

16th Century Florentine Merchants in Portuguese Asia

Talk by Maura Rinaldi

While the role of the Portuguese as the first Europeans to establish major trading contacts with Asia is well known, much less is understood about the influence that merchants and bankers from Florence had on this development. In 1338, a Royal Portuguese Decree accorded exclusive trading rights to Florentine merchant and banking companies. Many of the ships which traveled from Europe at this time to make discoveries were either owned or financed by Florentine companies.

Florence, from the first half of the 14th to the end of the 16th century was an extremely wealthy city due to its textile industry and banking system. In addition to financial support accorded for trade the Florentines also provided human resources by sending their agents, who were highly trained as merchants, managers and diplomats and who, not only shared their vast experience, but also did not hesitate to fight along side the Portuguese to establish their military supremacy when necessary. The stories about these Florentine travelers are fascinating and provide valuable insights about the historical and social development of Asia during this period of adventure and discovery.



Maura Rinaldi

Maura Rinaldi is an independent researcher, an international lecturer and writer whose publications include *Kraak Porcelain – A Moment in the History of Trade* (1989). This work has become the standard reference on the archaeological report of the ceramics salvaged from the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* shipwreck (1638). She now resides in Italy where her interests, in addition to Chinese ceramics, have evolved to embrace the role that 15th- and 16th-century Italians played in trade and in the Portuguese conquest of the Indies.

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A classical must read on the subject

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Extremely interesting book well written and with fascinating
details of the world at the end of the XVI century.

There are several English translations available : **Francesco
Carletti - My Voyage Around the World** (check in Amazon
often it is possible to find very cheap second hand copies).

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