carries throughout the thesis. In chapter one, a print will be studied through visual analysis to get insight into Dutch artists' assumptions on the Asian lacquer's production process. Afterwards, I will use Dutch still life paintings from the seventeenth centuries discuss how Asian lacquer intertwines with Dutch artistic traditions and Dutch people's lives, and understand why and how the Dutch appreciate Asian lacquer. In chapter two and three, visual analysis will be applied to the Coromandel lacquer screen and chest. I am interested in discovering how and why the Dutch in the seventeenth century find Coromandel lacquer appealing and whether that constitutes the Dutch reception of Coromandel lacquer.

[62] The book was first published in 1688, soon followed with three additions within the year. See Klootwijk, "Curious," 264.
[63] A good example would be *The Cabinet on a Stand*, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Inventory number: BK-2017-37.

Iconography

In this study, I will partially apply Erwin Panofsky's method use to describe Chinese motifs. In Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* in 1962, Panofsky discussed three layers of analyzing a work of art: pre-iconographical description, iconographical analysis, and iconographical synthesis.[64] The pre-iconographical description is the identification of the object's form and colour, which is the approach I will use to determine the motif of an artwork. Due to geographical and cultural migration, the analysis of the pictorial tradition of an artwork and how artwork fits in the broader cultural context are quite limited if applying Panofsky's approach.[65] Therefore, Panofsky's approach will only be used as the first stage of iconographical analysis.

I will also identify the Chinese motifs and designs on the Coromandel lacquer pieces in the Chinese context. In order to support my analysis, I will use literary sources and other similar visual secondary sources that interpret or represent the same motif within the context of the Chinese visual and literal culture. The literary sources are mostly poems from imperial China and records that indicate the meaning of referred items from the same time period as the object. The contemporary visual sources are probably the inspiration for the lacquer-maker's pattern design. The reason for focusing on both Coromandel lacquer and japanning's materiality, function, and iconographical meaning of the designs can be elaborated by the goal of this study – to deepen the understanding of Coromandel lacquer's production in a Chinese context, and to interpret Coromandel lacquer from both the consumer and the maker's perspective.

[64] Erwin Panofsky, "Introduction" in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). 3-17

[65] Keith Moxey, "Panofsky's Concept of "Iconology" and the Problem of Interpretation in the History of Art." New Literary History 17, no. 2 (Winter, 1986): 266. Accessed June 17th, 2023 https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/panofskys-concept-iconology-problem/docview/1297359918/se-2.

Research Experience in Covid Time

Most of my research was conducted during the Covid pandemic. Many cultural institutions, including the Westfries Museum and the Westfries Archief, were closed during the lockdown. Covid's impact on day-to-day life has been voiced by many, but not a lot of people are aware of its tremendous effect on researchers. Covid limits the possibility of hands-on experience and loads an electronic burden which may not happen during a different time. During the lockdown, I could only visit the Westfries Museum several times to observe and study the materiality of my research object – the WfM lacquer chest. The archival research was done remotely with the help of Peter Swart at the Westfries Archief. Thanks to the digitalization of archival materials, doing research remotely is possible today. But working on the laptop many hours a day also affected my physical and mental well-being. Furthermore, with the reduction of international mobility during the lockdown, inter-library loans take longer than average. Not being able to consult a source you need immediately adds a frustrating feeling to the research progress.

Chapter 1 – Asian Lacquerware in Seventeenth Century Still Life Paintings

A brief history of the VOC and its encounter with China

Before the establishment of the *Verenigde Oost Indische Companie* VOC, the Portuguese had been leading the trading with China and Japan. After the Portuguese received permission to start their trading settlement in Macao in 1557, Chinese commercial products flowed regularly to

Europe, but they were still expensive since the limited supply.[66] In the 1580s, Philip II ascended the throne in Portugal, which was when Dutch-Portuguese trading became prohibited. With the increasing demand, the supply of Asian luxuries and spices was even more declined. Thus, an image of East Asia has been imprinted on Western Europeans through oral transmission, manuscripts, maps and books.[67] The Dutch tried to create their own trading with Asia while avoiding conflicts with the Portuguese since the war and the Portuguese's monopoly on the sailing routes around the Cape.[68] The first attempt to Asia through the Northern route was a sorrowful failure. Both cartographers and explorers speculated that the crew could sail across the sea north of Russia and then arrive in China. They believed the northern route was much shorter, and they would not encounter the Portuguese and suffer through the heat. In July 1595, a large fleet headed to China through the north route. After many difficulties, the expedition crew had to stop on Novaya Zemlya, a large island in the Arctic Ocean. The fleet returned empty-handed, and a lot of the explorers died during the voyage. In May 1596, another two ships left Amsterdam for China. With the harsh arctic weather, the two vessels tried two different routes up north but ended up with the same result: returning home.[69] Finally, in August 1597, a Dutch fleet took the Portuguese route around Africa, which marks the first Dutch fleet returning from Asia, with the price of losing almost two-thirds of the initial 240 people crew.[70] The success of the southern route leads to the founding of numerous large companies in Holland and Zeeland to

[66] C. J. A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade*, (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1982), 15.
[67] Although there was oral transmission, the knowledge of the East still only has a small group of audience, notably the elite literate. See Djoeke Van Netten, "The Richest Country in the World: Dutch Knowledge of China and Cathay and How to Get There in the 1590s" in *Foreign Devils and Philosophers: Cultural Encounters between the Chinese, the Dutch, and Other Europeans, 1590-1800*, East and West, volume 6, ed. Thijs Weststeijn, (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 57.
[68] Jörg, *Porcelain*, 16.
[69] Tristan Mostert and Jan van Campen, *Silk Thread: China and The Netherlands from 1600*, Rijksmuseum History Department Series (Amsterdam : Nijmegen: Rijksmuseum ; Ruks Museum/Vantilt Publishers, 2015), 35
[70] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread*, 37.

trade with East India. Different corporations were finally gathered in 1602 to establish a unified organization, the VOC, thanks to the mediation of the Grand Pensionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and the good offices of the Stadholder Prince Maurice.[71] The VOC had six chambers (*kamers van de VOC*) of Amsterdam, Middelburg (Zeeland), Rotterdam, Delft, Hoorn and Enkhuizen. The financial and administrative regulations were based on the share percentage of each chamber. The amount and percentage are as follows in Table 1.

Chamber	Capital (Guilders)	Percentage
Amsterdam	3,679,915	57%
Middelburg	1,300,405	20%
Enkhuizen	540,000	8%
Delft	469,400	7%
Hoorn	266,868	4%
Rotterdam	173,000	3%
Total	6,429,588	

Table 1. Initial Capitals and Percentage of VOC[72]

Although the VOC tried to stop the dominance of the Portuguese in trading with China, the distrust from the Chinese officials and the interference of the Portuguese in Macao proved to be insurmountable obstacles.[73] In 1601, two Dutch vessels travelled to Macao and Canton, demonstrating the first encounter with China.[74] Jacob van Neck, the officer who commanded the

[71] Jörg, *Porcelain*, 16.
[72] All the data in this table is from Henk den Heijer, *De geoctrooieerde compagnie: de VOC en de WIC als voorlopers van de naamloze vennootschap*, Ars notariatus 128 (Amsterdam: Stichting tot Bevordering der Notariële Wetenschap, 2005), 61.
[73] Jörg, *Porcelain*, 17.
[74] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread*, 37.

fleet, later realized it was impossible to have direct trading with China.[75] The Dutch never bridged direct trading with China successfully in the seventeenth century since the Chinese emperor in the Ming Dynasty had forbidden it.[76] The Chinese porcelain and other goods were shipped to the Netherlands from robbing Portuguese vessels or intermediate stations such as Formosa and Japan.[77]

Even though the Dutch were the first Europeans to enter the tribute system of Chinese imperials and then create a diplomatic relationship with China, direct trading with China did not come easily in the early days of the VOC[78] Considering the Qing government of China allowed other countries to send delegations, the VOC council in Batavia supported the idea and appointed delegations for a tribute trip to Beijing in 1655. Under the leadership of two ambassadors, Pieter de Goyer and Jacob Keyzer, Johan Nieuhof worked in the group as a steward, whose journal and sketchbook later became *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham.*[79] Unfortunately, the answer was not what the Dutch looked for. In 1666, another embassy led by Pieter van Hoorn received the same negative result. Vincent Pacts visited Beijing from 1685 to 1687 with the third embassy, but they still could not seize a positive response from the Chinese government.[80] It was not until the autumn of 1728 that the Amsterdam Chamber sent ships *Coxborn* and *Buuren* to Guangzhou directly. Afterwards, the Zeeland Chamber also joined the direct trading to Guangzhou.[81] Before this moment, the Dutch

[75] Jörg, *Porcelain,* 16.
[76] Martine Gosselink, "The Dutch East India Company in Asia," in *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age*, ed. Jan van Campen and Karina Corrigan. (New Haven:Yale University Press, 2015), 24.
[77] Formosa was the meeting point of Japanese and Chinese trading. In 1609, the VOC opened a factory in Hirado, Japan, which became another supply line of Chinese goods. See Jörg, *Porcelain,* 17.
[78] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread*, 75.
[79] Mostert and Van Campen, *Silk Thread*, 77.
[80] Jörg, *Porcelain,* 18 – 9.
[81] Jörg, *Porcelain,* 21.

had private trading experience with China, mainly in southern cities on the coast, such as Fuzhou, Xiamen, Kimmen and Guangzhou.[82]

The trading of Asian lacquerware in general, was not as dominant as porcelain in the Netherlands. In fact, Asian lacquerware only occupies a modest fair of Asian merchandise shipped via the VOC to the Netherlands.[83] The Dutch Republic was also not the largest market for Coromandel lacquerware. Van Campen suggests that Coromandel screens were greatly imported by the English.[84] Secondary evidence in archive documents stating Coromandel lacquer's import to the Dutch Republic. The Dutch East India Company ship *De Hollantze Thuyn* which departed from Batavia to Amsterdam on November 25th, 1676, brought "three Chinese lacquered screens (*3 stux Chineze verlackte schutzels)* on board.[85] Because the Japanese did not produce lacquer in the form of screens, and most of the Chinese lacquer screens were made in the technique of Coromandel lacquer, this record is most likely referring to Coromandel lacquer. The vessels arrived in 1677 in Amsterdam, and the screens remained in stock in 1678. The estimated value was 480 guilders in Batavia.[86] The unsalable situation probably implies the relatively low demand for Coromandel lacquer in the Dutch market.

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[82] Jörg, *Porcelain*, 18.

[83] The term "oriental lacquer" was used by C.J.A. Jörg. It includes lacquerware from Southern and Eastern Asian countries. I replaced it with Asian lacquer in which represents the same. C. J. A. Jörg, "De Handel van de VOC in Oosters Lakwerk in de 18de Eeuw," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ)/Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 31 (1980), 355.

[84] Jan van Campen, "'Reduced to a Heap of Monstruous Shivers and Splinters', Some Notes on Coromandel Lacquer in Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries." *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin 57*, no.2 (2009), 140.

[85] Jacobus A. van der Chijs ed., *Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter plaetse als over geheel Nederlandts-India Anno 1676*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff/Landsdrukkerij Batavia, 1903) 331. As cited by Van Noord, "The 'Unhappie Ruines'" in Weststeijn, *The Foreign Devils*, 184.

[86] According to the historical purchasing power calculator (https://iisg.amsterdam/en/research/projects/hpw/calculate.php) of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, 480 guilders in 1678 is estimated as 6,127 euro in 2021. Another information to help putting the price of the screens to perspective is the salary from that time. For example, the annual salary of a professor at Leiden University in the 1630s is 1,500 guilders. This comparison reflects the Coromandel screens targeted the

In the eighteenth century, the Dutch perspective on whether they should trade Chinese lacquerware altered from time to time. In 1734, a successful auction of Chinese lacquerware took place in Middleburg.[87] In 1737, three boxes of lacquerware arrived in Amsterdam and Zeeland.[88] In 1740, the directors did require purchasing Chinese lacquerware, but only on a modest scale.[89] In 1749, the directors ordered "'geslingerde theebladen van een ongemeen facoen (hurled tea trays from an unusual facoen),'" but three years later they asked for "'Verlakte theebladen, 100 nesten van 5 vierkante bladen […] (lacquered tea trays, 100 nests of 5 square trays).'"[90] According to the data on Boekhouder-Generaal Batavia through Het Huygens Instituut's database "Bookkeeper – General Batavia,"[91] seven ships departed from Batavia or Guangzhou between 1737 to 1766 carried cargoes of lacquer, and one of them (voyage 12249) specifically noted the lacquers were Chinese.[92] In fact, due to the high price of Japanese lacquer in the 1730s,

aristocracies who had ample expense. See Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century: The Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87.

[87] Jörg, "De Handel," 356.

[88] Jörg suggests the 1737 purchase of Chinese lacquerware were three boxes in total. However, the record on Het Huygens Instituut's database shows the 1737 trips carried *diverse* and *367 pees* of Chinese lacquerware. See table 2 and Jörg, "De Handel," 356.

[89] "…de overage lakwerken van stoelen, kabinetten, toiletten en diergelijke prullen meer, die een timmermans en verlakkersknegt hier te lande veel fraaijer en sindelijker sou maken dan de laatst ontfangene, en die een grote spatie door haar volume in de schepen beslaan, sullen wij in den aanstaande niet meer verwagten, maar houden die alle voor geexcuseert." Algemeen Rijksarchief, VOCarch. 167, *Resolutie Heren XVII* 7-4-1740 cited in Jörg, "De Handel," n 17.

[90] Algemeen Rijksarchief, VOCarch. 167, *Resolutie Heren XVII* 12 en 25-9-1752, cited in Jörg, "De Handel," n 22.

[91] The database supports searching with certain criteria. For the nine results, the search term is *lakwerk* with the arrival region of Republiek as a filter. I also tried to search with *kamerschutsel* and *schutsel,* no relevant result came up. See the result at https://bgb.huygens.knaw.nl/bgb/voyages_results?group_by_all=on&product_name=lakwerk&specification=&ship_name=&booking_year=&booking_year_from=&booking_year_to=&source_id=&departure_place_id=&departure_region_id=&departure_month_start=&departure_year_start=&departure_month_stop=&departure_year_stop=&arrival_place_id=&arrival_region_id=3185&arrival_month_start=&arrival_year_start=&arrival_month_stop=&arrival_year_stop=&all_fields=

[92] Ibid.

regular trade of Japanese lacquer became unaffordable, the VOC started to consider Chinese lacquer.[93]

Voyage	Ships	Book Year	Departure Place	Departure Region	Arrival Place	Arrival Region	Total Value Indian Guilder	Quantities
3855	's Lands Welvaren	1766/1767	Batavia	Batavia	Amsterdam	Republiek	2.798,3,8	diverse
8257	Bosschenhove	1756/1757	Kanton	China	Amsterdam	Republiek	594	60 nest
8258	Eendracht	1756/1757	Kanton	China	Amsterdam	Republiek	693	70 nest
8259	Vrijburg	1756/1757	Kanton	China	Zeeland	Republiek	693	70 nest
12249	Goidschalxoord	1737/1738	Batavia	Batavia	Amsterdam	Republiek	250,16	367 pees
12763	Knappenhof	1737/1738	Kanton	China	Zeeland	Republiek	400,2	diverse
12983	Hogersmilde	1738/1739	Kanton	China	Amsterdam	Republiek	1.370	diverse
17768	Bethlehem	1740/1741	Kanton	China	Amsterdam	Republiek	840	diverse
17770	Scheijbeek	1740/1741	Kanton	China	Zeeland	Republiek	770	diverse

Table 2. VOC ships departed from Canton and Batavia to the Dutch Republic with Chinese lacquerware on board, 1737 to 1766.[94]

In the early days of trading with Asia, Coromandel lacquer was primarily sold in private trade, in which they left no written evidence in the shipping company's record. There are descriptions of lacquerware in the archive, though they are not detailed enough to define what type of lacquer they have written about.[95] Oliver Impey suggests, any attempt to establish a chronology of

[93] The data on Het Huygens Instituut suggests voyage 3855 in 1766/67 imported lacquerware (*lakwerk*) from Batavia. Jörg says VOC's trading of lacquerware ended in 1765. See Jörg, "De Handel," 356.
[94] All the information in this table is from Het Huygens Instituut with the search keyword 'lak' and the destination 'Republiek.' The voyage number is a serial number from Het Huygens Instituut. For example, by entering '3855' in the search bar, one could get all the information on the that certain voyage. Quantities means the amount of lacquer on a particular vessel. Within that category, 'diverse' means 'various' but no declared amount. 'Pees' is an abbreviation of 'piece' in French an 'peca' in Portuguese, meaning 'stuks,' 'pieces.' There is no specific explanation for 'nest' in the VOC Glossarium, but given the term's English translation is also nest, I consulted Oxford English Dictionary, one of the definition of the term is "a set of series of similar objects, *esp.* such a set or series designed to be contained in the same receptacle, or so made that each smaller one is enclosed in, or fits into, the larger one nearest in size to it." See nest, n. : Oxford English Dictionary (uu.nl). Accessed on Nov. 23rd, 2022.
[95] Van Campen, "Splinters," 139 – 140.

sources on how Japanese lacquer was received in Europe is challenging due to identifying issues. Chinese lacquer faces the same difficulties.[96] Furthermore, the Dutch Republic was not the primary patron of Chinese lacquerware, not to mention Coromandel lacquer screens. This ostensibly contributes to Chinese Coromandel lacquerware in the Netherlands having been scarcely studied by scholars.

Lacquerware in Dutch still life paintings and print in the seventeenth- and eighteenth centuries

Lacquerware was brought to Europe by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century before the establishment of the VOC.[97] One of the earliest examples of lacquerware in a European collection belongs to Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol. After his death in 1595, people found a Japanese Namban lacquer cabinet in his collection.[98] It did not take the Dutch merchants too long to acquire lacquerware through their own venue in Asia. Several years after the formation of VOC, in 1607, the VOC placed the first order of Japanese lacquerware, with the earliest shipment arriving in Texel in 1610.[99] The glossy black surface with gold decoration soon seized the attention of the Dutch. As the amount of imported Asian lacquerware increased, lacquer started to emerge in Dutch still life paintings.

Compared to the frequent appearance of porcelain in seventeenth century Dutch still life paintings, lacquerware was not the most common subject matter. A tentative scan of the image database of the Netherlands Institute for Art History in The Hague yields thirty-two paintings

[96] Oliver Impey and C. J. A. Jörg, *Japanese Export Lacquer: 1580-1850* (Amsterdam: Hotei Pub, 2005), 283.
[97] Roosmarie Staats, "Aziatica in de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse schilderkunst: Beeltenis en betekenis van porselein, lakwerk en zijde," Master's thesis, (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2014), 20.
[98] Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide, "The (Ab)Use of Export Lacquer in Europe', *ICOMOS-Hefte des Deutschen Nationakomitees,* Vol. 35 (2000), 27.
[99] Staats, "Aziatica," 20.

with the depiction of lacquerware in the seventeenth century.[100] Although the search result may not include all the artworks which depict lacquerware, the figure should reflect the rarity of lacquerware compared to porcelain in Dutch still life paintings in the seventeenth century.[101] Roosmarie Staats, who was the curatorial research fellow for the 'Asia in Amsterdam' exhibition, has written a chapter on lacquerware in Dutch seventeenth century paintings in her thesis. Staats summarizes the painters in the seventeenth century who had involved lacquerware in their still life paintings, notably Osias Beert the Elder, Willem Kalf, and Pieter van Roestraeten.[102] In 2021, Cheng He, a PhD candidate in the Department of History at University of Warwick, published an article on the presentation of lacquerware in early European paintings.[103] He unwraps the visual appearance of lacquerware and its representation as a luxury and vanity consumption to discuss how different representations of lacquer in early European paintings reflect diverse functions and meanings in certain artworks.[104] In "Cultural Reflections on Porcelain in the Seventeenth Century Netherlands," although Thijs Weststeijn concentrates on the multiple function and materiality of porcelain, his approach inspires me to consider lacquerware in a similar way: was lacquer recognized as a creation of art in the still life paintings in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic? Besides the ubiquitous idea of the Chinese utopia that has been attached to the lacquer, was lacquer and its materiality appreciated by the Dutch in other means? Inspired by the scholars mentioned above, the following part will use Dutch

[100] These paintings are found with the keyword "lakwerk", "lacquerware", and "lacquer" on the RKD database and through other search engines. The number of paintings is probably not the most precise since some titles may not include lacquerware, or the database has not registered "lakwerk" as a keyword. It is also possible that some artworks remain unknown in the private collections.
[101] Searching with the keyword "porcelain," there are 1355 results in RKDimages between 1604 to 1705.
[102] Staats, "Aziatica," 20 – 22.
[103] Cheng He, "Rendering the Surface: Representing Lacquerware in Early Modern European Paintings," on History Global History and Culture Centre, last modified May 19, 2021, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/blog/rendering_the_surface/.
[104] Cheng He, "Rendering."

seventeenth century still life paintings as the approaching tool to discuss how lacquerware was perceived by the Dutch in the seventeenth century.

The lacquer in still life paintings is usually depicted in black and decorated with gold motifs. Such designs are characteristics of imported Japanese lacquer. Compared to Chinese Coromandel lacquer, Japanese exported lacquer focused more on the pictorial appearance, and less on its colouring. Japanese exported lacquer is usually seen with the lustrous dark lacquer with gold or mother-of-pearl patterns. The stunning look not only attracted attention in Europe but also on the other side of the globe in China. During the Qing Dynasty, many emperors, such as the Yongzheng emperor, developed a fondness for Japanese lacquer.[105] Viewing this matter from a Western perspective, John Stalker and George Parker also suggested that Japanese lacquer is superior. They wrotein their lacquer imitation recipe book *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing*:

> The mistake of Bantam-work for Japan, arose from hence: all work of this kind was by a general name called Indian; by use they so far confused all together, that none but the skilful could rightly distinguish. This must be alledged for the Bantam-work, that tis very pretty, and some are more fond of it, and prefer it to the other, nay the work is equally difficult with Japan: But if I must give you my opinion, my skill and fancy induce me to believe, that Japan is more rich, grave, and Majestick, and for that reason ought to be more highly esteemed.[106]

To Stalker and Parker, both Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Japanese lacquer are equally difficult to make. Some might prefer Chinese Coromandel lacquer, but Stalker and Parker preferred Japanese lacquer given that they believe it is richer, more majestic and more esteemed. It is possible that Japanese lacquer was preferred in the seventeenth century not only because it

[105] Kristina Kleutghen, "Imports and Imitations," 192.
[106] Stalker and Parker, "*A Treatise*," 7.

was seen as a true luxury[107], but also due to the fact that Chinese lacquer was seen as a cheaper substitute when the regular trade of Japanese lacquer became unaffordable. [108] Besides, when the trading of lacquer started between the Portuguese and East Asians, Japanese lacquer with a black background and gold decoration was brought into the scene before Chinese lacquer. Given its exclusivity and popularity, it would make sense that Japanese lacquer or its imitation "japanning" is the type of lacquer that made an appearance in seventeenth century Dutch still life paintings. Japanning is the imitation of Asian lacquer that emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century. European craftsmen established their own imitation of Asian designs in many fields, including porcelain, textile, and lacquer, to meet the increasing demand for Asian commodities. Japanning is a technique of applying layers of a local, European pigmented resin, often dammar, mastic or shellac on an object.[109] The surface which bears the japanning is usually wood. Sometimes, craftsmen also use leather or metal as the base for japanning. The finish of japanning is polished to achieve a smooth, flawless surface that resembles Asian lacquer. Such lacquer imitation is the cheaper alternative to meet a broader demand. As early as the start of the seventeenth century, japanning had been produced in the Dutch Republic. Willem Kick was the best-known craftsman for imitative lacquer in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. His shop of lacquerware was in business from 1609 to the 1640s.[110] With the rising enthusiasm for Asian decorations, imitating Asian lacquer becomes a trend in the seventeenth century. It was not a

[107] Kristina Kleutghen, "Imports and Imitations," 200.
[108] The data on Het Huygens Instituut suggests voyage 3855 in 1766/67 imported lacquerware (*lakwerk*) from Batavia. Jörg says VOC's trading of lacquerware ended in 1765. See Jörg, "De Handel," 356.
[109] Tara Cederholm, 2017, "Curiously Engraved: the New Art of Japanning and an Exploration of Depictions of Asia in Eighteenth-Century London and Boston," in Thirteenth International Symposium on Wood and Furniture Conservation Conference on March 14th, 2016, 177. http://www.ebenist.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Cederholm_LR.pdf
[110] Annemarie Klootwijk, "Curious Japanese Black: Shaping the Identity of Dutch Imitation Lacquer," *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art / Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek Online* 66, 1 (2016), 254. doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/22145966-90000788

patent for craftsmen solely; at least in England, ladies from the middle- and upper class started to adopt lacquer-making as a pastime.[111] Design and recipe books with replicated Asian and Asian-inspired images also emerged at the time. *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* by John Stalker and George Parker in 1688 was one of them on making imitative lacquerware.[112]

As mentioned, Japanese lacquer or its imitation was not a common motif in seventeenth century still life paintings in the Dutch Republic. In RKD's database, the number of painters who depicted lacquer in still lifes is also limited. Only Osias Beert the Elder, Willem Kalf, Jan Brueghel the Elder, and Pieter van Roestraeten have depicted lacquer. Beert was not only one of the first painters who included lacquer in still life paintings but also the one who finished the most works with lacquer in them.[113] It is possible that some lacquers in the still life paintings are from the painter's personal collection, or they have sketched the lacquerware in a sketchbook. Beert depicted three lacquer objects repetitively; one is a lacquer bowl that appears in *Still Life with a Stoneware Vase and a Bowl of Chinese Lacquer with Flowers* (Figure 4), a slightly bigger lacquer cup in *Still Life with Oysters and a Tazza with Biscuits on a Table* (Figure 5), and a thinner lacquer cup in *Breakfast Still life with Oysters* (Figure 6). The lacquer bowl not only reappeared in Beert's still life paintings but also in a mythological genre painting on *Pausias and Glycera* by Osias Beert the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens in 1615 (Figure 7). In figure 4, Beert probably chose the lacquer bowl since its colour and the stoneware vase are cohesive. In figure 5

[111] Julie Bellemare, "Design Books in the Chinese Taste: Marketing the Orient in England and France, 1688-1735," *Journal of Design History* 27, no. 1, p 6. Doi:10.1093/jdh/ept032.
[112] In *A Treatise,* Stalker and Parker also wrote in the epistle that the book is intended to help amateurs. ". These will assist [them] to distinguish between good work and rubbish, between an ignorant knave and an artist, and put a stop to all the cheats and cousenage of those whiffling, impotent fellows, who pretend to teach young ladies that art, in which they themselves have need to be instructed, and to the disgrace of the Title lurk and shelter themselves under the notion of Japanners, painters, guilders, etc." See Stalker and Parker, *A Treatise of Japanin and Varnishing* (London and Oxford, 1688), Epistle. https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/treatisejapanin00stal
[113] Staats, "Aziatica," 44

and 6, the black lacquer with gold decoration forms a complementary colour contrast with the bright silver and the oysters. On the other hand, the black and gold shimmer of the lacquer also shares similarity to the lustrous silver vessel and the translucent drinking glasses.

Jan Brueghel the Elder's earliest painting with lacquer, *Still Life with Garland of Flowers and Golden Tazza* , is dated in the 1618 (Figure 8). He chose to portray a jewelry box in the style of Chinese red and black lacquer with a pearl necklace lying over it. Staats suggests that although the jewelry box is similar to Japanese lacquerware, it is questionable whether it was authentic Japanese lacquerware or a European imitation. However, Staats does not provide any evidence which could prove the theory.[114] It is reasonable that Staats has such doubts, given that lacquer from Japan and China was expensive. But knowing that the earliest record of a Chinese lacquer chest in Antwerp was in 1607, and the VOC placed the first order of Japanese lacquerware in the same year, it is still possible that Jan Brueghel the Elder had seen or owned imported Japanese or Chinese lacquer by the time he painted the lacquer box in 1618.[115]

After Osias Beert the Elder and Jan Brueghel the Elder introduced lacquer as a still life motif in the 1610s, it seemed that the luxury went out of trend in still life paintings until the mid-seventeenth century when Pieter van Roestraeten and Willem Kalf painted them again. Besides still life paintings, lacquer also appeared in more elaborate settings, such as *Portrait of a Family Drinking Tea in an Interior* (Figure 9) by Roelof Koets (1680) and *Portrait of Godart Verdion* (Figure 10) by Ludolf Bakhuizen (1680 – 1689). Koets painting describes a family drinking tea

[114] Staats, "Aziatica," 44.
[115] City Archives Antwerp, Notariaatsarchief N. 1331 W.G. De Kesel, *Vlaams Barook Meubiliair in Lak,* Drongen, 1991, 16-18, as cited in W. De Kesel and G. Dhont, *Coromandel,* 10.

around a lacquer tea table. This type of lacquer table was probably imported to the Netherlands and favoured by the middle- and upper-class patrons, as it is also shown in an inventory list of the Carbasius family, a regional regent family in Hoorn since the seventeenth century. In Hendrik Carbasius's deed of division on February 7th, 1750, Nicolaas Bel recorded "een verlakte thee tafel" (one lacquered tea table).[116] In Ludolf Bakhuizen's portrait of Godart Verdion, the black and gold Japanese lacquer cabinet foreshadows Verdion's wealth and reputation. Godart Verdion was a trader and jeweller in Amsterdam and Batavia. Because many of the VOC vessels with Asian lacquer departed from Batavia, the lacquer in this painting probably symbolizes his profession as a trader and where he was situated geographically.

Lacquerware with nature and luxury

As one of the trading ports constantly receiving Asian luxury goods, Asian lacquers have been documented since the beginning of the seventeenth century. An inventory of the estates of rich burghers in 1625 recorded some lacquerware pieces as "a small object of 'Indian' lacquerware, an 'Indian' lacquer box and an 'Indian' lacquerware dish."[117] Antwerp was also the cradle of Osias Beert the Elder and Jan Brueghel the Elder. Out of all the painters who had included lacquerware in their paintings, Beert portrayed this glossy material the most and made it a returning motif in his works. Between 1610 to 1620, two black lacquer cups appeared in at least ten of Beert's still life paintings.[118] In most cases, Beert placed the lacquer bowl or cup among

[116] See Nicolaas Bel, Hendrik Carbasius' aket van verdeling, February 7th 1750. Box 1685 Notarissen in West-Friesland tot 1843, 1552-1843. Folder **2538** Akten, 1749-1750. Page 117. https://www.westfriesarchief.nl/onderzoek/zoeken?mivast=136&mizig=210&miadt=136&micode=1685&miview=inv2#inv3t2

[117] City Archives Antwerp, Notariaatsarchief N. 1331 W.G. De Kesel, *Vlaams Barook Meubiliair in Lak,* Drongen, 1991, 16-18, as cited in W. De Kesel and G. Dhont, *Coromandel,* 10.

[118] Nine of these still life paintings are found through RKD's database by searching "lakwerk," one is as suggested, in the Prado Museum's collection, even though both the RKD database and Prado's website do not include this work. Please note that there could be more of Beert's still lifes with the lacquer cups.

flowers, fruits, vegetables, and seashells. In *Breakfast Still Life with Oysters* (Figure 6), Beert depicted a plate of untouched oysters in the center of the painting, with some figs on the left, a loaf of bread on the right, a glass of wine with two other Venetian glasses, and some opened chestnuts in the lacquer cup. It is unclear whether Beert intentionally chose to place the lacquer cup among fruits, vegetables, seafood, and objects made of natural material, but Beert's arrangement of the lacquer cup underscores the inherent nature of lacquer, which is that this glossy luxury is made from natural resources. Furthermore, it seems to refer to the obscure etymology of the term "lacquer." The origin of the term "lacquer" is "lac," a term that derives majorly from two branches.[119] The Anglo-Norman *lac, lak,* the Middle French *lacque,* the post-classical Latin *lac, lacca,* and Hellenistic Greek *λακχά* are among the first group. The second group is about the Arabic *lakk* and its derivations: the Persian *lāk* and the Sanskrit *lākshā.*[120] These various origins all mean a kind of dye. Both Hellenistic Greek and post-classical Latin are more precise, referring to a plant used in dyeing. The word "lac" represents a dark red resinous material generated by certain scale insects as a protective coating. Such insects can be collected on twigs and branches of infected trees that are native to South Asia and the Southeast Asian mainland.[121] In "Cultural Reflections on Porcelain in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," Thijs Weststeijn argues that the porcelain in Jan van Kessel's painting is depicted as both a natural and an artificial product given its raw material and the process of making.[122] Based on a similar association, the lacquer in Dutch still life with fruits and vegetables also indicates

[119] Cheng He, "Understanding the Fragrance of Lacuqer in Early Modern Europe," *University of Toronto Art Journals* 9, no. 1 (2021): 69.
[120] "lac, n.1". OED Online. June 2022. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/view/Entry/104777? (accessed July 27, 2022).
[121] Ibid.; He, "Understanding," 69.
[122] Thijs Weststeijn, "Cultural Reflections on Porcelain in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," in Jan van Campen and Titus Maria Eliëns, *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2014), 217.

lacquer's double connotation – as the creation of nature and the creation of artifact. In Beert's painting, the figs, chestnuts, and oysters are the reference to nature, while the Venetian glasses represent the artificial product which is also made from raw materials (sand and limestone). As I mentioned, the small lacquer cup was a returning member of Beert's paintings. It is likely that combining the lacquerware in the still life paintings with fruits, vegetables and sea creatures was a conscious decision made by Osias Beert to indicate lacquer's connection with other natural materials. In *Looking at the Overlooked,* Norman Bryson points out that "the access to nature is of a special kind, the sort of privileged pastoral return available only to the very rich."[123] This was because fruits were a luxury instead of a staple in the Dutch national diet. As a type of "costly southern delicacies," the fruits imply the owner's unlimited access to continental resources. Therefore, the lacquer cup in Beert's painting probably also represents luxury material and unlimited access to intercontinental resources.

In 1653, Willem Kalf placed a lacquer box among shell cups, shells, and coral in *Still Life with Shell Cup, Shells, Coral and Lacquer Box* (Figure 11). All the objects in the painting are carefully arranged. The shells, the nautilus cup and the corals create a pyramid-shaped composition, which attracts the viewer naturally. The chiaroscuro contrast between the sheen nautilus cup and the white shells and the dark lacquerware also brings the protagonists of the painting forward. The meticulous brushwork and lustrous highlight on the shells and the nautilus cup indicate Kalf's extraordinary skills. Staats believes that given Kalf's tendency to choose special items, Kalf may have thought the painting had exceptional worth, and he probably choose real Asian lacquer instead of imitated lacquer because of this reason.[124]

[123] Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion, 1990), 124
[124] Staats, "Aziatica," 44.

Furthermore, still life paintings depicting delight and pleasure bear commercial value in a capitalist society like the Dutch Republic.[125] Due to the skill, labour, and techniques required to finish such a painting, the painting itself is a mirror of the precious commodities it depicts.[126] The capital resources required to produce the picture and the objects portrayed are transformed into things that are worth far more than the sum of their component parts and the labour required to generate them.[127] For example, Norman Bryson suggests that Willem Kalf set a high goal for the skills and crafts shown in his painting. Kalf intended to create designs that were better than the original. Kalf's goal is "to produce designs for plate that are finer than any silversmith's, goblets more elaborate than any glass-maker can create."[128] As a result, the labour concentrated on the depicted objects, and the effort reflected by the painting interacted naturally. To a certain degree, the value of the painting depends on the value of the depicted objects. And because a painting as such not only includes other crafts but also surpasses them, it establishes the supremacy of its own labour and bestows more value than the still life objects.[129] In auction sales of artworks in Amsterdam between 1597 to 1638, still lifes were sold with an average of 11.3 *f* from 1597 to 1619, and 15.1*f* from 1620 to 1638.[130] The average prices of paintings in auction sales for these two time periods were 9.8 *f* and 7.6 *f*.[131] Comparing the average prices of still life

[125] Miya Tokumitsu, "The Currencies of Naturalism in Dutch 'Pronk' Still-Life Painting: Luxury, Craft, Envisioned Affluence." *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 41, no. 2 (2016): 30–43. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44011805.
[126] Another factor that could vary a still life painting's price is pigment. For example, Kalf is known for using expensive pigments. But unfortunately, it is unclear what pigment Willem Kalf used to depict the Asian lacquer in his paintings.
[127] Tokumitsu, "The Currencies," 38
[128] Bryson, *Looking*, 124.
[129] Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990), 124.
[130] J. Michael Montias, "Auction Sales of Works of Art in Amsterdam (1597-1638)." *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek (NKJ) / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 50 (1999): 174. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43888643.
[131] J. Michael Montias, "What Did They Buy and at What Prices?" In *Art at Auction in 17th Century Amsterdam*, 87–92. Amsterdam University Press, 2002. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kd6h.16.

paintings and paintings in general between 1597 to 1638, still lifes were sold approximately 15% more expensive. Therefore, the price difference could be an indicator of the painting's commercial value. Still life paintings such as Kalf's works which reflect advanced artistic skills and luxury objects obtain a matching value for the artist's labour and luxurious showcasing. As part of some still life paintings, lacquer is firstly a luxurious object, then a vehicle for painters to showcase their skills by painting and imitating the lustrous material. Therefore, the still life paintings with lacquer not only depict precious commodities, they become a luxury themselves by combining the labour of making the painting, and how the painters try to surpass other crafts the objects might represent.

The usage of black lacquer

Besides Japanese lacquer's connotation with nature and luxury, could Dutch painters prefer it due to the colour? In a thesis emphasizing the popularity of black in the Dutch Republic between 1675 to 1725, then MA student Catherine ter Laak from Leiden University elaborated on how black became a colour of the rich.[132] In Dutch portraits in the seventeenth century, the figures are often seen in black clothing with white lacy decorations. Besides the combination being a characteristic of Dutch portraits, black was also a very rare colour in the seventeenth century. Before the discovery of the New World, oak apple was the only raw material that can be used to dye fabrics and achieve an intense and even finish. Being the only material, oak apple had to be imported from the Middle East or Northern Africa.[133] The distance and the amount of oak apple

[132] In Ter Laak's thesis, she suggested Simon de Vries said, "in Japan werd aldermeest gebruikt het zwarte lak, tot versiering van de huisraad der grote voorname personen. Want zwart is hier de Heeren-coleur, en in de grootste achtbaarheid," however, ter Laak's citation is incorrect and de Vries's untraceable. Therefore, I will not further discuss this possibility. For Ter Laak's argument, see C.A.E. ter Laak, "Why Black? A Dutch Desire for the Colour Black between 1675 – 1725" (Master's Thesis, Leiden University, 2016), 18.
[133] Michel Pastoureau, *Black. The History of a Color*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 91 – 97.

needed to produce black fabric were extremely expensive. After building contact with the New World, black became a fashionable colour for clothing in the court of Spain since they had increased access to the dye material. Other European courts also followed the fashion trend, namely the French and the Dutch.[134] Art historian Marieke de Winkel, who specializes in clothing in seventeenth century portraitures, suggests that black was a popular colour for clothing among the upper class.[135] Due to its time-consuming preparation and costly raw material, black clothing signifies the wealth and status of its owner. With the provided information, it is possible that Asian lacquer was depicted by seventeenth century Dutch painters due to the exclusive colour and the wealth it represented.

Lacquer-making in a Dutch Seventeenth-century Print

Although the manufacture of lacquer has not been painted by Dutch painters, such a motif emerged in one of the books about the East and West Indies in the seventeenth century. In the book *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* by Simon de Vries in Utrecht in 1682, de Vries mentioned the production of lacquerware in the Dutch Republic, which might be the earliest and only sources about lacquer-making in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.[136] Simon de Vries was an enthusiastic publisher and writer on non-European topics. Given Simon's father, Lucas de Vries was a bookseller and printer, Simon de Vries' great affinity with books and prints was not a coincidence.[137]

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[134] Ter Laak, "Why Black," 33

[135] R.E.O. Ekkart, Quentin Buvelot, and Marieke de Winkel, *Hollanders in beeld: portretten uit de Gouden Eeuw* (Den Haag, Londen, Zwolle: Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis ; National Gallery ; Waanders, 2007), 65 - 151

[136] *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* has two volumes and four parts. Romeyn de Hooghe made 65 engravings for the book. See Trude Dijkstra"'Tot eeuwige memorie de druckerye-konste'", *Quaerendo* 48, 3 (2018): 219, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/15700690-12341415

[137] Trude Dijkstra"'Tot eeuwige memorie de druckerye-konste'", *Quaerendo* 48, 3 (2018): 206-232, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/15700690-12341415

Instead of having his first-hand experience in China or any of the Dutch Republic's possessions in the East Indies, Simon de Vries had never been outside of the Dutch Republic.[138] De Vries compilated descriptions of countries and travelogues and acknowledged the original sources, unlike many of his contemporaries.[139] De Vries' approach to his writing probably also decided the target audiences for the book for him. In the preface of *Curieuse aenmerckingen*, De Vries indicated five groups of the potential audience of his book: a group that would purchase the book but soon claim it is too costly; a group which is willing to pay for the book but had no time to read from many writers; readers with the language barrier; readers who had the money, time, and sufficient knowledge in foreign languages but no desire to read many books; and a group of readers who would prefer his compilation because they lacked the knowledge base to understand or judge travelogues independently.[140] From the targeted audiences of the book, we can make the assumption that De Vries's writing is probably easy to understand for laymen. In the book, De Vries provided several paragraphs on how to make lacquer. I cannot understand or critic the message due to lacking the knowledge of old Dutch. Therefore, I will focus on analyzing the print of lacquer-making.

All the illustrations in the book were done by Romeyn de Hooghe. It is unclear how Romeyn de Hooghe was inspired to design the engraving about lacquerware. The image was divided into nine different sessions with notes explaining each part in French and Dutch (Figure 12). On the right side of the image stands a lacquer tree. Behind the tree in the background, there is a

[138] Dijkstra"'Tot eeuwige," *216*
[139] De Vries applied texts from Olfert Dapper, Athanasius Kircher, Martino Martini, Nicolas Trigault, and Matteo Ricci's travelogeus. See Dijkstra"'Tot eeuwige memorie de druckerye-konste'", *227*
[140] Dijkstra"'Tot eeuwige'", *215*

Chinese boat in the water. Moving toward the middle is a shelf standing on top of the pavilion's roof. The shelf stacks various kinds of lacquer vessels including lacquer boxes, lacquer bowls, and lacquer cups. Some large lacquer chests are scattered in the image. It is worth mentioning that a lacquer craftsman is working on the chest in the middle left part of the image. Beneath the shelf of lacquer are two men working in front of the pavilion. The man on the right seems to be drawing or writing on a screen or board that he is holding. The man beside him on the left is pestling into a vessel. According to the notes in the book, this scene is supposed to suggest sealing or stamping. Close to the bottom of the lacquer tree, a man is collecting reed leaves – the raw material for paper production. The man on his left is holding some paper with his right arm and holding some wax with his left hand. The note explains this scene as the production of paper. Next to this scene are the ink maker and ink user. The ink maker is grinding or beating a bar, and the ink user is sitting behind a lacquer chest, writing with a writing brush on a sheet of paper. On the left bottom corner of the image, a well-dressed man is holding a dove which was used for letter delivery. In the meantime, he is also talking to a guy behind him who also holds a dove, most like his servant given the clothes he is wearing. In the left top corner, the last scene in the image is about drinking tea. Three people are in a room on the second floor of the pagoda. Two of them are sitting beside a round table and drinking tea. A female facing her back to the image is holding a cup for one of the tea drinkers; she is supposedly the servant who serves the tea ritual. Besides the scenes mentioned above which are noted by the engraver, there is a man with several vessels behind the lacquer tree in the middle left of the image (Figure 13). The equipment beside him stays unidentifiable.

In summary, the print is not solely describing how lacquer is made. The technique and materiality of lacquer-making are not touched upon. Instead, it combines several Chinese products and their production process – lacquer, ink, and paper. Because the letter dove and tea-drink scenes do not fall into the category of manufacturing, the print is probably intended to portray that this is what a day in China could be to the audience. Therefore, lacquer-making in this print is seen as a type of craftsmanship that is commonly practiced in China.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have set the scene for how we might understand the reception of Asian lacquer in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic. By outlining how Asian lacquer was first introduced by the VOC and what kind of lacquer objects were preferred by their end-customers. By studying the archive material of VOC's shipment record, it is clear that smaller Asian lacquer objects, such as lacquer tea trays were preferred over larger pieces. The idea is also enforced by Dutch seventeenth century still life paintings with lacquer in them, where all the lacquer appeared are plates, bowls, cups or small boxes.

Most of the lacquerware that appeared in the Dutch seventeenth century still life paintings is black lacquer with gold decoration – a characteristic of Japanese lacquer or its imitation. The still life paintings with black Asian lacquer might also reflect the popularity of this kind of lacquer. Since Asian lacquer was not a common motif as porcelain in Dutch seventeenth century still life paintings, it would be interesting to find out whether was having Asian lacquer was a conscious choice by painters. By closely studying several Dutch still life paintings with lacquer in them, I noticed that Japanese lacquer in Dutch still life paintings fall into three major categories: depicted with nature, curiosity or luxury. Osias Beert placed Japanese lacquer with fruits and

vegetables probably because of lacquer's etymological link with nature. Moreover, when Osias Beert arranged lacquer with a Venetian glass, some fruits and vegetables, the lacquer cup might have a double connotation. Made from raw material in nature, lacquer stands as a creation of nature as well as a creation of an artificial object.

In Willem Kalf case, Asian lacquer was associated with shells, corals and nautilus cups. By having collectibles that could be crafted into luxury objects and luxurious items in the same paintings, lacquer was probably also seen as a symbol of luxury. The average price of still life paintings from 1597 to 1638 was higher than other painting genres at the time, which further reinforces patrons not only invested in still life paintings for the advanced artistic skills but also for what was depicted, which is probably chosen carefully by the still life painters.

Painters probably also chose to paint black Asian lacquer given the colour itself. In the seventeenth century Dutch Republic, black was closely associated with wealth and status since the raw material of dying black fabric was expensive to obtain. Black clothing was popular among the upper class in the Dutch Republic. Therefore, black Asian lacquer was probably chosen by painters, since colour black's connection with luxury.

Besides Dutch still life paintings that depicted lacquer, a print by Romeyn de Hooghe illustrated the process of making lacquer in Simon de Vries's book *Curieuse aenmerckingen der bysonderste Oost en West-Indische verwonderens-waerdige dingen* in 1682. Instead of showcasing the material used to make lacquer or spotlighting the technique of lacquer-making, de Hooghe combined several other craftsmanship and activities that were commonly practiced in

China, including paper-making, ink-making, and tea ritual. In this case, lacquer-making is seen as the craftsmanship that has been practiced in China.

Chapter 2 – The Westfries Lacquer Chest

Summary

This chapter focuses on the seventeenth-century Chinese Coromandel chest displayed at the Westfries Museum ("WfM") in Hoorn (Figure 1. Coromandel Lacquer Chest. Westfries Museum, Hoorn. 100 × 53 ×53 cm. Inv no.01992Figure 1). The chest has been part of the museum's collection since 1906, after being donated as part of the H.M.de Vicq-Carbasius legacy. This chest was picked as the focus of this case study since Chinese Coromandel lacquer was extensively employed on folding screens in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries but is less often connected with chests. Moreover, original Coromandel furniture without reusing Coromandel screens is also less seen in the seventeenth century. This is further underlined by previous scholarly research, as there are merely three known cases of similar lacquer chests; one is in the Rijksmuseum,[141] the other two were sold by Christie's in London and New York in 2012 and 2013.[142] By studying the donor and the potential original owner's family, I intend to understand the patrons and their social status in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

The remainder of this chapter will provide an analysis of its provenance, dating, and a description and interpretation of the chest's motif. The forthcoming analysis is based on the

[141] Coromandel lacquer chest, lacquer and pigments on cypress wood, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv.no. BK-1957-50. 103.5 × 48 ×47 cm, China, 17th century.

[142] The mentioned objects are not discussed because they are not in a Dutch collection or owned by a Dutch owner in the past. This thesis focuses on the reception of Coromandel lacquer in the Dutch Republic in the 17th and 18th century. The mentioned objects do not fit the criteria. Christie's London, Lot 235, Sale 5305, 15 May 2012, 174 × 79 × 85 cm. Christie's New York, Lot 7, Live Auction 2773, 24 April 2013, 98 × 137 × 56.5 cm, China, 18th century.

donor's genealogy with archival materials dating back to the 1600s; an assessment of the applied materials and techniques to contrast original Chinese and imitative lacquer; and an assessment of the iconography to provide insight into how this may have been perceived by the seventeenth century Chinese and the Dutch respectively. Collectively, the accumulated evidence supports the conjecture that the chest could be made in the same region as the lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum.

Provenance

The chest's history before 1906 remains unknown. By looking into the last owner and her family, it is possible to find more leads on the provenance of this chest and provide hypothesis with the support of historical evidence. The Coromandel lacquer chest was donated to the Westfries Museum in 1906 as part of the legacy of H.M.de Vicq-Carbasius (Henrica Maria Carbasius 1828 – 1906). In H.M.de Vicq-Carbasius's inventory list in 1906, the chest was described as "de Chineesch verlakte kist op het portaal" (the Chinese lacquered chest in the room portaal).[143] However, we do not have any information on how Henrica de Vicqu-Carbasius received the chest, nor the possible origin of the chest. Former researchers and curators had studied the chest before, but no evidence suggested that it was bought by or gifted to H.M.de Vicq-Carbasius. In this case, the first question is whether H.M.de Vicq-Carbasius inherited the chest from her family. To study the inventory and family notarial documents, it is necessary to research the Carbasius genealogy in Hoorn. The Carbasius in Hoorn is a local elite family. Their history could trace back to the sixteenth century. The first Carbasius family member was Dr. Jan

[143] Stukken betreffende het legaat van mevr. H.M. de Vicq-Carbasius (1830-1906) aan de gemeente Hoorn, 1906-1982. Folder 1486 Carbasius, familie, 1978 – 1986 inventaris, no.17. https://www.westfriesarchief.nl/onderzoek/zoeken?mizig=210&miadt=136&miaet=1&micode=1486&minr=1037268&miview=inv2#inv3t2

Claasz Seylmaker (Carbasius), who was born in 1560. Dr. Jan Claasz Seylmaker was a doctor and a *schepen* of Hoorn in 1584, 1586, 1588, and 1590.[144] Later, he started to call himself the Carbasius as we could find out through archival documents.

A couple of Carbasius family members are selected for the research given their profession or the connection to the VOC. Boëtius van Elslant (1627 – 1678) was a lawyer and judge in 1664 and 1669, a *schepen* of Hoorn in 1675, and a *hoofdparticipant* of the VOC in 1673.[145] Although Boëtius van Elslant was not from the Carbasius family, he married Maria Carbasius, who was a daughter from the Carbasius family.[146] Boëtius van Elslant was also one of the civic guards of Hoorn. He was depicted in *The Company of Captian Claes Willemsz. Jager* by Jan Albertsz. Rotius in 1655 (Figure 14). Hendrik Carbasius (1688 – 1748) was the bewindhebber of O.I.C (Oost-Indische Compagnie). In Hendrik Carbasius's *akte van verdeling*, a detailed list of his inventory from 1750, records at least two pieces of small lacquer in "East style" and one lacquered tea table, but not any evidence of the WfM chest.[147] Given that the crew members of VOC sometimes bring Asian goods through their personal cargo on the vessels, Carbasius family members who were on board of VOC vessels are picked for the research. According to the VOC crew members' documents in the National Archief, three people related to the Carbasius family –

[144] *Schepen* is a municipal officer. Many thanks to Henriëtte Tilgenkamp at the Westfries Museum who explained this term to me.
[145] A *hoofdparticipant* is a participant who invest at least 6000 *f* to the Chamber of Amsterdam, and 3000 *f* to other chambers. See "Organisatie Van De Voc," De VOC Site, accessed August 12, 2022. https://www.vocsite.nl/geschiedenis/organisatie/
[146] "Boëtius Van Elslandt." ECARTICO. Amsterdam Centre for the Study of the Golden Age, May 27, 2021. https://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/ecartico/persons/56043
[147] The two tea trays are referred to as "twee oude verlakte thee blaadjes nylde oostelykste voorkamer" (two old Eastern-styled lacquer tea trays in the front room) and "een verlakte thee tafel" (one lacquered tea table). See Nicolaas Bel, Hendrik Carbasius' aket van verdeling, February 7th 1750. Box 1685 Notarissen in West-Friesland tot 1843, 1552-1843. Folder **2538** Akten, 1749-1750. Page 117. https://www.westfriesarchief.nl/onderzoek/zoeken?mivast=136&mizig=210&miadt=136&micode=1685&miview=inv2#inv3t2

Jan Carbasius, Joanne Carbasius, and Hendrick Hessing – had been to Asia through the VOC All of them were, in fact, on the vessels to Batavia between 1714 to 1731. They either had worked for the Dutch-Asian trading companies or was closely related to someone who worked there. Future research should therefore build upon the hypothesis and investigate the inventory list of the people mentioned above.

The chest has not been studied thoroughly before this research. The earliest publication on the chest was a short article in *Het Huis Oud & Nieuw* in 1908. The author of this particular part of the publication remains anonymous. The author claimed the incapability to define everything on the Chinese chest, and therefore, focused on appreciating the visual aesthetics. The author wrote the chest is "a jewel of art," and mentioned the paint "has already suffered a lot over time, [and] is slightly damaged."[148] Another record on the chest is the memo of this object in the Westfries Museum. As the memo suggests, the chest was first regarded as a Japanese object by J.C. Kerkmeijer, then it was crossed out and followed with a remark from T.R. Mulder (Westfries Museum curator 1931 – 1952) mentioning a description from Mr. Gan Tjiang-Tek, the curator at the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. In a letter on Nov. 10th, 1960, Gan described the chest as it is "probably made in Coromandel or elsewhere outside China, by a Chinese, with symbols for joy and the bride. The chest or its original in China was intended as a gift for a woman on a wedding or birthday."[149]

[148] See Nicolaas Bel, Hendrik Carbasius' aket van verdeling, February 7th 1750. Box 1685 Notarissen in West-Friesland tot 1843, 1552-1843. Folder **2538** Akten, 1749-1750. Page 117. https://www.westfriesarchief.nl/onderzoek/zoeken?mivast=136&mizig=210&miadt=136&micode=1685&miview=inv2#inv3t2

[149] The Dutch original is as following: "De kist wordt door de heer Gan Tjiang-Tek (cons. te M.v.Volkenkunde) beschreven als een vermoedelijk in Koromandel of elders buiten China, door een Chinees vervaardigde kist, met symbolen voor een lang leven [en?] de bruid. De kist of het origineel ervan in China was bedoeld als geschenk voor een vrouw bij huwelijk of verjaardag. Later kan [kon?] het complex van koromandel decoraties ook aangebracht

There is no doubt that Gan's conjecture is valuable for studying the chest. However, it neglects to show evidence to support the theory. First of all, Gan suggests that this particular chest was probably made in Coromandel or elsewhere by a Chinese craftsman. However, he did not clarify why it was probably made outside of China. Furthermore, Gan's wedding interpretation was probably interfered by the red interior. Red is closely associated with weddings in classical Chinese culture.[150] In this case, the colour red does not contain any special meaning since the colour is out of relevant context. Gan's theory on the chest's longevity meaning and the function as a birthday gift to a female base on the motifs on the chest is likely correct, but to add to Gan's hypothesis, the chest is probably a birthday gift to an elder lady. I will unwrap the reasoning in the later part of this chapter.

Possible Dating and Production

Dating lacquerware without technical studies of the material is difficult for several reasons. Firstly, only a small number of lacquers are signed, and it is not enough to build a sample collection and compare to unsigned works. Secondly, the development of lacquerware lacks characteristics based on geography and time. Thirdly, there are less influential lacquer craftsmen than painters and sculptors, which makes it hard to trace lacquer's stylistic characteristics. Last but not least is the lack of historical records on lacquerware.

worden op [..] goed voor Europa. Zie brief Hr. Gan.Tjang.Tek.,Cons. Afd. China Mus v Volkenkunde te Leiden 10 nov 1960." Memo from the Westfries Museum on inventory 01992.

[150] Patricia Bjaaland Welch, *Chinese Art: A Guide to Motifs and Visual Imagery*. 1st ed. (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Pub, 2008), 549.

With all the reasons above in mind, this part attempts to approximate dating by comparing dated lacquers, especially with the Washington screen. Scholar Ding Wenfu suggests that out of all the inscribed *kuancai* screens he could track down, twenty-two of them have inscriptions or documents to affirm that they are from the Kangxi Reign.[151] The number of them and the continuous years provide an extraordinary sample database for comparative studies to estimate the date and origin. Accordingly, it is likely that the approximate date of the chest is the Kangxi Reign in the Qing Dynasty from 1660 to 1720 given the similar artistic style and theme from other dated Coromandel lacquer objects, which I will further discuss in the following paragraph.

Documents and literature on lacquerware factories would be the most reliable source for tracing the origin. Unfortunately, no such records exist nowadays. However, based on the inscriptions on some *kuancai* screens, Huizhou in Anhui province, Hangzhou in Zhejiang province, Suzhou in Jiangsu province, Yangzhou in Jiangsu province, and Fuzhou in Fujian province are probably the key origins of *kuancai* technique. As we can see on the map (**Error! Reference source not found.**Figure 15), all the producing locations are gathered in the southern part of China due to the rise of manufacture industry and the shift of cultural centres.[152]

Material and Technique

In 2017, Silvia Tagliante, intern at Rijksmuseum, drew a conditional report on the Westfries Museum chest. The report suggests that the chest's locking system is likely a replacement, as the interior shows the signs of a previous locking system (Figure 16). It suggests the question if the original craftsmen left space for the locking system and even potentially cooperated with its

[151] Ding, *Lacquered Chinese*, 285.
[152] Chang, bei 长北, Yang Ming 杨明, and Cheng Huang 黄成. *Xiushilu tushuo* 髹饰录图说 [An Interpretation of xiushilu] (Jinan: Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2007), 9.

design, which brings us a step closer to the making of Coromandel lacquer in seventeenth-century China.

Partial answers to these questions can be found upon closer inspection of the lock in relation to the motif. The locking system has three metal plates on the back and a cloud-shaped design on the front. They all cover the design partially. A lacquer craftsman may not have the knowledge of metalworks, given the high specificity required in both crafts. Moreover, given that the lock disrupts the motif it appears that the lacquer craftsman did not consider leaving a spot for a lock. On the other hand, though the lock system indeed covers the motif, it does not disturb any primary decoration. Hence, the craftsmen of the WfM chest probably adjected the composition considering the future lock on the chest.

The brass lock of the chest has a s-shaped design called *ru yi* (如意). Due to the shape of the design, *ru yi* is sometimes mistaken for clouds, from which they may have drawn inspiration, and occasionally bats. *Ru yi* is a homophone for the saying "as you like" or "as you wish;" and the saying appeared for the first time in the Six Dynasties.[153] Thereby, the lock also expresses good fortune and wishes. The shape of the lock plate also resembles the cartouche on the interior. It could mean that the lock-maker counted the pattern in while designing the locking system. A wooden chest that was manufactured and used in China in the late Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644) has a similar lock as the WfM chest (Figure 17).[154] It is unclear whether the European or Middle

[153] Welch, *Chinese Art*, 531.
[154] Huang Hua Li Guan Pi Xiang Ming Wan Qi 黄花梨官皮箱 明晚期 [Rosewood leather chest from late Ming Dynasty] . Guan Fu Bo Wu Guan 观复博物馆 [Guanfu Museum]. Accessed August 14, 2022. http://www.guanfumuseum.org.cn/view.php?cid=869&sid=4.

Eastern designs influenced the lock. However, the Guan fu box proves that such lock and design did exist and was done domestically at least since the Ming Dynasty in China.

The technique of this type of lacquer is "*kuancai,*" known as the Coromandel lacquer in Europe. The origin and the earliest *kuancai* lacquer remain unclear to art historians up until today. And considering *kuancai's* artistic value, it is worth separate research on the provenance. To summarize, *kuancai* was known by Huang Cheng and Yang Ming, the author and later editor of *Xiu Shi Lu,* the only remained lacquer-making recipe book in imperial China. written around 1567 – 1572. [155] Since *Xiu Shi Lu* has discussed *kuancai* thoroughly, it can be conjectured that the technique of *kuancai* was highly developed in the 1560s. In *Xiu Shi Lu,* Huang Cheng described *kuancai* as following:

> 款彩，有漆色者，有油色者。漆色宜干填，油色宜粉衬。用金银为绚者，倩盼之美愈成焉。又有各色纯用者，又有金 银纯杂者。[156]
>
> Kuan Cai, some are filled with lacquer-based colouring, others with oil-based colouring. It is more suitable for the lacquer-based pigment to be applied with a dry technique, while better for oil colouring to be painted on top of a layer of paste. The ones with gold or silver highlight are more than beautiful. Some *kuancai* only use colours; others apply gold and silver.

Kuancai was also mentioned by John Stalker and George Parker in *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* in 1688. Stalker and Parker referred to *kuancai* as "Bantam Work," the name for *kuancai* in Britain. Stalker and Parker's work could be one of the earliest written records of *kuancai* in Europe. Although it is still questionable whether Stalker and Parker had seen real Coromandel lacquerware before, they indeed understood the process of making *kuancai.* Stalker

[155] Huang lived in Long Qing Reign (隆庆 1567-1572) in Xin'an, now Huizhou (徽州). Yang was from Xitang in Jiaxing (嘉兴) during Tian Qi reign (天启 1621 - 1627). See Shixiang Wang and Cheng Huang, *Xiushilu jieshuo,* 6.
[156] Shixiang Wang and Cheng Huang, *Xiushilu jieshuo,* 135.

and Parker's visual sources for the lacquer design patterns could have been travel books at the time, such as Johan Nieuhof's *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces* in 1665. Stalker and Parker's design pattern two shares striking similarities with the illustrations in Nieuhof's book (Figure 18). Both patterns on the bottom of the page, which are named as "the fellow," seem like imitations of Nieuhof's work (Figure 19). In both patterns, every bird has a long neck and a shape bill, just like Nieuhof's cormorant. Nieuhof paid attention to the small details of the feather. But in Stalker and Parker's pattern, especially the bottom right one on page 2, the bird has rounder feathers closer to the neck and narrow feathers with a sharper end.

On the other hand, the technique and characteristics they described are very much the same as what Huang Cheng wrote in *Xiu Shi Lu.* They explained the carving and colouring of *kuancai* as below:

> There are two sorts of Bantam, as well as Japan-work: for as the Japan hath flat lying even with the black, and other lying high, like embossed work; so the Bantam hath flat also, and incut or carved into the wood, as a survey of some large Screens, and other things that come from these parts, will beyond all scruple convince and satisfie you: with this difference however, that the Japan-Artist works most of all in Gold, and other metals, the Bantam for the generality in Colours, with a very small sprinkling of Gold here and there, like the patches in a Ladies countenance. As for the flat work, it is done in colours mixt with gum-water, appropriated to the nature of the thing designed for imitation: for the ordering these colours with gum-water, you have already received instructions.[157]

[157] The gum-water mentioned by Stalker and Parker here is a mixture of natural gum and water, used as a toning medium. See John Stalker and George Parker. *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing*, (London and Oxford: Mr. Richard Woods Sci House,1688), 36. Accessed on Aug 14th, 2022 https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/treatisejapanin00stal

Stalker and Parker mentioned two types of carving technique for Coromandel lacquer and japanning: flat and high.[158] The flat carving carves into the panel, whereas the high carving creates a relief look. Stalker and Parker also suggested Japanese lacquer was mostly done in Gold and other metals, but Coromandel lacquer focuses on colours with occasional sprinkes of gold. When it comes to colouring the flat carved lacquer, pigments are mixed with gum water to apply to the designated part. The techniques Stalker and Parker referred to also exist in Chinese lacquer-making. They are called negative carving 阴刻 *yinke* and positive carving 阳刻 *yangke* by Yang Ming in *Xiu Shi Lu.*[159]

In *Xiu Shi Lu*, Yang said in the *kuancai* section that "negative engraving characters and pictures are like the engraved board, the patterns are not coloured after rubbing."[160] The negative carving leaves the outline of a pattern, then carves out what is within the pattern but leaving the outside of the outline untouched. Whereas, the positive carving chisels out both sides of the outline, only leaving the outline of the motifs (**Error! Reference source not found.**Figure 20). By "lying high" and "embossed work," Stalker and Parker probably meant the left outline of positive carving. The authors also pointed out the different colouring material between other lacquer coatings and Coromandel lacquer. They suggested the gold decoration in Coromandel lacquer are as small as freckles on a lady's face, in which *Xiu Shi Lu* mentioned the small gold and silver sparkles as well. Moreover, Stalker and Parker did not discuss the usage of larger gold and silver

[158] Flat and high carving are terms used by Stalker and Parker to describe relief works. Flat refers to lower relief, and high equals to deep-carved high relief.
[159] Changbei, Ming Yang and Cheng Huang 长北 杨明 黄成, *Xiu Shi Lu Tu Shuo* 髹饰录图说 [*An Interpretation of Xiu Shi Lu*] (Jinan 济南: Shandong hua bao chu ban she 山东画报出版社, 2007), 91.
[160] 阴刻文图，如打本之印板而陷众色。See Changbei, Ming Yang and Cheng Huang 长北 杨明 黄成, *Xiu Shi Lu Tu Shuo* 髹饰录图说 [*An Interpretation of Xiu Shi Lu*] (Jinan 济南: Shandong hua bao chu ban she 山东画报出版社, 2007), 9.

leaves. And often times, the gold leaves or gold-base pigment are used for colouring the entire motif, as the tree branch motif on the interior of the WfM chest (Figure 21).[161] For the binding medium for the pigment, Stalker and Parker indicated that a kind of gum-water was used in Coromandel lacquer. However, in *Xiu Shi Lu*, Huang and Yang suggested the pigments are lacquer- or oil-based. Based on the descriptions of Stalker and Parker, their approach of making Coromandel lacquer is quite similar to the methods that were executed in China during the seventeenth century, as mentioned in *Xiu Shi Lu.* The only minor difference is the binding medium of the pigment. Because the term "lacquer-based pigment" is too generic, and no additional information leads to the compound of the pigment, it is hard to judge if the lacquer-based pigment in *Xiu Shi Lu* and the pigments dissolve in gum-water have the same substances.

While explaining the instructions, Stalker and Park also gave an example with a design pattern on the positive carving technique (Figure 22):

> Be mindful likewise to leave black stroaks for the draperie of garments, if you were to work in this manner the great Bird, which is in the 11th Print at the end of this Book; You ought, I say, to carve where the white is, and leave the black untouch't, which shews not only the feathering of the wings, but the form and fashion of the Bird itself; the fame means are to be used in all other things which you undertake.[162]

Stalker and Parker explained that by carving the white areas and leaving the black parts, both the outline of the bird and the details will stand out. However, one error they made is that they regard *kuancai* as an outdated technique. They said:

> But I should counsel that person, who designs to imitate Bantam work, to endeavour to procure a sight of some Skreen, or other piece; for one single survey of what will better inform him, than ten pages can instruct or demonstrate. Had it been a thing of little

[161] Silvia Tagliante, "Coromandel Lacquer Chest Condition Report," written on Sep. 8th, 2017, 4

[162] John Stalker and George Parker. *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing*, (London and Oxford: Mr. Richard Woods Sci House,1688), 37. Accessed on Aug 14th, 2022 https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/treatisejapanin00stal

> trouble, or which might have been useful to the young and willing practitioner, we hand inserted a Plate or two of it, for it differs vastly from the Japan in manner of draught; but since tis now almost obsolete, and out of fashion, out of use and neglected, we thought it a thankless trouble and charge to affix a Pattern, which could neither advantage Us, or oblige You: I think no person is fond of it, or gives it house-room, except some who have made new Cabinets out of old Skreens.[163]

Stalker and Parker's claim on how *kuancai* is no longer favoured by the collectors is most likely untrue. A strong counter example is the collection of Princess Mary II, the wife of Stadtholder William III, who moved to the Dutch Republic from England in 1677. Princess Mary II was keen on collecting exotic goods including ceramic, lacquerware and textiles.[164]

As discussed earlier, *Xiu Shi Lu* was written between 1567 -1572. Does the time reflect the origin of *kuancai* technique? If not, when and where marks the beginning of *kuancai*? In the comments of *Xiu Shi Lu*, Yang Ming referred to *kuancai* as "*yin ban* (印板, meaning print blocks)."[165] Craig Clunas mentions that probably no other lacquering technique reflects the dependence of lacquer-making on printing.[166] Both of *kuancai* and positive-carved printing acquire transfering the design on the broad then carving everything except the outline of the patterns. Print-making has a long history in China since the Sui (581 – 618 AD) and Tang (618 – 907 AD) Dynasties. This media developed rapidly since the popularity of Buddhism, which requires a mass production of Buddhist images and texts. Printing was highly developed by Tian Qi Reign (天启)(1621 – 1627) in the Ming Dynasty, the time period that Yang Ming had lived. The production of printmaking, and especially the carving process in Anhui province, Jiangsu

[163] Ibid., 37
[164] John Ayers, *Chinese and Japanese Works of Art in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen Volume 1* (London: Royal Collection Trust, 2016), 104 – 112.
[165] Wang, *Xiu Shi Lu*, 135.
[166] Craig Clunas ed., *Chinese Export Art and Design* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1987), 80.

province, Zhejiang province, and Fujian province were in full flourish. Thereinto, Huizhou (徽州)was one of the most prominent print-making and carving centre, which is where the lacquer craftsman and author of *Xiu Shi Lu*, Huang Cheng, came from. In other words, *kuancai* technique was probably inspired by wood printing and carving as these techniques reached their peaks in the early Ming Dynasty.[167]

Another theory is that *kuancai* probably derived from other types of lacquering, namely *diaolou* (雕镂, means engrave) and *ticai* (剔彩, means carve). In *Xiu Shi Lu*, Huang Cheng put *kuancai* at the end of the *diaolou* session. This arrangement might have not only technical chronology reason but also a historical one. Ding Wenfu suggests that *diaolou* and *tianqi* lacquer reached a peak in Jia Jing reign (嘉靖 1522 -1566) in the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644).[168] Amongst the development, *diaolou* started to derive different characteristics such as thinner lacquer — one of the features of *kuancai's* lacquer body.[169] Another technique that had grown rapidly in Jia Jing reign is *ticai* (剔彩), in which the craftsmen paint the base layers of lacquer in different colours.[170] Therefore, the cross section would show diverse colours after carving.[171] The colourful characteristic mirrored the taste from that time. People are attracted by the colourful finish of *ticai* lacquer, which is also a characteristic of *kuancai. Kuancai* also took a step further from *ticai* by making negative carving the go-to carving technique. Most of the *kuancai* lacquer from the seventeenth and eighteenth century that we see today are carved negatively, which

[167] Chou, *Kuancai*, 17 – 22.
[168] Ding Wenfu 丁文父, Zhongguo Gudai Xiuqi Jiaju: Shi Zhi Shiba Shiji Zhenju De Yanjiu 中国古代髹漆家具：十至十八世纪证据的研究 [*Lacquered Chinese Furniture: Research Based on Examples from the 10 1-18th Centuries*] (Beijing: Wen Wu Press, 2012), 275.
[169] Ibid.
[170] The pigments used by Coromandel lacquer will be discussed in Chapter 3.
[171] See Chang Bei 长北, *Xiushilu*, 159.

means the background and outlines are uncarved, and the carved design are filled with colours. By carving and painting less areas, *kuancai* saves the time, labour and material cost in comparison to *ticai,* in which pigments are used for the entire surface area for every base layer. In other words, the craft techniques required for *kuancai* were highly developed in Jia Jing reign. Both Ding Wenfu and Wu Yingyue believe *kuancai* is a by-product of controlling cost and applying *diaolou* and *ticai* broadly.[172]

Description and interpretation

In this section, I will shift to the iconography of the WfM chest. By this short analysis of the motif *Spring Morning in the Han Palace,* I hope to reveal the motif's meaning in the Chinese context, and therefore, understand the meaning of this object from the creator's point of view. However, one thing to keep in mind is that iconography evolves through time and space. In Benjamin Schmidt's "The Space of Memory and Their Transmediations. On the Lives of Exotic Images and Their Material Evocations," Schmidt suggests that the meaning of icons (image) shift and change as they migrated geographically 'from source to source and from medium to medium.'[173] And due to that shift of meaning, the image that early modern Europe has for the world was also impacted. Given the amount of iconographies on the objects, it is impossible to cover the evolution of each icon in different times of Chinese history in this thesis. Therefore, all the iconographical analysis in the following chapters will be elaborated in the context of Qing Dynasty China. I will use visual or literal sources from the same time period to support each iconographical interpretation.

[172] Ding, *Lacquered Chinese,* 276
[173] Benjamin Schmidt, "The Space of Memory and Their Transmediations. On the Lives of Exotic Images and Their Material Evocations," in Memory *before Modernity,* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 226

The chest measures 100 × 53 ×53 centimeters in length, width and height. The stand in the picture is a nineteenth-century imitation of the original one since it went moldy (Figure 1). The body and lid are coated with black lacquer on the exterior, and with red lacquer on the interior. The narrative on the chest depicts "spring morning in the Han Palace (汉宫春晓)," a motif that dates back to the Ming Dynasty, originally painted by Qiu Ying (仇英) on a handroll.[174] The painting, now in the National Palace Museum in Taipei, was done in 1552. As the title reveals, it depicts a group of court females on a spring morning in the Han palace. In the 1995 research, Chou Kung-shin believes only four Coromandel screens depict the subject matter *Spring Moring in the Han Palace.*[175] However, my research has revealed that the amount is probably more extensive than that. Since Qiu Ying's *Spring Morning* was highly appreciated and popular at the time, it is possible that craftsmen tried to apply Qiu Ying's work on lacquerware in the early stage of *kuancai*'s development then archived a huge success. With the number of copies after Qiu Ying's *Spring Morning,* we can imagine the motif is a safe choice for craftsmen with almost guaranteed success. Some scholars, for example, Ding Wenfu, believes that Qiu Ying could be the inventor of *kuancai* technique.[176] Zhang Chao (张超 1625 – 1694), a writer from Anhui, wrote a novel collection named *Yu Chu Xin Zhi* (虞初新志), published in 1683. In book eight, he said Qiu Ying was "first a lacquer craftsman, then he painted figures and building for people as well."[177] On the other hand, Ellen Johnston Laing disagrees with the theory on Qiu Ying's

[174] Qiu Ying was one of the *Four Masters* of the Ming Dynasty. Please see the full-length figure on Google Art and Culture. https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/spring-morning-in-the-han-palace/pQE45TO7_p50Qg?hl=en-GB
[175] As far as I can trace, there are at least six Coromandel screens in this subject-matter, including the two sets Coromandel screens in the Rijksmuseum, two in Anhui Museum and Shanxi Museum, one in the National Gallery of Asian Art (Washington D.C.), and one set sold by Sotheby New York (Fine Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art, lot 426, Sep 15th, 2010).
[176] Ding, *Lacquered Chinese*, 277.
[177] 張山來曰：明畫史又有仇十洲者，其初為漆工，兼為人彩繪棟宇。Zhang Chao, "Yu Chu Xin Zhi, Book Eight," Wikisource, accessed February 7th, 2022, https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh/虞初新志/卷 08

lacquer-making career. Laing argues that there is no trustworthiness of Zhang Chao's source. And based on the nature of Zhang Chao's writing, this piece of information could very much be a rumor.[178] Zhu Qiqian, a twentieth-century lacquer scholar, also could not substantiate Zhang Chao's theory from any additional sources.[179] Hence, it appears to be importable that Qiu Ying was a lacquer craftsman and the inventor of *kuancai* technique.

The Westfries Museum's chest is not the only Coromandel lacquer with the *Spring Morning* motif. Besides the Rijksmuseum lacquer room that I will discuss in the next chapter, a Coromandel Screen in the National Museum of Asian Art in Washington D.C, US, presents a number of significant similarities with the Westfries Museum's chest in terms of the composition and motif (Figure 23).[180] This gives rise to the idea that lacquerwares may share or are inspired by the same sketchbook "*fen ben*" (粉本). Consequentially, in the subsequent description of the WfM chest, a comparison between the artworks will be provided.[181]

The WfM chest's lid depicts a scene with eleven females and two male guards in a pavilion, surrounded by a garden and a pond (Figure 24).[182] The viewpoint is slightly higher than the architecture so that everything is shown through the semi-bird's-eye view. On the right, two guards are in the garden with two large fans. Such fans with long handles are used for ritual proposes or to demonstrate social status. Three pairs of weapons only show their tips on the right

[178] Ellen Johnston Laing, "Problems in Reconstructing the Life of Qiu Ying," *Arts Orientalis 29* (1999), 76.
[179] Laing, "Problems," 74.
[180] The Coromandel Screen by Sheng Nian in the National Gallery of Asian Art, Washington D.C. will be referred as the Washington screen in the report.
[181] The WfM chest is the abbreviation of the Westfries Museum's Coromandel lacquer chest.
[182] The chest and narratives will be interpreted from the right to left as that is how ancient Chinese inscriptions and paintings supposed to be read.

lower corner. The corner patterns hide the soldiers and most parts of the weapons. In the middle of the scene sit two ladies and a younger girl on a blanket with two baskets around them.[183] The girl holds some flowers and grass; this gives the impression that she is partaking in the activity *dou cao* (斗草 grass battle). *Dou Cao* is a pastime that originates from herb-picking, but has since extended from this, where one would compete for who could pick the rarest and highest volume of flowers, grass or other plants during a walk or hike. This scene shares a close resemblance with Qiu Ying's work (Figure 25 and Figure 26).

On the left, a deer stands in front of the pavilion. There is a pine tree, a *tai hu* stone （太湖石） on the deer's left, and a peony bush on the right.[184] On the left of the peony are another *tai hu* stone and a small magnolia tree. Deer and pine trees were symbolic motifs in Chinese culture. Deer also accompanies Shoulao, God of Longevity in China, such as the Chinese porcelain in the Rijksmuseum shows (Figure 27 and Figure 28).[185] In this particular motif of the Westfries Museum lacquer chest, deer and pine tree carry a collective meaning. Deer (鹿 *lu*) is the homophone of official emolument (禄 *lu*), standing for Luxing, the God of Rank and

[183] In ancient China, hairstyle conveys the age of a person. Before reaching adulthood, both boys and girls have the same hairstyle which they separate hair and tie two small buns on the top of their heads. The hairstyle is called "Zong Jiao" since it looks like ox horns. *Classic of Poetry* (诗经 *Shi Jing*) mentioned this hairstyle: "How young and tender, Is the child with his two tufts of hair! (婉兮孌兮、總角丱兮。)" The girl on the chest has a hairstyle called "Shuang Ji (means double bun)" and it is a variation of Zong Jiao. See the translation at https://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/fu-tian?searchu=婉兮孌兮

[184] Due to the peculiar weathering, boulders from Lake Tai's (also known as *taihushi* 太湖石) in Jiangsu Province were particularly popular by rock garden designers. See Welch, *Chinese Art*, 160.

[185] Deer had been known as auspicious animals since the Han (206 BCE – CE 220) as the latest. It was one of the motifs of "mountain and forests" with bear, birds, and others when minority tribes were governing China. Deer also has a tight connection with Daoism, in which they believe deer associates with immortality, and could spot and consume a special fungus. See Welch, *Chinese Art*, 286.

Emolument.[186] Pine tree symbolizes longevity (寿 *shou*).[187] In conjunction, deer and pine trees constitute a classic wish for fortune and longevity.[188] Moreover, peony was the flower of prosperity which reinforces the meaning of the motifs.[189] The pavilion in the garden has flying eaves and hollowed-out walls.[190] The five statuettes on the ridge of the flying eave indicate the hierarchy of this building.[191] A girl dances for the seated court lady in the pavilion, accompanied by two female servants with long-stem fans behind her. A luxuriant throw covers the chair. The court lady's dress is also filled with patterns, adding to her luxurious appearance. Besides the dancing female, four other females also engage in the performance. Two females stand beside a palm plant and a Tai Hu stone on the left. One plays an orchestral instrument called Sheng,[192] and the other probably plays a percussion instrument. Part of the instrument is hidden behind the column, making it almost impossible to recognize. The musician on the right looks at the musician beside her. On the right side of the pavilion, another two musicians play while watching the dancer. The musician close to the dancer plays the *pipa* (琵琶), a plunked

[186] Deer's symbolism of wealth comes from its sound. The sound of "deer" can also denote to an "official's wage", which in feudal China was promised good income. See Welch, *Chinese Art,* 289.
[187] Ellen Johnston Laing, "Variations on Two Roles of the Cat in Traditional China as Represented in Chinese Popular Prints." *Artibus Asiae* 77, No. 1 (2017), accessed on June 28th, 2023, 87. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45050927.
[188] Deer and pine tree together form one of the auspicious deer pictures. The pine tree also strengthens deer's longevity meaning. See Welch, *Chinese Art,* 286.
[189] Peony is the flower of royalty, rank, wealth and honour in Chinese traditions. Welch, *Chinese Art,* 81.
[190] Flying eave is a type of eave in traditional Chinese architecture. It is part of the roof drainage system to divert water off the roof. With this part, water does not come contact the wall which extends the wall's service life. Due to the different climate and architectural style, flying eave shows slight difference in Northern and Southern China. The flying eave in the south is steeper since the higher precipitation, whereas in the North, it is flatter and shorter. See Zhenzhong Lai, "The Research on the Cornices Art of Traditional Chinese Architecture 中国传统建筑飞檐艺术研究," Master's thesis, (Hunan University, 2018), page 29 – 31.
[191] The statuettes on the ridge of the roof are imperial roof decorations (屋脊兽 Wu Ji Shou). Only palaces, official buildings and certain temples are allowed to have them. The statuettes are usually mythological animals such as dragon and phoenix. The number of animals is usually an odd number since odd number is for *yang* and even number is for *yin.*
[192] Sheng is usually made with bamboo pipes. It was recorded in *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋, an encyclopedic text finished at 241 BC (Qin Dynasty). See "Wu Yue Ji" in *Lüshi Chunqiu,* https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en&id=23255

instrument with a pear-shaped body and four strings. The further one plays a percussion instrument called *pai ban* (拍板), made with two wood or bamboo blocks. As they play, they both watch the dancer in the center. All the musicians are vivid and engaging since they either look at the musician beside them or pay attention to the dancer. The dancer wears a costume with long sleeves. Such long sleeve dress has a long history, and it still exists in Chinese opera today.[193] The decoration on the four corners is called *jiao ou* patterns (角禺纹样). They are designed to fill the space in the corners. In this case, the design contains three filled circles. Two circles contain cranes, and one circle contains a *shou* character (寿, means longevity).

The front of the chest consists of three parts: the lid, the lock and the front. Four kinds of flowers are on the lid. From left to right are the chrysanthemum, the plum blossom, the peach blossom and the lotus.[194] They each represent the fall, winter, spring and summer. The front shows another scenery with a pond and a pavilion. The scene is also observed from a similar angle that is slightly higher than the building (Figure 29). On the lower right corner, a willow tree peaks from the edge of the scene. In front of that is a small gathering of giant stones and bushes. In the pond, there are blossoming lotuses and a boat. The boat has a rectangular shade, and a table is placed in the centre. A vase that stands steadily on the table probably implies that the water is not swift. Two ladies, two boys, and one teenage girl are on the boat. Both ladies look far into the distance while the kids play. The lady on the right fishes without paying too much attention. One

[193] As early as the Warring state period (475 BC to 221 BC), long sleeves are related to dancing in literature. For example, in the Legalism text *Hanfeizi*, there is a idiom 长袖善舞 (Chang Xiu Shan Wu), it means long sleeves are beneficial to nice dancing. See https://ctext.org/hanfeizi?searchu=长袖善舞

[194] Flowers with seasonal meanings are a common theme in Chinese art. Certain flower matches with the season: the peony for spring, the lotus or iris for summer, the chrysanthemum for autumn, and the prunus (early flowering fruit trees, most commonly plum blossoms) for winter. Welch, *Chinese Art*, 37 and 660

boy picks lotus and gathers them on one end of the boat. The other boy faces away while he holds a stick in his hands. It is unclear whether he fishes or paddles the boat. The teenage girl sits beside the table with a stem of the lotus. In the middle of the scene, a bridge connects the left and the right (Figure 30), which is also the case in the Coromandel Screen in Washington (Figure 31). The boy on the bridge tries to reach the lotus stem from the boy in the pond. On the other side of the bridge, *tai hu* stones and flower bushes fill the foreground.

Two ladies and two golden pheasants are on the side of the pavilion. The lady in the front has a duster (拂尘 *fu chen*), and the lady behind her holds a fan. The two golden pheasants eat from the ground, probably fed by the two ladies (Figure 32). A similar scene is also on the Washington screen (Figure 33). The pavilion has an East Asian hip-and-gable roof (歇山顶 *xieshan ding*), red columns, cyan roof tiles, hollowed-out walls and a flying eave. Three statuettes on the roof indicate the hierarchy of this pavilion is lower than the one in the top scene.[195] One lady plays with the parrot near the hollowed wall while the other one watches. On the table are three vessels. The right one is used as a vase to display two peacock feather stems. The round vessel in the middle is probably a censer. A lady leans on the rail, stares away with a smile. Her right-hand half covers her face, holding a fan with the other hand. Beside the pavilion is a willow tree. Further back, two ladies on horseback ride up to the pavilion while chatting to each other (Figure 34). In the Washington scree, there is also a group of horse-riding ladies. Though they are on the right of the screen, it probably indicates their arrival at the scene (Figure 35).

[195] In ancient China, nine was regarded as the largest number and the number of emperors. Roofs with the nine imperial animals are buildings used by the emperors. Therefore, the hierarchy of this pavilion is lower than the one in the top scene. Welch, *Chinese Art*, 572

As a popular motif that portrays court ladies in leisure, numerous imitations emerged after Qiu Ying's first *Spring Morning in a Han Palace*. Including Qiu Ying's work, seven paintings entitled the *Spring Moring* represent the same scene from the mid-Ming to the beginning of the Qing dynasty. Taipei's National Palace Museum has six of them. Another well-preserved version is in the Cleveland Museum of Art, known as a copy after Qiu Ying.[196] Although these *Spring Palace* paintings contain the same major storyline, some details are still quite different. [197] Chou Kung-shin, the former director of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, suggests that Qiu Ying's *Spring Morning* was probably entitled by others based on the content.[198] Later, painters tend to use "Spring Moring in a Han Palace" as a general name for paintings that depict court ladies and their leisure life.[199] The depiction of court ladies (仕女图 *shi nü tu*) is a genre in Chinese paintings. The origin of this motif goes back to East Jin (348-406). The most well-known painters of this genre are Gu Kai Zhi (顾恺之) in the East Jin Dynasty and Zhou Fang (周舫) in the Tang Dynasty. Paintings with the title *Spring Moring of the Han Palace* did not appear till the Tang or South Song Dynasty.[200] The painter I mentioned above, Qiu Ying, is not the first person who painted the *Spring Moring of the Han Palace.* However, because some of the paintings under the same title did not survive, it is not known whether they depicted the same motif or whether the title was added afterwards. The earliest written record of the *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* is from the Ming Dynasty in the *Shan Tang Calligraphy and*

[196] See the full picture on https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1954.369#
[197] For example, only Qiu Ying and Leng Mei's paintings include a screen where a court painter Mao Yanshou is doing a portrait for a court lady, Wang Zhaojun (王昭君). She is known for her marriage alliance (和亲 He Qin) to the ruler of Xiongnu Empire. This story is recorded in *Book of Han* (Han Shu 汉书), the history of China finished in 111. Wang Zhaojun was one of the consorts of the Emperor Yuan of Han (汉元帝).
[198] Chou Kung-shin, *清康熙前期款彩"漢宮春曉" 漆屏風與中國漆工藝之西傳 Kuan Cai "Spring Morning in Han Palace" Lacquer Screen in the Early Period of Qing Kangxi Reign and Chinese Lacuqering Technique's Spread in the West,* (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1995), 38.
[199] Ibid., 38.
[200] Ibid., 35.

Painting Record (山堂书画记 *Shan Tang Shu Hua Ji*) by Wen Jia (文嘉) in 1568, after Qiu Ying's painting (1552).[201]

The right and left sides of the chest present the same subject matter — flower and hundred antiques (花博古 *hua bo gu*) (Figure 36 and Figure 37).[202] On the right side, the main characters of the scene are two branches of camellia, a branch of plum blossom, and some orchid leaves in a vase (Figure 36). In Chinese tradition, some flowers and plants have a collective name, such as "*three friends of winter*" (岁寒三友 *sui han san you*) and "*four gentlemen*" (四君子 *si jun zi*). Three friends of winter include the pine tree, the bamboo, and the plum blossom.[203] Because bamboo and pine stay green all year round and plum blooms in wintertime, they became the symbol of perseverance and resilience.[204] Plum is the emblem of winter since it survives and blossoms in the snow. The idea of four gentlemen has a similar meaning. "*Four gentlemen*"

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[201] Ibid., 38.

[202] *Bo* means a large number, and *Gu* translates to 'antiques.' The term Bo Gu originates from Zhang Heng's "Xi Jing Fu (西京赋)" in the Han Dynasty. In the North Song Dynasty, the emperor Song Hui Zong (宋徽宗) requested people to draft a catalogue called *Xuan He Bo Gu Tu* (宣和博古图 [Antique Catalogue from Xuanhe Reign]), named after the era. The catalogue records all the old vessels collected in his palace. Bo Gu is a general term for porcelain, copper, jade, stone and ancient vessel. Political regime stability is one of the main reasons behind the development of Bo Gu. The connoisseurship of collecting old vessels was leisure for the aristocracy and the rich.[202] Besides, as the imperial examinations became dominant during the Song dynasty and lasted until the late Qing, stationeries (Wen Fang 文房) had the chance to attract broader audiences. A lot of scholarly literature was dedicated to the stationeries, such as *Wen Fang Si Pu* 文房四谱. Stationeries are regarded as the materialization of the literati and their lifestyle. See Craig Clunas. *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 8 and 93; Zhang Heng, *Xi Jing Fu*, https://zh.m.wikisource.org/zh/西京賦

[203] This trio, which initially appeared in a poem by Zhu Qingyu from the ninth century, gained popularity thanks in part to the paintings of Song artist Zhao Mengjian at a time when the three was strongly connected with the Confucian ideal. See Welch, *Chinese Art*, 84

[204] Bamboo has been a symbolism of *junzi*, resilience and righteousness since the Tang Dynasty. In the poem "Ting Zhu" by Liu Yuxi, he wrote that "the bamboo swings along the wind as a *junzi*, who is capable to live in any circumstance (露涤铅粉节，风摇青玉枝。依依似君子，无地不相宜)." See Qi Yu Sheng 齐豫生，Liu Yu Xi Shi Ji 刘禹锡诗集 [A Poem Collection of Liu Yu Xi]，（Sha He 沙河：Xin Jiang Qing Shao Nian Chu Ban She 新疆青少年出版社， 2000）,64.

comes from the Confucian term "*junzi* (君子, means gentleman)." *Junzi* applies to people with Confucian morals and merits such as humaneness, loyalty, good manners and righteousness. Plum blossom, orchid leaves, bamboo, and chrysanthemum are the "four gentlemen" in flowers.[205] Plum blossom is regarded as a symbol of winter in Chinese traditions. In the Confucian context, plum blossom speaks for virtue. Orchid is also a sign of loyalty and unappreciated virtue.[206] Moreover, in the Spring and Autumn period, Confucius endowed special meaning to the orchid. He related orchid with noble and virtuous people in *Kongzi Jiayu* (孔子家语 *The Schools Sayings of Confucius*). He wrote:

> "与善人居，如入芝兰之室，久而不闻其香，即与之化矣。" (To spend time with a good person is like entering a house full of orchids. After a while you no longer smell their scent because you have absorbed it. Styaing with a bad person is like entering a shop full of dried fish; after a while you no longer smell the fish because you have also been immersed in it.) [207]

Beside the vase are a seal with jade hooks and ribbon on the right, and a small fruit-shape plate that holds the seal paste on the left (Figure 37). The design is not uncommon since some Chinese vessels were designed based on fruits from nature, such as gourd, peach, pomegranate, etc.[208] With close observation, I noticed gold paint flakes on the seal; it could mean that the seal was intended to be use by the elites. Behind the vase, a *jie* (节, means "knob") lies diagonally. It is a ritual stick that an ambassador would hold as a representation of the country when they visit

[205] "The 'Four Gentlemen' in Chinese Painting," Confucius Institute 曼彻斯特大学孔子学院 - The University of Manchester, March 29, 2017, https://www.confuciusinstitute.manchester.ac.uk/about/news/archive/2017/headline-543720-en.htm.
[206] "Zheng Xie: Orchids and Bamboo: China: Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)," The Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed June 27, 2023, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/49244.
[207] Hans Stumpfeldt, "Thinking Beyond the 'Sayings': Comments About Sources Concerning the Life and Teachings of Confucius (551–479)." *Oriens Extremus* 49 (2010): 16. Accessed on June 26th, 2023. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24047735.
[208] Charles Williams, *Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs: A Comprehensive Handbook on Symbolism in Chinese Art through the Ages,* 89

elsewhere. With the golden and jade seal laying on the side, it could foreshadow the identity of the chest's receiver — a state or regional ambassador. It is not uncommon to find clues of the receiver on lacquerware. For example, the inscription on the back of Washington's screen provides impressive information, including the names of the lacquer craftsman, the commissioner, and the screen's receiver (Figure 38).

The colour scheme of this scene is highly coherent. For example, the colours of the duster match the ribbon, the seal paste, the leaves and vase, and the camellia. On the lid are two sets of floral scenes. One depicts a ganoderma besides a bush of orchid leaves; the other portrays the peach blossom with two *tai hu* stones. Ganoderma is a type of mushroom, known as the plant that can make people immortal in Chinese legends. Therefore, it is a symbol of longevity and eternal life. Peach blossom also has the meaning of long life, although sometimes it means love and beauty in poetry.[209]

On the back, a large *tai hu* stone sits in the center (Figure 39). Two paradise flycatchers locate symmetrically on the side of the back. Their name in Chinese is *shou dai niao* (绶带鸟), and the first character 绶(*shou*) is a homophone of longevity (*shou*).[210] Therefore, paradise birds have been perceived as the symbol of longevity since Six Dynasties (220 – 589).[211] Below the paradise bird on the right are two butterflies. Sometimes butterflies were associated with special

[209] Welch, *Chinese Art,* 171
[210] Welch, *Chinese Art,* 634.
[211] 郭萍 Ping Guo, "Wei Jin Sui Tang Shi Qi Shou Dai Niao Tu An Yu Yi De Dong Jian 魏晋隋唐时期"绶带鸟"图案寓意的东渐 [The Motif of Paradise Bird and Its Meaning in the Dynasties of Wei, Jin, Sui and Tang] ," Zhuang Shi Za Zhi《装饰》杂志 [Decoration Magazine], published on August 13, 2012, accessed on June 22nd, 2023. http://www.izhsh.com.cn/doc/10/1945.html.

symbolism in a narrative, but that is not the case here.[212] Behind the stone are a bush of bamboo and chrysanthemum. In the group of "four gentlemen," they unfold summer and fall and present the virtue of perseverance against harsh conditions. Behind and on the left of the stone are two branches of sweet osmanthus. In Chinese cultural context in the Qing Dynasty, sweet osmanthus has been associated with fall, the mid-autumn festival, affluence and longevity. In a painting by Jiang Tingxi 蒋廷锡 in the Qing Dynasty (Figure 40), the osmanthus tree is represented as a metaphor of autumn. On the right corner, Emperor Kangxi wrote a poem named "Appreciating Moon on Mid-autumn Festival 中秋望月," which associates osmanthus tree with autumn.[213] The left side of the chest is similar to the right. It is also a scene with the flower *bo gu* (花博古) motif. The flower vase has a bigger round bottom with some geometric patterns. In the vase are orchid leaves, magnolia and peach blossom. Both magnolia and peach blossom could be associated with the beauty and purity of females.[214] On the left of the vase is a magnolia-shaped item. Behind the vase is a typical duster. A *ru yi* (如意) lies in the right corner with a red ribbon. *Ru yi* is a vessel favoured by the collectors since its name is a homonym of 'blessing.' On the lid are two vegetation bushes. One is orchid leaves with chrysanthemum, and the other contains bamboo and *tai hu* (太湖) stone.

[212] During the Warring Period (475 – 221 BC), Zhuangzi (369 – 286 BC), a Daoism philosopher, used butterfly as a metaphor for his thoughts on existence of dream and reality. He wrote, "Formerly, I, Zhuang Zhou, dreamt that I was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, feeling that it was enjoying itself. I did not know that it was Zhou. Suddenly I awoke, and was myself again, the veritable Zhou. I did not know whether it had formerly been Zhou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or it was now a butterfly dreaming that it was Zhou. But between Zhou and a butterfly there must be a difference. This is a case of what is called the Transformation of Things.'" After Zhuangzi's story of butterfly dream, butterflies started to be associated with dreams in literature, such as the poem *Jin Se* in the Tang Dynasty by Li Shangyin. See Donald Sturgeon, "Zhuangzi : Inner Chapters : The Adjustment of Controversies - Butterfly," Chinese Text Project, accessed November 29, 2022, https://ctext.org/zhuangzi/adjustment-of-controversies?searchu=butterfly&searchmode=showall#result.

[213] "清蔣廷錫桂花 Qing Dynasty Jiang Ting Xi Sweet Osmanthus," 故宫 open data 专区 Palace Museum Open Data , accessed June 27, 2023, https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/DigitImageSets.aspx?sNo=04020419.

[214] Welch, *Chinese Art*, 70

The interior of the chest, unlike the outside, is painted in red lacquer fully (Figure 41). Although the conservation report by Silvia Tagliante did not provide information on the red pigment, the Chinese lacquer recipe book *Xiu Shi Lu* mentions that cinnabar and vermilion are commonly used for red lacquer.[215] Cinnabar is one of the earth colours that exist in natural sources. Oppositely, Vermilion needs to be artificially produce by Mercury and sulfur.[216] Most of the designs on the chest interior were painted in gold. In the four corners are four floral patterns. Diagonally, they are a pair of pomegranates, orchid leaves with chrysanthemum, and orchid leaves with lotus. For example, the major symbolism of pomegranate is fertility as "seed" (*zi*) is the homophone of "son" (*zi*). However, pomegranate also has the symbolism of a long life.[217] With the chrysanthemum also wishing longevity, it is unlikely that fertility would be the correct explanation in this pomegranate motif. The main narrative is in a cartouche design. Two figures, one female and one male, stand on two clouds in the center of the scene. In front of them is a small bridge with some water plants. Behind them are big stones, willow trees and a pagoda behind a distant hill. The circle in the sky is the sun instead of the moon. In some Chinese depictions, the moon is accompanied by seven stars called the Big Dipper to show the time of the day (Figure 42).

The female figure on the interior slightly humped her back. She holds a pole-like thing in her hands, which I will explain later. The man is doing the fist-and-palm salute while making a bow slightly. The fist-and palm-salute is one of the traditional etiquettes when meeting others. The

[215] Changbei, Ming Yang and Cheng Huang, 长北 杨明 黄成 *Xiu Shi Lu Tu Shuo* 髹饰录图说 (Jinan 济南: Shandong hua bao chu ban she 山东画报出版社, 2007), 86
[216] Kroustallis, Stefanos, and Bruquetas Galan Rocio, "Paint It Red: Vermilion Manufacture in the Middle Ages." *Making and Transforming Art* (2014). Edited by Helene Dubois. 23
[217] Welch, *Chinese Art*, 141

fist and palm salute gesture is called *zuo yi* (作揖), a gesture one does to show others respect. The lower the person positions their upper body, the more respect they express.[218] In ancient China, the hierarchy between males and females is quite strict. Confucianism believes in male chauvinism that males are more worthy of respect than females. Originated from the Warring States Period, Confucianism revived in Tang Dynasty, and continued to impact North and South Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasty.[219] The origin of gender inequality is from the philosophy of "filial piety" of Confucianism. The core of "filial piety" is that women must obey men, citizens must obey their ruler and the young must obey the elderly.[220] An good example of "filial piety" from Confucius literature is a paragraph from *Kongzi Jiayu* (孔子家语 *The Schools Sayings of Confucius*) (Han Dynasty, 202 BC – 9AD, 25 – 220 AD) . Confucius met an older man Rong Qiqi while he travelled in Tai Mountain. Confucius asked the older man what happiness is (先生所以为乐者何也), the older man said:

> "吾乐甚多，而至者三。天生万物，为人为贵，吾既得为人，是一乐也；男女之别，男尊女卑，故人以男为贵，吾既得为男，是二乐也。" (I have many reasons. The sky creates everything, and human is the most superior. The first happiness is being born as a human. Males and females are different. Males are distinguished, and females are ignoble. As a male, it is the second reason of my happiness.)[221]

This paragraph reinforced the gender inequality in imperial China. All that being said, if the female has a higher hierarchy than the male in the depiction, the only way to explain would be that she is older than the man, probably a senior relative. Therefore, given the female has a higher hierarchy than the male in the interior's motif, I suspect that she is an elder relative of his,

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[218] Ge Feng and Zhengming Du, "Traditional Chinese Rites and Rituals," in *Traditional Chinese Rites and Rituals,* trans by Jieting Huang and Yingjie Jiang, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 10

[219] Columbia University Asia for Educators, "China in 1000 CE," The Song Dynasty in China | Asia for Educators, accessed November 30, 2022, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/songdynasty-module/confucian-neo.html.

[220] Yuhui Li, "Women's Movement and Change of Women's Status in China," *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 1(1), 30, accessed on June 29th, 2023. https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol1/iss1/3/

[221] Donald Sturgeon,. "Chinese Text Project Dictionary." Chinese Text Project. Accessed August 14, 2022. https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en&id=84463.

most likely his mother. This hypothesis also aligns with the longevity theme throughout the chest.

Another point worth recounting is the landscape in the background of the interior's motif. The mountain and pagoda could be the reference of the West Lake (西湖) in Hangzhou, and to be more specific, a scene named *Sunset on Leifeng Pagoda* (雷峰夕照). Since the Southern Song Dynasty up until today, there are ten sightseeing spots, known as the *ten views* (十景) of the West Lake. These places have become more than tourist spots. They have been conceptualized and circulated as cultural identities to strengthen local pride.[222] Therefore, if the pagoda-and-sun motif represents the West Lake, it might allude the production site of this chest, Hangzhou. Since Hangzhou has been one of *kuancai* lacquer's production centre since the Ming Dynasty, it also supports the hypothesis this chest was probably made in a factory in Hangzhou.

Conclusion

In chapter two, I aim to use the Wesftries Museum lacquer chest as a case study to understand how the Chinese Coromandel chest was perceived by the Dutch contemporaries in the seventeenth century. In the first part, I dived into the potential original owner of the chest – the Carbasius family in Hoorn. As a local elite family, the Carbasius family had many family members who worked for the VOC. One of them obtained two "Eastern-style lacquer tea trays" and one lacquer tea table according to the inventory deed from 1750. Although the Westfries Museum chest has not been found in the archival record yet, the fact that an elite family-owned

[222] Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Susan Shih-shan Huang, *Visual and Material Cultures in Middle Period China* (Leiden: BRILL, 2017), 152. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004349377.

lacquer item in the eighteenth century shows that Asian lacquer objects were welcomed by the rich and aristocracy in the Dutch Republic.

In the next part, I discussed the possible dating of most Coromandel lacquers and their production sites in China. This part demonstrates Chinese Coromandel's production in China and how it related to trading with Western countries. By cross-studying many dated Coromandel lacquer, I purposed that the Westfries Museum lacquer was probably made between 1660 to 1720 when there were bursting amounts of Coromandel lacquer made with similar motifs. Most of the known lacquer production centres were gathered close to the southern coast of China, probably because it was cheaper for the manufacturers to ship Coromandel lacquer aboard. This reflects how trading with Europe defines the production module within China. In other words, business and cultural interaction always involve and impact both parties.

In the following session, I compared the production method of Coromandel lacquer in the Chinese lacquer recipe book *Xiu Shi Lu* by Huang Cheng and Yang Ming (1567 – 1572), and the European lacquer recipe book *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* by John Stalker and George Parker in 1688. Such a comparison of these two recipes has not been done before. The comparison is to understand whether the Dutch consumers might have appreciated the technique and the materiality of Coromandel lacquer. In terms of making Coromandel lacquer, the Chinese and European methods were highly similar. Both recipe books mentioned the same craving techniques, the only minor difference exists in the binding medium of pigments. The result of the comparison reveals that although the production process of Coromandel lacquer has not been exchanged on a literal base between Chinese and European craftsmen in the seventeenth century,

both Chinese and European craftsmen approached lacquer-making with highly similar techniques. Moreover, the paragraph on making European imitated Coromandel lacquer in *A Treatises* signifies Coromandel lacquer's popularity amongst craftsmen and skilled workers, as well as amateur audiences.

In the last part of this chapter, I have examined the motifs on the Westfries Museum lacquer chest and their meanings in the Chinese visual tradition during the Qing Dynasty. To achieve this, I have provided visual and literal materials from the same time period as the Westfries Museum's chest to inspect the motifs. Contemporary Dutch owners and spectators, such as the original collector of the Westfries Museum chest, would have been unaware of these diverse connotations due to their lack of knowledge and may have appreciated the lacquered chest for its visual appeal and representation of a faraway world and fantasy. As a result, this overview has highlighted the difference in the interpretation of Chinese motifs between Chinese craftsmen who created these Coromandel lacquer and European consumers who bought and collect them and would have lacked the knowledge to understand the iconographical meaning. By geographically and culturally relocating from the Qing Dynasty China to the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the value, meaning and significance of Chinese Coromandel lacquer and its visual motifs transformed.

Chapter 3 – The Hague Lacquer Room and the Rijksmuseum (Leeuwarden) Lacquer Room

Summary

In this chapter, I will discuss both the lacquer room installed by Princess Mary in the Stadholder's quarters in the Hague and the one in the Rijksmuseum (Rijksmuseum lacquer room). They will be viewed as case studies to emphasize Coromandel lacquerware rooms in the seventeenth-century Dutch domestic setting. I will consult Constantjin Huygens's letter on Princess Mary's lacquer room in the Stadholder'quarters in The Hague, which is not preserved today. Although the lacquer room in the Hague was not preserved, Constantijn Huygens's letter and other archival materials of transcriptions on the back of the screen are left behind, which provides a solid foundation for the case study. From Constantijn Huygens and Princess Mary's letter, I will try to understand how Chinese Coromandel was appreciated by Dutch scholars and how was it different from other consumers. Jan van Campen and Willemijn van Noord's literature on Constantijn Huygens's letter will be studied and added with additional information. I will approach the Rijksmuseum lacquer room with visual and material analysis and provide possible dating of the lacquer screen panels. By studying the setting of the lacquer rooms, I will try to shed light on how the lacquer rooms represent interests in East Asian luxuries and East Asian countries. In the later part of this chapter, I aim to unwrap the different connotations of the lacquer room motif in the Chinese visual tradition through iconographical analysis. Furthermore, I hope to find more clues that could prove the provenance of the Rijksmuseum lacquer room.

Lacquer Rooms in Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century

Asian goods, especially the ones with decorative value such as porcelain and lacquerware, were often used in interior decorations in European royal and aristocratic décors. For example, special

shelves were commissioned by Stadholder Frederick Henry (1584 – 1647) and his wife Amalia van Solms (1602 – 1675) in the 1630s to exhibit their porcelain collection. Moreover, in 1654, the first lacquer room appeared in the Hague under Amalia van Solms' commission. The small lacquer panels were not made for the room but disassembled from small Japanese lacquer furniture.[223] Although Japanese lacquer was widely regarded for its superior quality compared to Chinese lacquer, it was unavailable in large panels. Therefore, using Japanese lacquer for this type of room was uncommon, and Chinese lacquer became the preferred substitute as they were available in larger sizes. From the 1680s onwards, Chinese Coromandel lacquer began to appear as wall covers in lacquer rooms. Most of the Coromandel lacquer was intended to make screens or as screens when shipped to Europe, which makes it easy to be reused as wall covers.

Although the Dutch believe that they spread the favour of East Asian decorations in interior design to the rest of Europe, art historians have recently suggested that it is only part of the story.[224] The daughters of Stadholder Henry Casimir II of Nassau Dietz (1657 – 1697) and his wife Henrietta Amalia von Anhalt Dessau (1666 – 1726) brought the trend of East Asian art to the German states with their marriages. Aside from the lacquer rooms in the Dutch Republic, such rooms were also built in Berlin (1685 – 1695), Munich (1693 and a second room in 1695) and Dresden (1701).[225] Including the ones in the Dutch Republic, all rooms were created with the same principle – lacquer panels above a dado.[226]

[223] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140
[224] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140
[225] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140
[226] Dado is the lower part of an interior wall when specially decorated or faced. It could also represent the decoration adorning this part of a wall. The definition comes from Merriam-Webster, "Dado." https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dado. See an example in the Rijksmuseum lacquer room, inv. BK-16709

The lacquer room in Leeuwarden (now in the Rijksmuseum) was not the only lacquer room in the Netherlands at the time. In the seventeenth century, there were at least four lacquer rooms in the Dutch Republic.[227] Two of them were installed by the Stadholder-King William III (1650 – 1702) and Princess Mary (1662 – 1694). One was in the stadholder's quarters in The Hague; the other was in their country house in Honselaarsdijk. The rest were also in the stadtholder's residences: Huis ten Bosch and the stadholder's court in Leeuwarden.[228] Princess Amalia van Solms owned the lacquer room in Huis ten Bosch, where she had Japanese chests cut up to reuse the panels. The rest was constructed in the 1680s with Chinese lacquer screens.[229]

In the later lacquer rooms, the European imitation of Asian lacquer – "japanning" – was more frequently used. As discussed in Chapter 1, japanning is the imitation of Asian lacquer that emerged in Europe in the seventeenth century. japanning was not only favoured by people who were in search of a cheaper alternative to the Asian lacquer but also by the royal and aristocracy, who had particular demands with respect to the size of lacquer panels. The later lacquer (japanning) rooms in Europe tend to use smaller japanning (sometimes Coromandel lacquer) panels. The trend might reflect that the European-style panelling seems to replace the larger panels from Asia at one point. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Coromandel lacquers were seen more frequently in German and Dutch courts but faded out of fashion around 1700.[230]

[227] Van Noord, "The 'Unhappie Ruines," 160
[228] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines," 160
[229] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"160
[230] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140

After William III (1650 – 1702) and Princess Mary (1662 – 1694) ascended to the throne in England in 1689, Princess Mary brought her passion for East Asian goods such as porcelain and lacquerware to England, where she discovered that there was already a market for such items.[231] Even before the arrival of William and Mary, lacquer rooms had emerged in England. In 1682, John Evelyn visited Mr. Bohn, who had a room with lacquer panelling.[232] As I mentioned, two of the four lacquer rooms in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century belonged to Stadholder King William III and Princess Mary. One was in the Stadholder's quarters in The Hague; the other was in their country house in Honselaarsdijk. In several letters between Princess Mary and Constantijn Huygens, Princess Mary showed her intention to decorate a room with Chinese lacquer screens, which Huygens strongly opposed.[233]

Constantijn Huygens was the secretary of the Stadholder at the time.[234] In a letter from September 21st, 1685, Huygens asserted to have translated a letter from the Chinese emperor, but it turns out that Huygens made up the letter from China to raise Princess Mary's awareness of the lacquer screens.[235] Furthermore, Huygens claimed the letter was brought to the Netherlands by VOC to make the letter more convincing.[236] In the letter, the "Chinese emperor" was furious that Princess Mary II "divided, cut, and split asunder and reduced to a heap of monstruous shivers and splinter." The writer of the letter described the Europeans as "ignorant, barbarous and malicious people" who do not understand Chinese "high transcendent wisdom." He also expressed that the right-size panels could be made easily in China if they knew the exact

[231] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140
[232] J.W. Adams, *Decorative Folding Screens in the West from 1600 to the Present Day*, London, 1982, pp. 24 – 25.
[233] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"160
[234] Campen, "Splinters," 139
[235] Wybe Kuitert, "Context & Praxis: Japan and Designing Gardens in the West," Die Gartenkunst 28, no.2 (2016): 285
[236] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"162

dimensions of the cabinet.[237] Willemijn van Noord suggests that Huygens fabricated the letter himself.[238] Van Noord points out that although Constantijn Huygens was able to speak many languages, Chinese was not one of them.[239] Therefore, in order to understand the Chinese inscription on the screen, Huygens needed to find someone who could read Chinese or translate it to another language by an intermediary. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, no one could understand Chinese characters except the occasional Chinese visitors to the Dutch Republic.[240] Jesuit missionaries were usually the candidates as intermediaries. In some cases, the Chinese texts were sent to Batavia, where a lot of Dutch people lived and worked with the Chinese people there.[241] If Huygens's letter was brought to the Netherlands by the most recent ship from East Asia, it would have been the vessels that arrived in the Dutch Republic around August 30, 1685.[242] It means Huygens only had about twenty-two days to find an intermediary who could understand Chinese and receive the result back, which seems almost impossible knowing how many people Huygens needs to write to and contact before reaching a translator who would understand Chinese. Therefore, the letter was, most likely, a fabrication of Huygens. Van Noord suggests Huygens made a confession at the end of the letter to indicate there was no Chinese original, but all written by himself. Moreover, Van Noord disagrees and argues that Huygens did make a "very humble and gentle confession," but it was only because Huygens

[237] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines," 163
[238] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"164
[239] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"163
[240] On November 3rd, 1637, André Colvius, who was the minister at the Wallon Church in Dordrecht at the time, wrote a letter to Anna Maria van Schurman. In the letter, he probably attached pages of authentic Persian, Japanese and Chinese characters. About the Chinese characters, he said that "Pour le chinois, il est / assez commun, et j'en ai assez. J'entends qu'il y a un chinois a Amsterdam, qui sait lire leur escriture. (For Chinese, it is / fairly common, and I've had enough of it. I hear there is a Chinese in Amsterdam who can read their handwriting.)" See "Chinese leaves," SERICA: some notes on old Chinese books by David Helliwell, accessed December 27, 2018, https://serica.blog/2018/11/05/chinese-leaves/.
[241] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines," 164.
[242] Three ships travelled from Batavia to the Dutch Republic in August 1685, and there no ships arrived in September. All three ships arrived around August 30, 1685. See Het Huygens Instituut, accessed March 16, 2022, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/das/detailVoyage/96711

hoped to examine the screen and process a translation of the inscriptions, given that he was eighty-nine at the time and would stop serving the stadholder soon.[243]

It is unclear how Princess Mary replied to Huygens, but Huygens did get the inscriptions on the panels translated. All hundred and eight large characters and thirty-six small characters on the screen were copied on a piece of paper. According to Van Campen, Huygens passed the inscriptions to an intermediary, Le Roij, who then sent the request to Melchisedec Thevenot (1620?- 1692), the librarian of Louis XIV. Then Thevenot referred it to Philippe Couplet (1622 – 1693), who spent many years in China as a learnt Jesuit, then returned to Paris and helped translate Chinese classic books for *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*. In the letter from Couplet to Huygens, he explained the hundred and eight large letters are all variations of the Chinese character longevity (Shou), and the thirty-six small letters were greeting from the Governor-General of the Fujian province to a friend.[244]

Both Jan van Campen and Willemijn van Noord have written and analyzed the inscriptions. According to the translation from Couplet, Van Campen suggests the inscription was a greeting from the Governor-General of the Fujian province to a friend.[245] Van Noord developed the research further and provided a more detailed translation of the inscription (Figure 43):

> 總督福建等處地方軍務兼理糧餉，兵部右侍郎，兼都察院右副督御史制，眷弟劉斗頓首拜。
> "Kowtowing in salutation, [this screen was] commissioned in spring by your humble Liu Dou, governor-general of Territorial Military Affairs and Provisions and Funds for Fujian

[243] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"165
[244] Van Campen, "Splinters," 140.
[245] J. van Campen, *De Haagse jurist Jean Theodore Royer (1737 – 1807) en zijn verzameling Chinese voorwerpen*, The Hague, 2000, pp. 215 – 217. Royal Archives in Noord-Holland, Haarlem, Rijksmuseum archives, inv. no. 951.

> [Province] and so on, right vice-minister of the Ministry of War and right vice censor-in-chief of the Imperial Censorate.[246]

Although most parts are translated correctly, the translator made a minor mistake by interpreting the character 眷 (*juan*) as ”spring” 春 (*chun*). However, the correct Chinese translation of 眷 *juan* is relatives and family members, and sometimes the term is directed to relatives through marriage specifically. The term obtains an alternative meaning in the Qing Dynasty.[247] It was applied by many literati on paintings' or gravestones' inscriptions to show the closeness to the receivers.[248] Therefore, the inscription actually only tells Liu Dou commissioned this screen without stating the season of this action.[249] Although the text did not lead us to the gift receiver, the other hundred and eight characters provide the occasion of this commission. All the one hundred and eight characters have the same meaning – longevity 寿 (*shou*). They are written in a hundred and eight different ways in small seal script (小篆 *xiao zhuan*), a style of calligraphy derived and unified by the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221– 206 BCE), and frequently employed for official inscription.[250] And during the imperial period in China, the phrase “wish for longevity” was probably only used for elder people. As Van Noord already found, Liu Dou 劉斗(? – 1718), courtesy name (*zi* 字) 耀薇, was a county general of Gansu Province from 1661

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[246] The translation I use here is done by Lennert Gesterkamp, as Noord mentioned in her article. See Noord, 178.

[247] The term is described as a way to call a relative by marriage who is from the same generation. “眷”，本有姻親，親眷之意。初結婚之家，尊長對卑幼自稱“眷生”；卑幼對尊長自稱 “眷晚生”；平輩稱為“眷弟 (Juan, originally means relatives by marriage. For a newly married family, the elders refer themselves as ‘Juan Sheng’ to the younger ones; the youngers refer themselves as ‘Juan Wan Sheng’; relatives from the same generation are called ‘Juan Di.’ Baidu. “眷弟.” transciption 百度百科. translation Baidu, March 3, 2021. https://baike.baidu.hk/item/%E7%9C%B7%E5%BC%9F/10399797.

[248] An example of this term on gravestone is Yuan Keli 袁可立 from the Qing Dynasty. Ibid.

[249] In many cases, inscriptions of Chinese paintings, calligraphy, and screens contain the year, date, season, and even weather of when it was inscribed. However, the seasons are usually represented by two characters, such as 仲夏 (mid-summer) or 秋月 (autumn month).

[250] “Seal Script (篆書).” Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, March 25, 2020. https://asia.si.edu/learn/chinas-calligraphic-arts/seal-script/.

to 1670. From 1661 to 1672, he was the right vice censor-in-chief of the imperial censorate. He became the Governor-general of Territorial Military Affairs and Provisions and Funds for Fujian and the Right vice-minister of the Ministry of War from 1670 – 1672.[251] These positions make Liu Dou part of the Chinese upper-class, and it would be likely for someone of his position to commission such a luxurious birthday gift and address himself so modestly to win the favour of other well-connected governmental officials or as a gift to the family.[252] From Liu Dou's governmental titles and the year he received the positions, we could trace the earliest time of the Chinese lacquer screens' production. Since Liu Dou was appointed the title of Fujian's Governor-general in 1670, this title should not be linked with Liu Dou's name before that.[253] The first four characters of the inscription reveal Liu Dou as the Governor-general of Fujian, which means by the time Liu Dou commissioned these screens, he already acquired the position. Therefore, the screens were probably made between 1670 to 1685, the year Huygens write to Princess Mary about the screens.

Princess Mary's Chinese lacquer screens must have attracted Huygens's attention, given that Huygens has written about it until the last months of his life.[254] Nonetheless, Huygens's persuasion had little impact on Princess Mary's collecting behavior. Besides Huygens, Princess Mary's interest in East Asian objects also received criticism from writer Daniel Defoe (1660 –

[251] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"178.
[252] The Coromandel lacquer screen by Sheng Nian in the National Museum of Asian Art in Washington D.C, US was commissioned by a governmental general for someone with a higher position. See https://asia.si.edu/object/F1906.42a-l/
[253] "Liu Dou 劉斗." 人名權威-人物傳記資料庫. Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica. Accessed August 12, 2022. https://newarchive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/sncaccgi/sncacFtp?ACTION=TQ%2CsncacFtpqf%2C%28%E5%8A%89%E6%96%97%29%40TM%2C1st%2Csearch_simple.
[254] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"188

1730), who thought Princess Mary laid the foundation for "fatal excesses."[255] Needless to say, Constantijn Huygens was one of the few people who were opposed to the repurposing of Chinese lacquer screens in the seventeenth century. In *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing,* Stalker and Parker also criticized people who cut up "Bantam" (Coromandel lacquer) screens to make new cabinets:

> So that in these things so torn and hacked to join a new fancy, you may observe the finest hodgepodge and medley of men and trees turned topsy-turvy and instead of marching by land you will see them taking journeys through the air ….] in a word they have so mixed and blended the elements together […], nay deprived everything of its due site and position, that if it were like anything besides ruin and deformity, it must represent to you the earth, when Noah's flood was overwhelming it. Such irregular pieces as these can never certainly be acceptable, unless persons have an equal esteem for ugly, ill-contrived works, because rarities in their kind, as for the greatest performances of beauty and proportion.[256]

To Stalker and Parker, using different lacquer panels to collage a new object is a hodgepodge that destroys the integrality and beauty of the original. More than the aesthetics on the surface level, Huygens also cared about the original notion of the screen. To Huygens, such an authentic object from China is a chance to learn about the culture. The screen should be used in the way it was intended to be to show respect for the culture. Huygens's letters to Princess Mary demonstrate his point of view of Chinese material culture. His persistence in writing to Princess Mary about the screen manifests how serious he was and the respect he had for the Chinese lacquer screens. His attitude went beyond the beautiful decorative value of the lacquer screen. To Huygens, the screens were just like other artworks around Europe; they have meanings, stories, and the emotion of the patrons, which are worth learning and respecting. Huygens's profound reaction to the Chinese lacquer screens was rather innovative for his contemporaries. By

[255] Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain,* (London: JM Dent and Co, 1927), 166
[256] Stalker and Parker, *A Treatise,* 37 – 38. Also quoted in Kesel and Dhont, *Coromandel,* 28.

recognizing the artistic and cultural value of the Chinese lacquer screens, Huygens also broke the filter of otherness and fantasy on East Asian luxuries, which was uncommon for his time. On the contrary, Princess Mary's view and reaction regarding the lacquer screen display a more common perspective in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Her fancy for the lacquer screens was not based on her respect for Chinese material culture or the imagination of East Asian but on the purpose of decoration and collecting East Asian luxuries. Therefore, she felt no regret in deconstructing the lacquer screens and tailoring them to her own needs. The trend of using Asian material or Asian imitations was spotted again soon after Princess Mary in the Dutch Republic, which I will discuss in the next part of this chapter. No archival sources appointed the final destiny of the screen Liu Dou commissioned. It probably gained a new life as a cabinet Princess Mary owned at Honselaarsdijk.[257]

The Rijksmuseum Lacquer Room

The Rijksmuseum lacquer room was originally filled with porcelains and other Asian goods in the Stadholder's court in Leeuwarden in 1695 by Stadholder Henry Casimir II of Nassau Dietz (1657 – 1697) and his wife Henrietta Amalia von Anhalt Dessau (1666 – 1726).[258] Now, it locates in the Philips Wing as a lacquer room with two European tables and a shelf filled with porcelain (Figure 2). As one faces the shorter wall of the lacquer room, the left wall is listed as BK-16709 (-161-181), and the right wall is BK-16709 (-197-219).[259] The article written by De

[257] Van Noord., "The 'Unhappie Ruines,"187.
[258] Jan Dorscheid, Paul van Duin, Henk van Keulen, "The Late 17th Century Lacquer Room from the Palace of the Stadtholder in Leeuwarden, Preserved in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam," in *Investigation and Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700 - 1900): Lacquerware and Porcelain ; Conference 2013 Postprints, [International Workshop on Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900)]*, Konservierungswissenschaft, Restaurierung, Technologie 11 (The Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900), Wien: Böhlau, 2015), Gabriela Krist and Elfriede Iby, eds., 240.
[259] I will use the last three digits of the inventory number to refer to certain panels.

Haan recreates the installation history of these screens.[260] The components were on display in the newly opened Rijksmuseum in 1885. The lacquer panels were not shown as a complete piece the entire time. In a small exhibition in 1934, the two walls of lacquer panelling were on display as two separate items. The reunion of the Leeuwarden components did not come until the end of the war. T.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, later the head of the Department of Sculpture and Decorative Arts, suggested reuniting the Leeuwarden wall panellings and reconstructing them as their original composition in the Stadholder's palace in Leeuwarden. In the new setting, three walls – two long and one short, contain lacquer panels instead of two walls. The walls were aligned with the ceiling in terms of dimension. The second short wall was not covered with lacquer panellings. Instead, it functions as the hole in a peep show that the audiences can view the interior in a different manner. With some restoration of the cornice and carved decoration of the dado, the Leeuwarden components were finally in one piece as the lacquer room, even though the Rijksmuseum lacquer room does not reflect how the panels were installed in the Stadholder's palace.[261] De Haan has written an article explaining how the lacquer panels were placed in the Leeuwarden palace, but the exact arrangement of each panel still stays unknown.

Although it is impossible to recreate how the panels might look in Leeuwarden, De Haan's writing still provides insights into how the owner Henrietta Amalia of Anhalt – Dessau perceived the panels, and moreover, how the Dutch aristocracy appreciate Coromandel lacquer. In the specifications of shipping procedures, the document mentioned the original rooms of the wall panellings are in the 'servant's quarters above the kitchen.'[262] The two rooms were then

[260] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 153.
[261] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 154.
[262] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," note 87.

demolished and knocked into one to create a servant's room.[263] According to the inventories and descriptions from the eighteenth century, this area was once part of the stadholder's wife's apartments, known as the princess's quarters. They were called closets, not the closets in modern days, but private inner chambers that could be accessed from the state bedroom. Closets are rather special in aristocratic and royal interiors in which only the close ones and very high-ranking guests are welcomed. The closets were usually part of the enfilade, which was a grouping of rooms with doorways facing each other and a view of the park. In the case of the Leeuwarden palace, the closets were on the ground and the first floors overlooked a small but sunny garden in the palace. The bedroom which was attached to the closets had been demolished in 1805 already.[264]

The stadholder palace we see today in Leeuwarden was rebuilt in 1880 and 1881.[265] Jonkheer Victor De Stuers, a senior official at the Ministry of the Interior, and P.J.H. Cuypers, the architect of the Rijksmuseum, went to the Leeuwarden palace to check whether any parts of the interior could be installed in the new Rijksmuseum that was under construction at that moment. In the letter from De Stuers and Cuypers to the Provincial States of Friesland, they claimed that what was left in the palace could not indicate the glory of the Frisian Stadholder's Court.[266] Furthermore, they advised the minister to take the 'most remarkable Chinese panelling' to the Rijksmuseum as an example of eighteenth-century interior decoration in the country.[267] A carved

[263] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 153.
[264] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 155.
[265] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 152.
[266] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 153.
[267] '(…) een zeer merkwaardige Chineesche betimmering, welke bij deze verbouwing komt te vervallen, alsmede een plafonddecoratie en eenige dessus de porte behouden worden en na voorzichtig uitgebroken te zijn, worden overgebracht naar het Nederlandsch Museum als proeve van de decoratie van vertrekken in de 18e eeuw'. Tresoar, Leeuwarden, Provincial Executive Archives, inv. 9361. De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 153, note 14.

and gilded limewood dado, a painted ceiling, pieces of a wooden cornice embellished with palmettes and orange/apples, and a wall covering consisting of various Coromandel lacquer panels were all included in the shipment.[268]

The earliest record of Henrietta Amalia's closet was in 1686, in which the room was mentioned as 'the closet of Her Royal Highness.'[269] And in 1688, the inventory list of Henrietta Amalia suggests two closets instead of one. While discussing the wall covering, it says there were two wall coverings of East Indian and French damask for the 'small room,' which might signify a bigger room's existence.[270] In recent research, Dorscheid found the inventory records, which showed that Henrietta Amalia received three Chinese folding screens from her husband in 1694.[271] The lacquerware panels were installed in the Leeuwarden residence for the Stadholder at the end of the seventeenth century.[272] De Haan's article specifies the change of the closets, which I will not repeat here. It was not until 1731 that there was an unequivocal reference to two closets, described as the 'front room' and the 'second room.' In the description, there were two doors with porcelain arrangements right above the front room. The room was filled with porcelains, gilt mirrors, a gilt table and two gilt guéridons.[273] Meanwhile, it was decorated with miniatures, paintings, and red silk damask. Besides, it listed a set of amber furniture and three lacquer tables. In the corners of the room, there were cabinets made to display porcelains. The

[268] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 153.
[269] Tresoar, States of Friesland Archives, section 11 Friesland Provincial Executive, inv, 2682, Payment Orders of the Receiver of Excise, fo. 195. As cited in De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 157.
[270] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 157.
[271] Dorscheid, Duin, Keulen, "The Late 17th Century," 244.
[272] Van Campen, "'Reduced to a Heap of Monstruous Shivers and Splinters': Some Notes on Coromandel Lacquer in Europe in the 17th and 18th Centuries," *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (2009): 137.
[273] Guéridon is a type of small side table used to hold candles. In my cases, it comes with columns supporting on the bottom and mounted by a tray on top. See "gueridon," *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Continually updated at http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/. Accessed on June 28th, 2023.

wall covering already looks quite dated, which shows it had been in the room for some time before 1731. According to the inventory, the second closet is 'panelled with East Indian lacquered woodwork instead of wall hangings,' which could be the Leeuwarden lacquer panels now in the Rijksmuseum.[274]

In the inventory in 1764, the two closets did not change much. Besides the red silk damask, miniatures and paintings that were already in the room in 1731, more porcelains were added to the second closet in 1764. The closets were mentioned by two anonymous female tourists in 1774 and 1789. The 1774 note is relatively brief, but 'the gold lacquer closet' was referred to as one of the four rooms worth mentioning in the stadholders' palace.[275] The 1789 report includes more details in which both closets were mentioned: 'a little closet, and another alike with Chinese wall covering, and with tables, mirrors and a chess set, all in amber.'[276] In a 1786 publication *Tegenwoordige Staat van Friesland,* the author suggested the closets as 'being inlaid with Chinese decorations'.[277] The revolution in 1795 marks the end of the stadholders' power in the Dutch Republic. It was for the first time that the size of the closets was described in the inventory in 1795. The one further north was referred to as the 'little' room and the other one as the 'room'.[278]

[274] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 158 and 159.
[275] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 160.
[276] Private collection, Groningen, 'Aantekening onzer reijze, over de Zuiderzee, door Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel etc. gedaan in den Jaare 1789': 'een cabinetje, nog een dito met chinees behang, en met tafels, spiegels, en een schaakspell, alles van barnsteen.' As cited in De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," note 58, 160.
[277] 'At the side of this room one goes into two extraordinary closets, each overlooking the garden through a sliding window, the rearmost being inlaid with Chinese decorations, and ornamented above with a ceiling with gilded cornices'. *Hedendaagsche Historie of Tegenwoordige staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden,* volume 14: *Friesland,* Amsterdam, 1785 – 1786, pp. 97 – 107. As cited in De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," note 59, 160.
[278] De Haan, "The Leeuwarden," 161.

Lacquer Screens and Gender Role

Unlike the Dutch elites who installed the lacquer screens in a female-oriented setting, screens in China were placed in both public and private settings. For example, the screen in Qianqing Gong in the Forbidden Palace situates in a public room (Figure 44). In Mou Yi 's Dao Yi Tu （牟益《捣衣图》*Making Clothes*），a screen with a mountain and water painting is placed in a female-oriented domestic setting (Figure 45). According to Wu Hung, many mountain and water screens in imperial Chinese paintings either carry undescriptive romantic connotations, or a sense of irony. For example, in a fan painting done by Wang Shen (王诜）from the eleventeenth century, a female stands in front of her dresser and gazes into herself in a copper mirror (Figure 46) . Besides her stands another lady, who is picking accessories with the assistant from her servant. These figures foreshadow the loneliness of the concubines and their remembrance to their husband. [279] Wu also suggests that many Chinese paintings creates a female space – a space that is sensed, imaged and represented as a female. Such a space cannot be constituted without the unification of mountain and water, flower and grass, architecture and the atmosphere, as well as the female figures in these paintings. Wu believes that male gazing has been applied to the feminine pictorial setting and everything within it. It is also proven by the Coromandel lacquer screen examples with female-oriented depictions. A good example is the lacquer screen by Sheng Nian in the National Museum of Asian Art in Washington D.C. On the back of the screen, the inscription shows that it was commissioned by Huang Jingji (黄敬璣) as a gift to Kong

[279] Hung Wu 巫鸿 and Dan Wen 文丹, *Chong pin: Zhong guo hui hua zhong de mei cai yu zai xian* 重屏：中国绘画中的媒材与再现 [The Double screen: medium and representation in Chinese painting] (Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 2009),139.

Yiwen (孔翊翁) to celebrate Kong's birthday.[280] Besides the material value that such lacquer screens were pricy and could take a long time to prepare, it also subtly draws attention to male consumption. According to a recent lecture by Jan Stuart, the arrangement of having a lacquer screen with a female-oriented theme in a male-only room shows the traditional morals in imperial China.[281] The story of *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* recounts the emperor and his concubine's court life. It represents the traditional Chinese moral of carrying on the ancestral line; in the case of the emperor, to have someone inherit the throne. The story also portrays an elite man's ideal life – having many wives and children. It echoes the "more kids, more blessing" belief, which also falls into filial piety.[282]

One of the most important characteristics of concubine's palace image is isolation, which is similar to where the closet decorated with lacquer panels would locate in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Such rooms usually situate in a private part of the palace where only family and close friends have access in Europe. In the seventeenth century, privacy became a larger concern in Dutch domestic settings, especially in wealthier families. The distinction between the areas that are accessible to visitors and the family-only private space became indispensable.[283] Newly built or renovated housing obtain rooms with clearly defined functions. The notion of having family life in the more private rooms was probably inspired by manners books that started to appear after the mid-sixteenth century. These books outlined proper modes of behavior for

[280] Although the content of the inscription did not mention that the screen was a birthday, ritings in such tone and style that exaggerates one's achievement were common as birthday wishes. See Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 44.
[281] Jan Stuart, "*Palace Life Unfolding: A Chinese Lacquer Screen from 1672,"* Burke Center for Japanese Art, (online and in-person lecture, Columbia University, New York, April 28th, 2022, 6- 7:30 pm)
[282] Ibid.
[283] John Loughman, "Between Reality and Artful Function: the representation of the domestic interior in seventeenth-century Dutch art," in *Imagined Interiors:Representing the Domestic Interior Since the Reniassance*, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 89.

dining etiquette and personal deportment and relegated activities like personal hygiene and the exercise of unedifying bodily functions to the private sphere. Meanwhile, dividing the interior space with gender roles also gained more awareness.[284] For example, Willem Goeree from Middelburg wrote an architectural treaty *D'algemeene bouwkunde* in 1681, mentioning the ideal domestic setting where the male rules the front social activities and the female dominates the backstage.[285] A room as intimate as the closet was probably designated to serve the female members in the palace.

Besides how the closet's location probably implies the gender role of this room, the original decoration of the closet is also worth discussing. Originally, the closet was filled with porcelains and other Asian goods by Stadholder Henry Casimir II of Nassau Dietz and his wife Henrietta Amalia von Anhalt Dessau.[286] Given that this type of closet was dedicated as a private space for seventeenth-century upper class ladies, it is likely that Henrietta executed the shopping and decorating of this room. In a recent publication "Unease with the Exotic: Ambiguous Responses to Chinese Material Culture in the Dutch Republic" by Thijs Weststeijn, Weststeijn discusses that Chinese porcelain was associated with a gendered approach due to early orientalism and the fact that many enthusiastic female collectors spent their husbands' money on these beautiful but fragile objects.[287] In *Het groot ceremonie-boek der beschaafde zeeden (The Great Book of*

[284] John Loughman, "Between Reality and Artful Function," 89.
[285] John Loughman, "Between Reality and Artful Function," 90.
[286] Jan Dorscheid, Paul van Duin, Henk van Keulen, "The Late 17th Century Lacquer Room from the Palace of the Stadtholder in Leeuwarden, Preserved in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam," in *Investigation and Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700 - 1900): Lacquerware and Porcelain ; Conference 2013 Postprints, [International Workshop on Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900)]*, Konservierungswissenschaft, Restaurierung, Technologie 11 (The Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900), Wien: Böhlau, 2015), Gabriela Krist and Elfriede Iby, eds., 240.
[287] Thijs Weststeijn, "Unease with the Exotic: Ambiguous Responses to Chinese Material Culture in the Dutch Republic," in *Making Worlds: Global Invention in the Early Modern Period*, edited Angela Vanhaelen et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), 450 – 452.

Ceremonies of Civilized Behavior, Amsterdam 1735), the author suggested that porcelain was bought by women "who ruin their men by establishing cabinets with ancient porcelain.[288] Since the closet decorated by the Coromandel lacquer panels also displays Chinese porcelain, it is possible that the Coromandel lacquer panels were perceived as part of a feminine collection in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. Since the lack of context and knowledge, the aristocratic ladies probably could not interpret the lacquer screens and the narratives as to how they should be. They were probably attracted to the Asian design and the otherness, and without even realizing, they placed the lacquer screens in an isolated and feminine surrounding, just as what the motif depicts.

Visual Analysis

Because the original arrangement of the lacquer panels in the closet remains unknown, the lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum does not reflect how the installation was arranged in the original room in Leeuwarden. Nevertheless, it still represents the beauty and the fame of this kind of lacquer room. Moreover, it implies how ladies from the aristocracy appreciate these East Asian luxuries in their intimate domestic setting. The lacquer screen panels that are currently in the Rijksmuseum now are from three sets of screens. This is confirmed by both visual analysis and technical studies that Christina Hagelskamp carried out.[289] The images on adjoining panels are mostly coherent but sometimes reveal inconsistencies. The panels that are covering the lacquer room's walls were originally from three sets of screens but sliced in the middle, which implies that at one point, the owner sliced the screens so that both sides were presentable in

[288] Jan Claus Willem van Laar, *Het groot ceremonie-boek der beschaafde zeeden* (Amsterdam: Mourik, 1735), 415.
[289] Christina Hagelskamp, "De restauratieateliers: De Leeuwarder lakkamer in het Rijksmuseum," *Aziatische Kunst,* jaargang 45, Nr. 2, Juli 2015.

Leeuwarden. The side walls of the room depict *Spring Morning in the Han Palace,* while the wall across the entrance presents views of the West Lake in Hangzhou.

The *Spring Mornings* on both walls are depicted from the bird-eye view with a forty-five degrees angle. Court ladies are scattered around the scene, engaging in various activities, including feeding peacocks, grass battling, boating on the water and riding horses. The depictions on both walls are quite different from the WfM lacquer chest. However, visual analysis suggests they all depict the same subject matter and motifs.

Chou Kung-shin, the former director of the National Palace Museum in Taipei, believes that the two side walls of the lacquer room both show *Spring Morning* and are based on the same sketch since they are almost identical except for small fragments, such as the shape and arrangement of the trees and stones.[290] Christina Hagelskamp also suggests that due to the use of the sketchbook, the overall narrative and outline of architecture are similar; meanwhile, the secondary elements such as the rocks, flowers and trees show less similarity as they might be drawn without a template.[291] The only obvious compositional difference is that the left wall's *Spring Morning* depicts a corner of a fence.[292] Otherwise, most of the differences are shown in smaller elements.

[290]"這兩件屏風上的《漢宮春曉》圖，可以肯定是來自同一個粉本，兩幅圖幾乎完全相同。不同的地方僅在配景小處，如庭園內的樹，石頭的安排及它們的形狀略為變化。" Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 55.
[291] Christina Hagelskamp, "De restauratieateliers: De Leeuwarder lakkamer in het Rijksmuseum," *Aziatische Kunst*, jaargang 45, Nr. 2, Juli 2015. 37.
[292] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 55.

The entry scenes of the side walls form a good example (Figure 47 and Figure 48).[293] Both panels depict two groups of scenes. On the higher part are two ladies on a swing, with two ladies watching on the side. Swinging has been the tradition of the *Qingming Festival* 清明节 since the Ming Dynasty.[294] Moving towards the bottom of the panel, there are two groups of ladies – one sharing food on a boat, the other includes ladies both inside and outside of a pavilion. Although both sets of screens depict the same scenes, the panel on the right wall contains more extensive details compared to the panel on the opposite wall (Figure 49). For example, the ladies in the left panel do not display the same degree of detail in their clothing. In both scenes, the left lady on the swing wears a hanging ornament on her waist. However, the right scene depicts a more complex knot underneath the ornament. A similar disparity in details is shown by the lady's collar. On the left panel, the cloud collar (云肩 *Yun Jian*) only shows the outline. However, the lady on the right panel not only has a cloud collar but a more refined version with a *ru yi* design. As mentioned before, *ru yi* is a vessel favoured by collectors since its name is a homophone of 'blessing.' The lady on the far right who is watching the swing also reflects the difference in terms of details. On the left panel, the lady's fingers are not fully depicted, whereas the right panel portrays a slightly more complex hand gesture. In the left panel, the Tai Hu stone behind the lady lacks details. In contrast, the stone in the right panel offers a sense of three-dimensionality by means of outlining the contour of the stone's structure. In terms of facial details, figures have different eyebrow and lip shapes on opposite walls. The ladies on the left wall have rounder eyebrows with higher arches. Two meeting thin lines vividly depict the

[293] Since Chinese scroll paintings are supposed to be read from the left to the right, the same rule applies to lacquer screens. The entry scenes are the panels on the second far right of the whole screen.
[294] Jan Stuart, "*Palace Life Unfolding: A Chinese Lacquer Screen from 1672,"* Burke Center for Japanese Art, (online and in-person lecture, Columbia University, New York, April 28th, 2022, 6- 7:30 pm)

smiling eyes. Their smiles are done in a similar way, with their mouths slightly curling upwards. All the lines of their facial features are softy contoured, echoing their jawlines and chins. On the other hand, the right walls figures have shorter eyebrows and shaper eyes and mouths. Even their chins are slightly smaller and pointier than the left wall.

Besides the facial details of the figures, more partial scenes on these two panels display the different levels of refinement. For example, in the pavilion scenes, the left panel simply depicts two ladies; one of them has her right hand out, directing the other female to look to the right. The right panel has the same composition and gesture but in a domestic setting. Compared to the left panel, the right one has drapery and curtains around the round window, which frame the figures (Figure 50). The lady on the left leans towards a red table with a teacup and a scroll on top. Elements of the architecture also imply the different finishes of the two screens. In the left panel, the imperial animals on the pavilion's roof are less delicate (Figure 51). It is almost impossible to identify the animal. In contrast, the right panel's pavilion has a vivid dragon's head as the imperial animal statuette. After noticing the difference on the first panel of each screen, it is reasonable to question if this difference in refinement continues throughout the screens. Other panels of the left screen also present a paucity of details.

Although the left wall is partially missing owing to the installation in Leeuwarden, no indications have proven that the panels are from a different screen. On the other hand, the right wall in the Rijksmuseum lacquer room is constituted by two different screens.[295] Not only do all these visual clues lead to the third screen, but technical studies of the lacquer room's panels also suggest the

[295] Five panels on this wall are from the third set of screens.

same result. The comparison of the exposed wood's grain pattern and knots demonstrates to which screen each panel belongs and which pairs the front.[296] Panel 203, 205 and 207 are three consecutive panels from two different screen sets (Figure 52). From left to right, the grass battling scene on the far-left panel misses a corner of the blanket; the fence around the water is cut off in the next panel. The two-floor pavilion, combined with two panels from two different screen sets, shows inconsistent colours, just like the trees behind the pavilion. Even considering dissimilar deterioration if the panels were placed differently over the years, the colours still do not match up. On the right of the pavilion, the *tai hu* stone is incomplete.[297] Another example is the discontinuity of panels 209 and 211 (Figure 53). Almost everything in these two panels is not aligned with one another. On panel 211 (right side of Figure 53), half of a green stone stands underneath the bridge. However, on the left side, panel 209 does not have the missing part of the stone. Obviously, panel 209 and 211 are not from the same set of lacquer screens. Given both panels depict stones, rooftops, bridges and small architectural details in really similar ways, and they are both more detail-oriented compared to the left wall of the room, panel 209 and 211 are likely from two different sets of lacquer screens with highly similar design and details.

Further visible discontinuity is shown on both the left and the right walls. On the left, the bottom of panel 179 is missing, since it might be where the door used to be in the Leeuwarden palace. The remaining part of the panel could be sawn off and then put together, as the crane design on the top edge is incomplete (Figure 54). There might be a small missing piece vertically, but no

[296] Hagelskamp, "De restauratieateliers," 37.
[297] *Tai hu* stone is a irregular shaped and porous rock. They are often seen in traditional gardens to compose mountain landscapes. See Mingyue Zhang, and Jin Baek. 2023. "Appropriation of Taihu Stone and Its Formal Evolution in Wang Shu's Architecture," *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering 22* (3): 1051. Accessed on June 29th, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1080/13467581.2022.2145211.

sources till today have shown any information on this particular missing part. The same happened to panel 207. The panel is cropped vertically in the middle without further information on the missing piece (Figure 55). According to the conference paper by Dorscheid, Paul van Duin and Keulen in 2015, most alterations, including cutting and rejoining the panels and changing the dimensions, were done to accommodate the windows and doors in the Leeuwarden palace before 1880. The added lacquer imitation, the oak frame alternative on the reverse side, linseed-oil putties, wax fillers and other retouches are assigned to the period after 1880 when the screens arrived in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.[298]

Besides the small missing piece, the discontinuity of the left wall is revealed through the crane and *shou* (longevity) design on the edge of the screen. The crane and *shou* character pattern symbolize the wish for longevity. It has been commonly used on Coromandel lacquer screens from that time.[299] The border patterns tend to follow certain rules, which shows a sense of continuity. Two contemporary and complete Coromandel lacquer screens, the folding screen with Dutch ships (BK-1959-99) (Figure 56) in the Rijksmuseum and a folding screen in the Museum van Loon (Figure 57) showcase the same crane and *shou* design. In these screens, the crane patterns either face each other or face the same direction (Figure 58 and Figure 59). However, the screens in the lacquer room do not follow this tendency. In "De Leeuwarden Lakkamer in het Rijksmuseum," Christina Hagelskamp suggests the unmatching scribed lines

[298] Jan Dorscheid, Paul van Duin, Henk van Keulen, "The Late 17th Century Lacquer Room from the Palace of the Stadtholder in Leeuwarden, Preserved in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam," in *Investigation and Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700 - 1900): Lacquerware and Porcelain ; Conference 2013 Postprints, [International Workshop on Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900)]*, Konservierungswissenschaft, Restaurierung, Technologie 11 (The Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900), Wien: Böhlau, 2015), Gabriela Krist and Elfriede Iby, eds., 253 – 254.

[299] The crane-and-*shou* screen border is commonly used in Coromandel screens from the Qing Dynasty. Besides the Rijksmuseum lacquer room, examples are the folding screen at Museum van Loon, Amsterdam as well.

and the finishing are probably caused by the time pressure during the production of the screen.[300] Therefore, the same reason might also lead to the disruption of the medallion pattern's sequence.

The examples of the similar architectural contour and different secondary depictions all indicate the use of sketchbook patterns. Although no such sketches have remained, the way modern lacquer artisans use them gives an idea of how they would have been employed during the Qing Dynasty. Lin Yi, a lacquer artisan in Suzhou, China, introduces the progress of making *kuan cai* lacquer and discusses the use of sketches.[301] Before carving the lacquer, the artisan needs to stick the sketch on the lacquer surface with a wheat paste (Figure 61). Then the artisan carves the lacquer along the sketch line and shovels till the white-grey foundation layer is shown. Afterwards, the remained sketch will be removed. Considering the size of a lacquer screen, the sketch might be drawn on *xuan* paper (宣纸 rice paper), a type of paper used for calligraphy and watercolour painting since ancient China. *Xuan* paper is lightweight and semi-transparent, which makes it the perfect material to trace the design and copy it repeatedly. Prints of the design might also be how the craftsmen access the sketches. If the designs were produced massively by prints, with the popularity and accessibility, the spread of design patterns would have been effective and broad. However, considering the size of most of the *kuan cai* screens, the craftsmen would have to combine prints together, which makes it less easy than sketching it on a piece of *xuan* paper.

[300] Christina Hagelskamp, "De restauratieateliers: De Leeuwarder lakkamer in het Rijksmuseum," *Aziatische Kunst* 45, 2 (2015): 35-43, doi: https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1163/25431749-90000289

[301] Lin Yi, "Suzhou, Lacquer and Decoration Craftmanship," interviewed by CraftPlus, Jan 21st, 2018, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI3MzMzNTY1Mg==&mid=2247486265&idx=1&sn=2a8ab2cff1cf33af366aba211767e061&chksm=eb259f32dc521624bc37d7b9f089a9de75b7b4b685ab1bf0f68cffa3bc6681cd55eead2291f4&scene=21#wechat_redirect

Unlike other *Spring Morning*, such as the long-scroll painting by Qiu Ying and the Freer lacquer screen by Sheng Nian, the overall composition of the Rijksmuseum lacquer screens are quite different. Both walls represent a coherent layout by having the major pavilion in the middle and bridges connecting lands around the building. Instead of depicting major scenes in the garden, water sets the scene for both depictions. Since both walls place the primary pavilion in the center, it draws the audience's attention to this central scene rather than guiding the audience to enter the scene from right to left, according to the tradition in Chinese scroll painting. Both walls' composition is highly similar, except the left scene contains an extra group of fences on the right of the main pavilion.[302]

To study whether all three screens might come from the same craftsmen, a visual comparison has been applied to the secondary elements of the depiction. Three panels with the same motif from each screen are chosen — in this case, the imperial animals and the roof — to examine how the design differentiates and resembles each other. The way the craftsmen executed the imperial animals in the three screens makes an interesting comparison and strong visual evidence that the design of all three screens reflects a certain level of personal style though they are most likely derived from the same sketch (Figure 61). Even though the pavilion scenes are from different parts of the story, the design of the architecture and the imperial animals are still eminently comparable. In panel 169, the imperial animal and the cloud-shaped pattern are less meticulous compared to the same motif in the other two panels. The imperial animal in panel 169 is also the only one, which shows one eye of the animal. On the other panels 205 and 207, both roof animals are depicted with two eyes with a slight three-quarter angle. According to Giovanni

[302] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 55.

Morelli, small details such as hair and facial contour reflect the stylistic habit of a painter.[303] If the same idea applies to how painters sketch animals, this could suggest that these panels were sketched and carved by different craftsmen. Combining Hagelskamp and Chou's theory that the screens were designed based on the same sketch, the three screens from the Leeuwarden palace in the Rijksmuseum were probably produced in the same workshop by different craftsmen.

Possible Provenance

Both sets of screens do not present any inscriptions on the front. Therefore, it is almost impossible to trace who commissioned the screens, and where and when it was made. However, based on the visual evidence of the screens and the provenance of the lacquer room while it was in the Stadholder's possession, it is possible to seize more information. Since Henrietta received the three screens together as gifts from her husband Henry Casimir II, and the screens are probably from the same workshop, it is most likely that Henry bought the three screens together. The question is, how did the three Coromandel lacquer screens from the same workshop arrive collectively in the Stadholder's palace? If the screens were exported overseas at the same time, where might be the production site and the trading port in China?

Given the lacquer room was made in 1695 in Leeuwarden, and Henrietta received the lacquer screens from her husband in 1694, the dating of the screens range from 1662 to 1694. And to give or take a year for the screens to arrive in the Netherlands, they were probably loaded onto the carracks in 1693 or 1694 at the latest. A large range of the possible production of the screens overlapped with the illegal trading time, which makes the route difficult to discover. However,

[303] Carlo Ginzburg, and Anna Davin. "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method." *History Workshop*, no. 9 (1980), 11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4288283.

there are still traces of history that could provide the possibility. Illegal private trade was common before VOC officially stepped in. Many people, including the ones who were not directly involved in the trading, such as VOC nursing staff, also had their own illegal business given the huge profit they could obtain. In 1684, VOC official Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakestein tried to stop the well-developed corruption but it was unsuccessful. [304] While the Dutch settled in Pescadores Islands and Formosa, most of the Chinese luxuries came from Fujian because of their geographical location. The majority of the Chinese businessmen whom the Dutch worked with in Batavia were likewise from Fujian.[305] In fact, most of the Chinese immigrants who moved to Batavia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were from the Jinjiang region in Fujian province.[306] The first Chinese emigrants to Nanyang (Southeast Asian) were from Guangdong and Fujian provinces.[307] Although Chinese emigrants have been populating much of Southeast Asia for centuries, it was not until the nineteenth century that their numbers began to rise significantly as the European colonial powers in the nations surrounding the China Sea region expanded and attracted Chinese labourers for the mines and plantations. The Zhangzhou area in southern Fujian is believed to originate from the earliest Chinese immigrants to Java. There have already been several generations of their descendants working as dealers, artisans, and labourers.[308] Therefore, the Leeuwarden lacquer screens (now in the

[304] Martine Gosselink, "The Dutch East India Company in Asia," in *Asia in Amsterdam: The Culture of Luxury in the Golden Age*, ed. Karina H Corrigan, Jan van Campen, Femke Diercks, and Janet C Blyberg, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 27.
[305] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 59.
[306] Leonard Blussé 包乐史, *Zhonghe jiaowang shi* 中荷交往史 [Tribute to China]. Translated by Guotu Zhuang. (Beijing: Lukoudian Publisher, 1999), 270.
[307]The first sizable Chinese population in Indonesia was the Hokkian. Since the end of the sixteenth century, Xiamen and the surrounding regions of the southern coastal province of Fujian provided enough labour which were employed in many fields. For Chinese international commerce, this was a crucial region. Hokkian people made up a large portion of Batavia's Chinese population and were the predominant immigrants up to the mid nineteenth century. See Menghong Chen, *De Chinese gemeenschap van Batavia, 1843- 1865: een onderzoek naar het Kong Koan-archief.* PhD diss., (Universiteit Leiden, 2009). Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net.1887/14501 ,113.
[308] Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1-7.

Rijksmuseum) were probably exported to the Netherlands through Fujian or Guangdong province. After Zheng Chenggong defeated the Dutch in 1662, the Dutch retreated to Batavia, where the VOC had their factories. Batavia also plays an intermediary role in Dutch-Chinese trading. Commodities were traded in Batavia by Fujian merchants who brought the vessels from China. Chou Kung-chin believes the screens were commissioned by Henry Casimir II through the VOC officials because the narratives and motifs on the screens are almost identical.[309] However, due to the lack of archival evidence, Chou's theory is only one of the hypotheses. Another possibility would be that Henry Casimir II bought the three screens together from a public auction of Asian goods after the VOC vessels arrived in the Netherlands.

If the lacquer screens were shipped to the Netherlands from Guangzhou or Fujian, does it mean that lacquerware was also produced in the region? Fujian does have a long history of lacquer manufacture. In recent years, archaeological discoveries have found some lacquerware in Fujian province dating to South Song Dynasty (960 -1279), such as the black lacquerware from the Huang Sheng tomb in Fuzhou, Fujian.[310] The amount of unearthed lacquerware is not large, which probably shows that lacquer manufacture in Fujian is not as developed. Or it could mean that the lacquerware found in Fuzhou was produced elsewhere. In Chou's book in 1995, Chou mentions a mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquer screen in Nanjing Province Museum, Nanjing, China, depicting the same narrative *Spring Morning in A Han Palace*. Although the screens are made with different techniques, the design and layout are highly similar. Both portray a palace garden surrounded by water. Except the Nanjing screen has two more architectures, the rest composition

[309] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 60.
[310] Zheng Qiao, "Research on the Lacquer Wares Unearthed from Fuzhou South Song Huangsheng Tomb," Master's thesis, (China Academy of Art, 2012), 10.

and the activities, including pitch-pot (*tou hu*), boating in the lake, and swinging, all echo the Rijksmuseum lacquer screens. Therefore, it is possible that these screens were produced in the same workshop at the same time.[311]

Luckily the Nanjing lacquer screens' provenance is recorded. According to historian Chen Zengbi, the lacquer screen was the possession of Zhang Fuqian, a millionaire in Wuxian (吴县)during the Guangxu Reign (1875 – 1908). Since Wuxian used to be one of the regions governed by Suzhou in the Ming and Qing Dynasty, the lacquer screen could be made in Suzhou, one of the lacquer-making centres in the Qing Dynasty. Suzhou was one of the important places of manufacture in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Lacquerware was one of the crafts that artisans in Suzhou specialized.[312] According to *Su Zhou Fu Zhi* (苏州府志), the development of lacquer-making in Suzhou was diverse in terms of lacquerware type. In *Su Zhou Fu Zhi's* Book twelve, it says:

> 漆作，有退光、明光、又剔红、彩漆皆精。皆旌德人为之。(Lacquerware, including *tui guang* lacquer, *ming guang* lacquer; both red carved lacquer and polychrome lacquer are spectacular. All of them are made by craftsmen from Jing De).[313]

The text provides valuable information on lacquer production and its centers. As discussed before, craftsmen from Huizhou (徽州 in An Hui) were proficient at *kuan cai* lacquer. *Caiqi* (彩漆 polychrome lacquer) in Suzhou was made by skillful craftsmen from Jing De (旌德). Jing De

[311] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 62
[312] Feng Huifen, *Suzhou Fuzhi*, 1877, book 20, page 17, quoted by 段本洛 Benluo Duan, 张圻福 Qifu Zhang, *Suzhou gongyeshi* 苏州工业史 [The Industrial History of Suzhou],（Suzhou: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1986）, 128
[313] *Tui Guang* is a genre of lacquer and a technique of lacquer-making. The surface of this type is quite dark at first, then it becomes shiny gradually. It was mentioned in *Yangzhou Huafang Lu* 扬州画舫录 [The Pleasure Boats of Yangzhou] by Li Dou in the Qing Dynasty. See Duan and Zhang, *The Industrial History*, 104

is a county in the South of Anhui province, another center of lacquer manufacture. Whether *cai qi* was another name for *kuan cai* is impossible to prove without known evidence. But according to the name of these lacquer types, they are probably similar styles which could be achieved by craftsmen from Jing De. Hence, Suzhou's lacquer production was rich in its diversity thanks to the influence of craftsmen from the An Hui province. Combining the historical context and the West Lake narrative on the back of the screens, the workshop of these screens was probably in Suzhou. As I mentioned, the screens were most likely traded through the coast in Fujian. Now the question is: how did the screens arrive in Fujian province through trading within China?

From the end of the Ming Dynasty, Anhui was known not only for their lacquerware but also for the merchants, known as the Hui merchants (徽商). According to *Min Shu* (Min's Book 闽书) by He Qiaoyuan (何乔远), many Hui merchants lived in Quanzhou (泉州), a city in Fujian province.[314] Moreover, Hui merchants were one of the suppliers of silk and textile to the East Indian Companies in Europe. They actively purchased silk and textile in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces and then shipped them to the coast in Fujian. [315] With this commercial history, Hui merchants were probably the mediators of the lacquer screens in the Rijksmuseum. The lacquer screens were probably carved in Suzhou, bought by the Hui merchants, then transported to Fujian, where the VOC might have purchased it illegally, then arrived in Batavia to be loaded on the vessel back to the Dutch Republic.

[314] Chou 周, *Kuan Cai* 款彩, 22.
[315] Fu Yiling 傅衣凌， *Mingqing shidai shangren ji shangye ziben* 明清时代商人及商业资本 [merchants and capital market in Ming and Qing Dynasty]，(Taipei: Gufeng chubanshe, 1987）, 84.

Comparison of the Materiality – Coromandel Lacquer vs Lacquer from Spa (*bois de Spa*)

Given the high demand for Asian objects such as porcelain and lacquer in Europe, local craftsmen attempted to make imitations of these imported luxuries. In the beginning, the Europeans made attempts to ship the sap tree, *toxicodendron vernicifluum,* but the tree sap dried up before even arriving in Europe.[316] Then the European craftsmen discovered different materials and techniques for making imitated lacquer.[317] Thanks to the material analysis that was executed by the Getty Conservation Institute in Los Angeles during the workshop "Recent Advances in Characterizing Asian Lacquer" (RAdICAL) in 2012[318] on Rijksmuseum's Coromandel lacquer screens, and another material analysis done by Delphine Steyaert, Louise Decq, Vincent Cattersel, Emile Van Binnebeke, Charles Indekeu, Wim Fremout and Steven Saverwyns on thirty-two pieces of Spa lacquer, I am able to compare the materiality of Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Spa lacquer based on the technical reports.[319] The lacquer from Spa is chosen due to its fame in the seventeenth century Europe, as well as the intensive study of its materiality in recent years.

On the Rijksmuseum Coromandel lacquer screens, unfired clay with starch and protein as an adhesive is a major part of the foundation for all layers. For layers of lacquer, urushiol (a heated

[316] Klootwijk, "Curious," 253.
[317] Given that lacquer-making in Europe likely shares similarity in terms of materiality, Spa lacquer will be used as an example of European lacquer in this chapter in the comparison with Chinese Coromandel lacquer.
[318] Jan Dorscheid, Paul van Duin, and Henk van Keulen, "The Late 17th-Century Lacquer Room from the Palace of the Stadtholder in Leeuwarden, Preserved in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam," in Gabriela Krist and Elfriede Iby, eds., *Investigation and Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700 - 1900): Lacquerware and Porcelain ; Conference 2013 Postprints, [International Workshop on Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900)]*, Konservierungswissenschaft, Restaurierung, Technologie 11 (The Conservation of East Asian Cabinets in Imperial Residences (1700-1900), Wien: Böhlau, 2015), 239-259.
[319] Delphine Steyaert et al., "Japanning in Spa at the End of the Seventeenth Century to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century: Historical Context and Materials for Lacquered *Bois de Spa*," *Studies in Conservation* 64, no. sup1 (May 6, 2019): 14–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2019.1581484.

drying oil) and black pigment are detected.[320] A cross-section image from one of the twelve Coromandel lacquer panels shows seven layers on top of the wooden panel. From the bottom to the top, there are four foundation layers, one intermediate paper layer, and two lacquer layers (Figure 62).[321] In comparison, the samples of Spa lacquer indicate a different recipe for lacquer-making. In general, the Spa lacquer samples are constituted of a thin layer of glue, one or more decorative layers, and one or more top layers of transparent material.[322] The most essential difference between Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Spa Japanning lies between the bottom layers. Instead of having a layer of foundation with unfired clay, paper (hemp fibres) or textile as the Chinese Coromandel, the Spa lacquer craftsmen decided to use an animal glue-based layer as an isolation layer to "low the substrate's porosity and hygroscopicity." A thin layer of glue is enough for preparing a fine-grained beechwood surface, a panel material craftsmen used in Spa. The method had been practiced by European artisans before lacquer-making emerged.[323]

For layers of lacquer, Chinese Coromandel and Spa lacquer also have a different approach in terms of using oil. In the Chinese Coromandel lacquer screen samples, oil appears in both the foundation and the lacquer layers. The foundation layer contains tung oil, cedar oil and Urushiol. In the meantime, aged urushiol and tung oil have been found in the lacquer layer.[324] However, in Spa lacquer's case, oil was only found in light blue lacquer, but not in all the black and darker blue lacquer boxes.

[320] Dorscheid, Van Duin and Van Keulen, "The Late," 250 – 251.
[321] Dorscheid, Van Duin and Van Keulen, "The Late," 249.
[322] Steyaert et al, "Japanning in Spa," 522.
[323] Steyaert et al, "Japanning in Spa," 522.
[324] Dorscheid, Van Duin and Van Keulen, "The Late," 258.

To summarize, Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Spa lacquer do not share too much similarity in terms of the layering structure and materiality. This could have been caused by the originality of some of the raw materials and particular production methods in recipes. Both lacquer types reflect localized material and methods, such as the tung oil in Chinese Coromandel lacquer and the use of animal glue base on top of the wood panel in Spa lacquer. Nonetheless, both Chinese and Belgian craftsmen were aware of the importance of preparing a foundation layer before adding lacquering and decoration on top.

Conclusion

In chapter three, I tried to obtain an insight into Coromandel lacquer's reception in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic through lacquer rooms. For the first case, I focused on a lacquer room owned by Princess Mary in the Stadholder's quarters in the Hague, which did not survive till today. Letters between Princess Mary and Constantijn Huygens suggest that as an enthusiastic lover of *chinoiserie,* Princess Mary adorned a chamber with Chinese lacquer screens in the stadholder palace, and received Huygens' criticism. To Princess Mary, Huygens fabricated a letter from "the Chinese emperor" and claimed that Princess Mary's "barbarous" action ignored the value of Chinese culture. Princess Mary's response to Huygens is unknown, but Huygens did receive the inscriptions on the lacquer panels as he requested.

Similar to Huygens's opinion on reusing Coromandel lacquer screen panels, Stalker and Parker also criticized those who dismantle "Bantam" (Coromandel lacquer) screens for new cabinets. Stalker and Parker believed that combining various lacquer panels to create a new piece that distorts the beauty and coherence of the original. Huygens was more concerned with the screen's original purpose than just its outward appearance. Such a genuine Chinese artifact offers

Huygens the ability to study the culture, in his opinion. Both cases reveal that European authors and scholars concerned more about Coromandel lacquer's original meaning and beauty, and even the cultural significance behind the lacquer screens. To respect the culture, the screen should be utilized as it was designed to be. Huygens's correspondence with Princess Mary reveals his appreciation and respect for Chinese material culture. Princess Mary's response to Huygens is unknown, but Huygens did receive the inscriptions on the lacquer panels as he requested. All the hundred and eight large characters mean "longevity," written in different small seal scripts. Thirty-six small characters introduced the commissioner of the screens, Liu Dou, a governmental official. However, given Princess Mary's lack of knowledge of Chinese culture, she would not have perceived it as how the Coromandel lacquer was intended to be.

Another Coromandel lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum, originally from the Stadholder palace in Leeuwarden, reveals Coromandel lacquer room's display in seventeenth-century Dutch domestics. The Coromandel lacquer panels were installed on the wall of a room called "closet," a private inner chamber that could be accessed from the state bedroom. Closets are rather special in aristocratic interiors in which only family and very close guests are welcomed. The closet was most likely decorated by Henrietta Amalia von Anhalt Dessau, who also placed a cabinet to display porcelain, a gilded table and amber furniture set in the room. Although Henrietta might not understand the motif on the lacquer panels – *A Spring Morning in the Han Palace,* installing the panels in the closet reinforced the lacquer screen's gender role. In imperial Chinese, screens were displaced in both public and private settings. In many imperial Chinese paintings, the painted screen in the scene is an allegory of the female character's romance or an irony of her loneliness. Chinese motif such as *A Spring Morning in the Han Palace* aggregates a feminine

environment that serves the male gaze. It underlines filial piety and portrays an elite man's dream in imperial China – to have many wives and children to carry on the ancestral line. On the other side of the globe, rooms were designed according to their function and gender roles. Such a private closet was probably designed for the females in the palace. Besides, by exhibiting the Coromandel lacquer panels with porcelain – an Asian luxury that was closely associated with females, Coromandel lacquer was probably also regarded as a feminine collectible. Without understanding the motif on the Coromandel lacquer panels, Henrietta was probably attracted by the Chinese court ladies and their lives, and coincidentally placed the lacquer panels in an isolated and feminine setting, just as what the motif presents.

In the next part of the chapter, I applied a visual analysis to compare and prove that all three screens in the Rijksmuseum lacquer room share extremely similar outlines and designs. One set lacks more detail and shows poorer quality compared to the rest. Therefore, the screens were probably produced in the same workshop but by different craftsmen based on the same sketch. It also proves the hypothesis that there was a circulation of sketchbooks or designs amongst lacquer craftsmen and studios. Furthermore, I tried to convey the possible provenance of the three sets of lacquer screens. A set of screens with almost identical designs is now in Nanjing Province Museum, Nanjing. Based on the note attached to the screen's last owner, Chou Kung-chin suggests that the screens were owned by a local elite near Suzhou, and the screens were probably made in Suzhou, one of the centers of Coromandel lacquer. The screens were probably shipped by Hui merchants from Anhui province to Fujian, who supplied Chinese goods to the East Indian Companies in Europe and engaged in trading within China.

Due to the local demand, lacquer imitation was also made in Europe. To understand how European craftsmen perceived Chinese lacquer in terms of its materiality, the last part of the chapter provided a comparison of materiality between Coromandel lacquer vs Lacquer from Spa. To recap, the layering structure and materiality of Chinese Coromandel lacquer and Spa lacquer differ significantly. This might be due to the lack of certain raw materials in Europe and different production processes utilized by imperial Chinese and seventeenth-century European craftsmen. Both Chinese Coromandel and Spa lacquer present regional materials and manufacturing techniques, such as tung oil in Chinese Coromandel lacquer and an animal glue foundation on top of a wood panel in Spa lacquer. Given that Spa lacquer's production started with the aim to imitate the quality of Asian lacquer, it reinforced Chinese lacquer's popularity in seventeenth-century Europe. Craftsmen applied local materials and invented different methods to imitate the lustrous Asian luxury.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

The purpose of the current thesis was to investigate the reception of Chinese Coromandel lacquer in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, specifically for the Westfries Museum lacquer chest and the Rijksmuseum lacquer room. This study has shown that in many cases Chinese Coromandel lacquer and other Asian lacquer were associated with nature, curiosity and luxury in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic by analyzing seventeenth century Dutch still life paintings that included Asian lacquer in them. Two Chinese Coromandel lacquer pieces – a chest at the Westfries Museum and a lacquer room in the Rijksmuseum – were chosen as the case studies to interpret Coromandel lacquer's function and meaning for contemporary Dutch collectors and viewers in the domestic sphere. Given that the possible initial owner of the

Westfries Museum chest used to own other lacquer items, as was a local elite family with a close connection with VOC, it is likely that Asian lacquer products were embraced by the Dutch Republic's affluent and nobility. Furthermore, the discussion on the approximate dating and production site of Coromandel lacquer in China further reflect that the commercial and cultural interactions affected both China and the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. The comparison between the Chinese lacquer-making recipe book *Xiu Shi Lu* and the European recipe book *A Treatise of Japaning and Varnishing* by John Stalker and George Parker proves that in terms of material and technique, Chinese and European craftsmen approached Coromandel lacquer production with highly similar techniques and slightly different materials. The recipe on imitated European Coromandel lacquer indicates Chinese Coromandel lacquer's popularity in seventeenth century Europe. In chapter two, I also analyzed the motifs on both lacquer objects to understand them within the context of Chinese artistic tradition and how the seventeenth century Dutch collectors might perceive them differently. The iconographical research demonstrates how the Coromandel lacquer's agency altered as a result of its geographic and cultural migration. Additionally, it highlights how crucial it is to examine Coromandel lacquer as a component of material culture through a transcultural lens.

In chapter three, Constantijn Huygens and Princess Mary's letters about the Coromandel lacquer panels in the Stadholder's quarters in the Hague exhibited two kinds of reception of the item. Princess Mary represented *chinoiserie* collectors who appreciate the aesthetic and the fantasy Asian luxury symbolized at the time. They bore the risk of destroying the original form of these luxury items while refunctioning them according to their needs. On the other hand, Constantijn Huygens stood for scholars who respect and appreciates the original meaning and material

culture the Coromandel lacquer screens represent. The inscriptions on the back of the Coromandel lacquer panels suggest that in many cases, Coromandel lacquer was commissioned in China before its influx to Europe. In the next part of chapter three, the Rijksmuseum lacquer room was studied as a case to suggest that these Coromandel lacquer rooms were probably perceived as a feminine collectible given it was often displayed with Chinese porcelains – an Asian luxury that has a close affinity with females in the seventeenth-century Europe. In Dutch palaces, the lacquer room was usually in a room named closet, which was connected to the bedroom and only allowed the inner circle of the female owner. On the other side of the globe, Chinese screens with female figures and water and mountain motifs were often regarded as a metaphor for romance and filial piety. Therefore, without knowing the iconography on the Coromandel lacquer panels, Henrietta Amalia von Anhalt Dessau and other European audiences were probably drawn to the depicted Chinese court women and their lives. But the female collectors also mounted the panels in a private female setting, precisely as the motifs in the Coromandel lacquer panel depicted. The next part of chapter three reveals that Coromandel lacquer was probably produced in China with circulated designs amongst lacquer craftsmen and studios. This was achieved by comparing the difference between the three sets of the Coromandel screens in the Rijksmuseum lacquer room. It further establishes the understanding of Chinese Coromandel lacquer's spread in Europe in the early modern time. The following part of the chapter focused on a comparison between Coromandel lacquer and Spa lacquer's production technique and materiality. The results of this comparison show that without knowledge exchange on lacquer making, both Chinese lacquer and European imitation lacquer applied regional materials and approached manufacture in a highly similar process. Since Spa

lacquer was aiming to imitate the quality of Asian lacquer, it affirms the popularity of Asian lacquer including Coromandel lacquer in seventeenth-century Europe.

Future Research

By way of closure to this study, I would like to make the following recommendations for further research. In terms of Coromandel lacquer, future research could try to trace records on lacquer studios in the Qing Dynasty. Are there any other examples of applying sketchbooks for the motifs on Coromandel lacquer? Another comparative study on the Coromandel screens with the same motifs would address this question. With the limited research on Coromandel lacquer, the methods of making Coromandel lacquer and European imitative Coromandel lacquer have not been studied thoroughly. Besides local materials that may be different, did the Chinese and European craftsmen use the same materials to make Coromandel lacquer?

Future research is needed for both the Westfries Museum's chest and the Rijksmuseum lacquer room. For the Westfries Museum's chest, a thorough research of the Carbasius family's inventory lists would be a suitable start, in specific the three Carbasius family members who were on board to Batavia. As Huygens's copy of inscriptions suggests, the screens Princess Mary owned were commissioned in China by a Chinese governmental official. We do not know how these Coromandel lacquer have ended up in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Did people sell the deceased's inventory in seventeenth-century China? In addition, we lack information on the trading within China before Chinese goods departed to other countries. Were goods shipped to the coast in China regularly or based on commissions? These questions could be addressed in future research to contribute to the dialogue of Dutch and Chinese transcultural art history in the early modern time.

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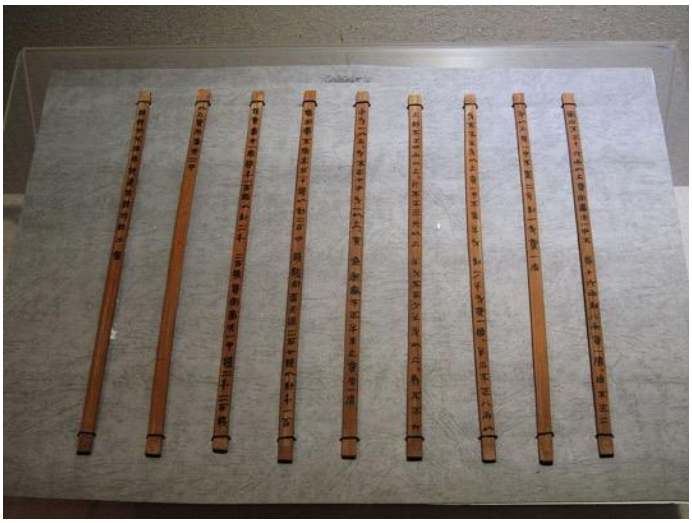

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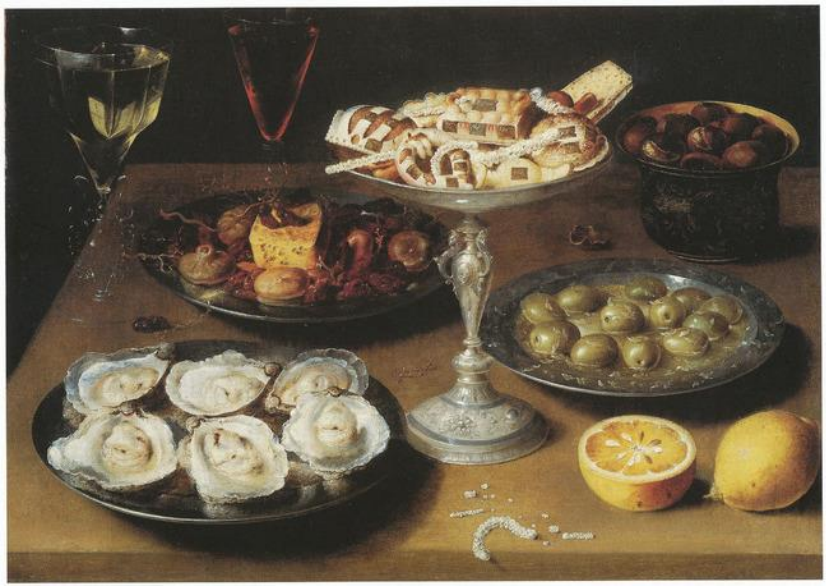

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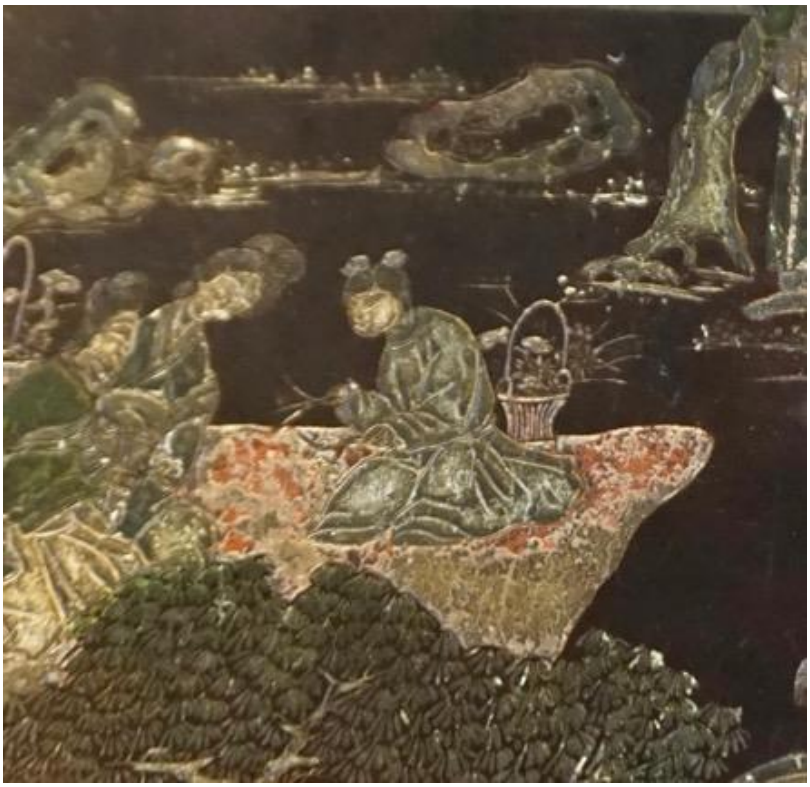

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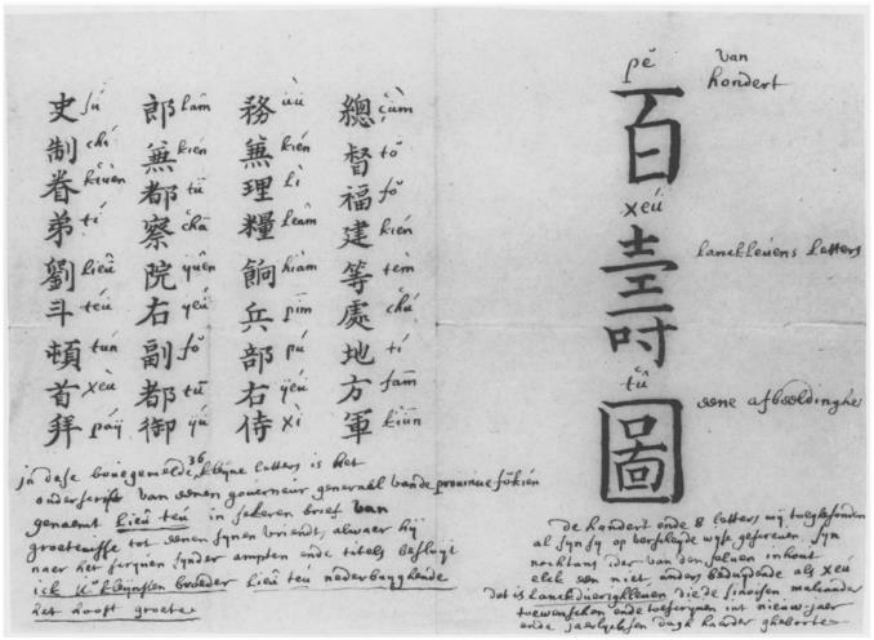

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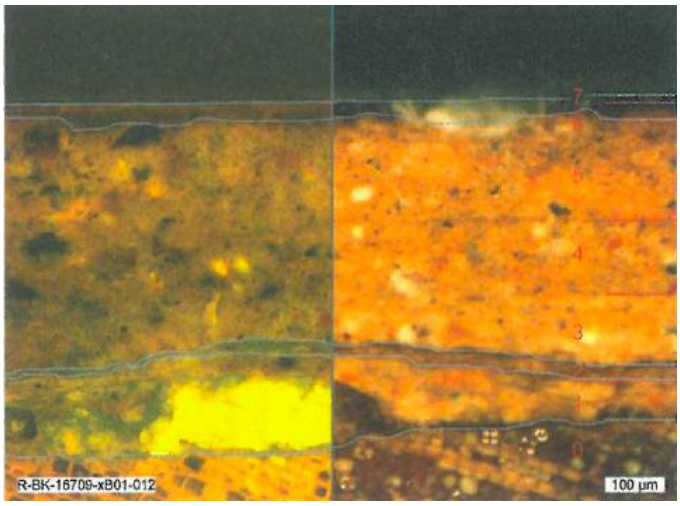

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Chinese lacquerware in the Low Countries in the Seventeenth Century

Leiden
Johan Cunaeus, 1662
*A playful Chinese abacus almost like ours, but much more artful; [...] an extraordinary Chinese shield made of black lacquer with a central knob around which six crowns of gemstones were set; [...] various chests of Chinese gold and silver made from parallel grooved threads interwoven with larger beams in a very beautiful manner: inside are similar silver vases, in which thee [tea] is prepared; alabaster statues of Chinese men with very black, long and slender beards and also striking ears [..] rough slate stones in which gold is enclosed, to rub off this gold, the stone is heated and pressed in black wax so that [the gold] is better visible; such wax is used by the Chinese mediators, de makelaars, and although they are wont to use that wax frequently, they are unable to extract the gold that is rubbed off for their financial gain.
("Abacum lusorium Chinensium pane ut nostrum, sed longe magis artificiosum [..] scutum egregium Chinese lacca nigra egregie tinctum per cujus medium umbonem dispositae erant sex gemmarum coronae)[…..] "varia armaria ex auro et argento Chinensi efformata ex continuis et striatis fils cum intertextis hinc inde majorib. trabibus, opere pulcherrimo, item vasa intus argentea, in quibus thee coquitur, ex alabastro status Chinensium cum barbis nigerrimis longs et tenuibus, etiam pane ad aures conspicuis [...] lapides lydios scabros auro clausos, quibus ubi affricatur aurum, ille frictus imprimitur cerae nigrae, ubi melius representatur; tali cera utuntur mediators Chineses, de Machelaers, atque ubi ea cera saepe usi sunt, norunt Solem affrictum inde extrahere pro lucro suo.")
From the description by Ole Borch, July 7, 1662; Borch, Itinerarium, 11, 159-160.

Amsterdam
Cargo of the ship De Hollantze Thuyn, 1677
"Three Chinese lacquered screens."
("3 stux Chineze verlackte schutzels.")
De Hollantze Thuyn arrived in Amsterdam in 1677; by 1678, two of the screens had still

not been sold. J.A. van der Chijs (ed.), Dagh-Register gehouden int Casteel Batavia vant passerende daer ter platse als over geheel Nederlandts-India Anno 1676 (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1903), 331; cf. Van Noord, this volume, pp. 184.

The Hague(?)
Amalia van Solms-Braunfels, Princess of Orange, 1642
"Twenty-four pieces of double red Cantonese damask [...] two Chinese and two Japanese screens."
("24 stucx dobbele roode Cantonse damasten [.....] 2 Chinese ende 2 Japanse schutsels.")
National Archive, VOC 148, Resoluties van de Heren Zeventien, November 25, 1642.
Published in Cynthia Viallé, "Fit for Kings and Princes': A Gift of Japanese Lacquer," in Large and Broad: The Dutch Impact on Early Modern Asia. Essays in Honor of Leonard Blussé, ed. Nagazumi Yoko (Tokyo: Tokyo Bunko Research Library 13, 2010), 208.
Reference thanks to Willemijn van Noord.

"'geslingerde theebladen van een ongemeen facoen (hurled tea trays from an unusual facoen),'" but three years later they asked for "'Verlakte theebladen, 100 nesten van 5 vierkante bladen […] (lacquered tea trays, 100 nests of 5 square trays).'" Reference from Jörg, "De Handel," n 22

Hoorn
"de Chineesch verlakte kist op het portaal."
Carbasius papers, inv. no. 17

https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fhdl.handle.net%2f21.12114%2fFDC9A3D080814704A38C5832475A01B9&c=E,1,Nk-ScSGGUAs2PHCNuElvVQdSU1Yy-M7SAdo5u9eDjP1gtS46dHf9PnKNO1vzGCjYMaI5LotyRfIfpll-wPTCCLhT9fskfGJqmiFkiAtzodTHnQ,,&typo=1

"twee oude verlakte thee blaadjes nylde oostelykste voorkamer". See Nicolaas Bel, Hendrik Carbasius' aket van verdeling, February 7th 1750. Box 1685 Notarissen in West-Friesland tot 1843, 1552-1843. Folder **2538** Akten, 1749-1750. P. 117
https://www.westfriesarchief.nl/onderzoek/zoeken?mivast=13

Antwerp

"a small object of 'Indian' lacquerware, an 'Indian' lacquer box and an 'Indian' lacquerware dish." City Archives Antwerp, Notariaatsarchief N. 1331 W.G. De Kesel, *Vlaams Barook Meubiliair in Lak,* Drongen, 1991, 16-18, as cited in W. De Kesel and G. Dhont, *Coromandel,* 10.

Appendix II. Carbasius Family Genealogy

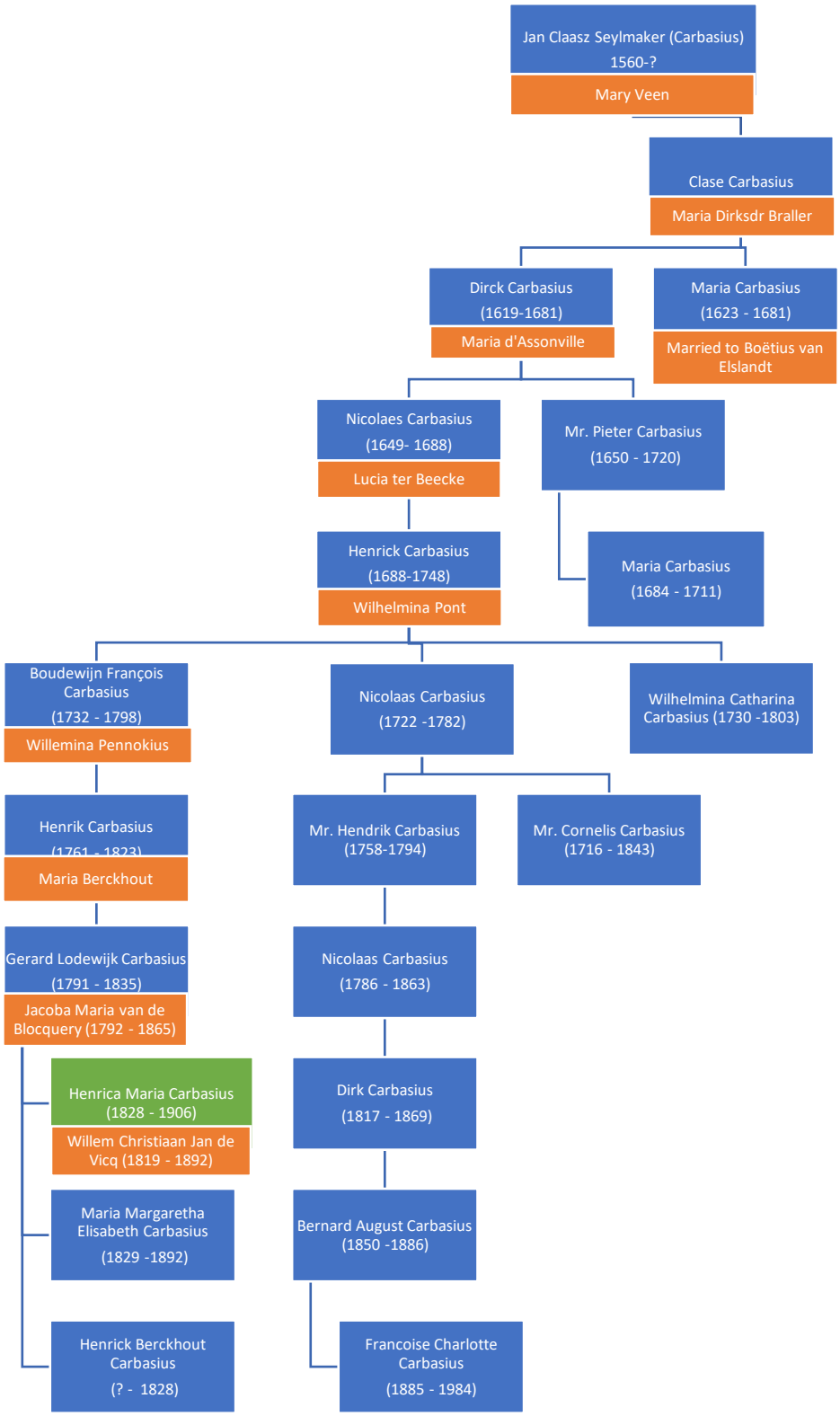
Jan Claasz Seylmaker (Carbasius)
1560-?
Mary Veen
Clase Carbasius
Maria Dirksdr Braller
Dirck Carbasius
(1619-1681)
Maria d'Assonville
Maria Carbasius
(1623 - 1681)
Married to Boëtius van Elslandt
Nicolaes Carbasius
(1649- 1688)
Lucia ter Beecke
Mr. Pieter Carbasius
(1650 - 1720)
Henrick Carbasius
(1688-1748)
Wilhelmina Pont
Maria Carbasius
(1684 - 1711)
Boudewijn François Carbasius
(1732 - 1798)
Willemina Pennokius
Nicolaas Carbasius
(1722 -1782)
Wilhelmina Catharina Carbasius (1730 -1803)
Henrik Carbasius
Maria Berckhout
Mr. Hendrik Carbasius
(1758-1794)
Mr. Cornelis Carbasius
(1716 - 1843)
Gerard Lodewijk Carbasius
(1791 - 1835)
Jacoba Maria van de Blocquery (1792 - 1865)
Nicolaas Carbasius
(1786 - 1863)
Henrica Maria Carbasius
(1828 - 1906)
Willem Christiaan Jan de Vicq (1819 - 1892)
Dirk Carbasius
(1817 - 1869)
Maria Margaretha Elisabeth Carbasius
(1829 -1892)
Bernard August Carbasius
(1850 -1886)
Henrick Berckhout Carbasius
(? - 1828)
Francoise Charlotte Carbasius
(1885 - 1984)

Image 1: Carbasius Genealogy

Blue – Carbasius family member
Orange – spouses
Green – the donor of the WFM chest

List 1. Carbasius Family

1. Dr. Jan Claasz. Seylmaker (Carbasius)
- Born in 1560
- schepen van Hoorn (schepen is a municipal officer) in 1584, ‘86, ‘88, ‘90
- tr. Mary Veen

2. Mr. Claes (Nicolaes) Carbasius
- Born April 1, 1598
- Secretary of Hoorn, schepen 1611, weesmeester 1618
- married to Maria Dirksdr (Braller) Hoorn 1 Jan 1612,

3. Dirck Carbasius (1619-1681), brewer and painter
- Born 2 April 1619 (baptism 1619-24 is missing in the archive)
- Death: September 22, 1681, Hoorn
- tr. (married) December 19 1645, Maria d’Assonville. Death: Feb. 26th, 1667

4. Nicolaaes Carbsius (1649-1688)
- Jan 28th, 1649 (no baptism date is found)
- Schepen van Hoorn 1681, 83, city council 1684, secretary of O.I.C
- Death: April 29th, 1688, Hoorn.
- He Married Catharina Veen, Dec. 2, 1685 as widow (weduwnaar) of Maria Bacharach
- Lucia ter Beecke (mother of Henrik Carbasius) Hoorn. Death: May 3rd, 1700. (recht op begr. Betaald 5 Mei) Funeral on May 5 Lucia ter Beecke remarried Nicolaas Meppel.

5. Mr. Henrik Carbasius (1688-1748)
- Born on Jan. 14th, baptized and registered in Hoorn on Jan. 15, 1688.
- Schepen van Hoorn 1714-1730, city council 1720, mayor of Hoorn 1730, 1736, and 1740. Rekenmeester of Holland 1732-35. Secretary of gecommiteerde council of Holland and West Friesland 1735-48. Bewindhebber O.I.C. (in Dutch history it refers to the formal title of one of the administrators (directors) of a chamber (urban headquarters) in the trading cities where the VOC and the WIC had an establishment.)
- Death: Mar 10, 1748. (recht op begrafenis. betaald March 15). (his family or himself paid for his)
- Married as widower of Hester Molenwerf (Edam, a town in North Holland, May 25, 1721)
- Henrik Carbasius married to Willemoet Pont who was born on Oct. 10, 1696; death: Dec. 28, 1737, Hoorn, (dr. van Pieter en Willemont Bouwens)

6. Mr. Nicolaas Carbasius (1722-1782) (two kids: Henrick Carbasius and Wilhelmina Lucia Carbasius)
- Born on Feb. 6, registered Feb. 6, 1722.
- Secretary of Hoorn, schepen, secretary of committed council of Holland and West Friesland.
- Death: Jan 24. Funeral (or deregistered Jan 28, 1782)
- married on April 26, 1750 to Wijnanda Cornelia Kaiser, who was born on Dec 17, registered Dec. 19, 1732 in Hoorn. Death: Aug 21. Funeral Aug 24, 1804, the daughter of van Mr. Cornelis en Susanna Jacoba Hoolwerff.

7. Mr. Henrick Carbasius (1758-1794) (one kid: Nicolaas Carbasius)
- Born: Oct. 5, registered Oc. 8, 1758, Hoorn. Adj. secretary of Hoorn 1780-1787, adv.to Alkmaar
- Death: Oct. 14, 1794. Funeral/ deregister at Schagen.
- tr. Oct. 17, 1784, Hoorn. Married to Ida Elizabeth van Hoolwerff, who was born on Jan 13 (registered Jan 15) 1765 in Hoorn, died on Dec 27, 1817 in Hoorn. Daughter of Mr. Jacob and Elizabeth Wilhelmina Crap.

8. Mr. Nicolaas Carbasius (1786-1863) (four kids: Henrik Carbasius, Cornelia Magdalena Benjamina Carbasius, Dirk Carbasius and Margarethus Johannes Carbasius)

- Born: Feb 21, registered on Feb 26, 1786 in Hoorn.
- Director of the post office at Hoorn. Mayor of Oudendijk.
- Death: July 23, 1863 in Hoorn
- Married twice.
- Aug 6, 1812 to Wijntje Langewagen, who was born on Jan 13, registered Jan 19, 1787, died on Oct. 3, 1826. Daughter of Dirk en Cornelia Breebaart.
- April 21, 1831 to Maria Augusta Bernardiua Josepha van der Heyden. Born in Drabenderhöhe (Pruisen) in 1798. Died on Dec 7, 1883. Daughter of Friedrich Gottlieb en Margaretha Anna van Goudoever (married again to Peel Gerard Verweyde.)

9. Henrik Carbasius (1813- 1862) (three kids: Wijntje Carbasius, Agatha Geertruida Carbasius, Margaretha Anna Carbasius)
- Born on July 23, 1813 in Hoorn. Director of the post office at Purmerend in 1838, member of provincial states of North Holland in 1860.
- Death: Jan. 3, 1862 in Purmerend.
- Marriage: March 15, 1849 to Agatje Groot

9a. Dirk Carbasius (1817- 1869)
- Born on Jan 30, 1817 in Hoorn.
- Director of post office at Heerenveen in 1845, at Meppel 1845, at Amersfoort 1861, at Alkmaar 1867 -69.
- Death: Aug 1, 1869 in Alkmaar.

- tr. Married to Anna Meemeling on June 21, 1844. Born on July 11, 1821 in Zaandam, died on Aug 11, 1900 in ‘s-Gravenhage. Daughter of Hendrik en Maria Elizabeth Jongewaard.

10. Bernard August Carbasius (three kids: Anna Carbasius, Françoise Charlotte Carbasius, and Hendrik Carbasius)
- Born on Aug 2, 1850 in Meppel.
- Commies stamper at the guarantee for gold and silver works at ‘s-Gravenhage in 1884.
- Death: Oct. 5, 1886 in ‘s-Gravenhage.
- Married to Maria Catharina Constantia van der Kop (born on May 31, 1861 Schoonhoven, daughter of Carel Wilhelm en Françoise Carlotte Vredde.) on July 12, 1883 at Schoonhoven. Maria remarried to Johannes Frederik Dohna.

Table 1. Carbasius Family Members on Board of VOC Vessels to Batavia, National Archief

Jan Carbasius				
Employment	Out of service	Vessel	Destination	Beneficiary
1714-12-23	1719	Leidsman, Hoorn	Batavia	Constantia Schulerus
1725-05-18	1730	Huis de Vlotter	Batavia	
1731-05-21	1731-11-04 (decease)	Huis ter Boede	Batavia	
Joannes Carbasius				
1720-05-11	1724	Huis ter Boede	Batavia	
Hendrick Hessing (1701 - ?)				
1719-01-01	1723	Rijksdorp	Batavia	Maria Carbasius