

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST EUROPEANS AT TAIWAN AND THE NAMING OF THE ISLAND “ILHA FORMOSA”

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1) Parallels between the Asia-expeditions of the Portuguese and the America- Voyages of Christopher Columbus

The Portuguese maritime expeditions to the Middle Kingdom were important events in global history. Considering their consequences for Portugal, China and, in a larger sense, for the whole world, parallels to Columbus' voyages to America are clearly recognizable.

Time and again the question is discussed if and how far Columbus has to be considered as “the discoverer” of America. Before 1492 (the year Columbus arrived there for the first time), this can be said for sure, there had been relations between the peoples on both sides of the Bering-Strait and southwards to the Aleutian Islands.¹ Moreover, it is possible that in the above-mentioned year and before there were voyages of American Indians at least to the Easter Island and such ones of Polynesians to (South-) America. Contacts between peoples of West Africa and the pre-Columbian America, too, are thinkable.² Scandinavian expeditions to and settlements on the Northeast American coastal areas are proven historically and archaeologically.³ But connections between America and “Non-America” before 1492 remained limited to “outlying districts” (example: coasts of the Bering Strait), episode (example: Vikings in North America) or both. In the comparatively “developed countries”⁴, i.e. Europe (except memories of Scandinavian expeditions to North America⁵), the Islamic world, India, Southeast Asia, China, Korea and Japan, in 1491 nothing was known about America.⁶

¹ Most anthropologists agree that at least the earliest American inhabitants (perhaps 20.000 years ago?) went thither from Northeast Asia.

² Such relations are put up for discussion chiefly by Black African and Afro-American experts, but obviously there exists no proof yet.

³ During the time of the Chinese Sung/Song 宋 and Yuan 元 – Dynasties (960-1368). The North American Norman population died out or was absorbed by native Americans around 1500. Details to these Norman settlements in: Fagan, Brian M., *Das Frühe Nordamerika (The Early North America)*. Munich 1993. More about the situation of the American natives before the arrival of the Non-Americans: Charles C. Mann, 1491, New York N.Y. 2006.

⁴ Term („entwickelten Ländern“ = „developed countries“) in: Braudel, Fernand, *Die Geschichte der Zivilisation (History of Civilization)*, Munich 1971, p.46.

⁵ Including, perhaps, a voyage of the German seafarer Diedrick Pining (c.1430-1491), who (supposedly?) sailed from Iceland to Northeast America in 1475.

⁶ Totally other opinion: Gavin Menzies, claiming that Zheng He 鄭和, in cooperation with his captains, sailed around the world in 1421-1423: Menzies, Gavin, 1421, London 2003. But he seems to have no evidence.

At the same time, knowledge of China in Europe⁷ was somewhat better.

There were already expeditions of Romans⁸ and Byzantines (in the 6th Century AD sericulture was smuggled from China to the Byzantine Empire) to the Middle Kingdom. Comparatively strong relations between Europe and China followed during the time of the Mongol Yuan 元 - Dynasty (1206/79-1368), ending obviously in 1342⁹ or some years later.

Thus, in the 15th century, knowledge regarding China existed but remained partly very vague in Europe. That is confirmed by the famous letters written by the geographers Paolo Toscanelli¹⁰ (1474) and Hieronymus Münzer (1493). Japan, extremely steeped in legend, was known under the names “Xipangu,” “Cippangu” and similarly, derived from the Chinese “Ribenguo 日本國.”

The letter of Paolo Toscanelli is, in principle, to be read as follows:¹¹

“Regards from the physicist Paul to Canonikus¹² Ferdinand Martinz in Lisbon.

It was to me the more delighting to get information of your intimate terms to His Majesty the King, because already in former times I often argued concerning a shorter route to the Spice Islands¹³ as that one via Guinea.¹⁴ Now the King¹⁵ demands from me an even more convincing explanation through inspection, so that also the less initiated can comprehend and understand this way. Although I know that one should describe this on a globe¹⁶ showing the Earth, I decided, because of better understanding and less effort, to explain the route on a nautical chart.¹⁷

⁷ I.e. the so-called “Christian Occident.” In Islamic countries there was more knowledge about China.

⁸ More: Chang Tien-Tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514-1644*, Leiden/Netherlands 1934, p. 2. Cary, Max and Warmington, Eric H., *Die Entdeckungen der Antike* (The Discoveries during the Classical Antiquity), Zurich 1966, pp. 166-167.

⁹ In that year (19th August regarding Chinese sources) a clerical delegation under leadership of John of Marignola, sent from Pope Benedict XII (pontificate: 1334-1342), was received in audience by the last Mongol Emperor of China, Toghon-temür/Shundi 順帝. This Great Khan was toppled by the Ming 明 in 1368.

¹⁰ Italian; 1397-1482.

¹¹ The original letter is written in Latin. German translation in: Richard Hennig, *Terrae Incognitae* (Unknown Territories), Vol. IV, Leiden 1956, pp. 231-233.

¹² Canonikus: high clerical dignitary (Roman Catholic Church).

¹³ Moluccas. First visited by the Portuguese, under command of the captains António de Abreu and Francisco Serrão, in 1512.

¹⁴ West Africa.

¹⁵ King Alfonso (Afonso) V of Portugal (ruled from 1438 to 1481).

¹⁶ The oldest still existing globe depicting continents and oceans is the “Behaim-Globe,” constructed by the German geographer Martin Behaim (c. 1460-1507) in 1492. It seems to be sure that such globes were produced already earlier.

¹⁷ This map has not survived, but Toscanelli’s constructions could not differ much from those on the above-mentioned Behaim-Globe.

Therefore, I send to His Majesty a map constructed by myself, produced on it your¹⁸ coasts and islands, leading off from those steadily traveling westwards, as well as the places one must get to and how far away you have to stay from the pole¹⁹ and the equator, and how long the distance, i.e. after how many miles you will get to those areas which possess the biggest abundance of all spices and precious stones. Don't be surprised that I call the area where the spices exist "westerly" despite the fact that normally it is described as easterly...

I have marked into the map the various places to which, according to reliable reports of the sailors, you can get, either because of headwinds or other reasons not having arrived as planned but elsewhere or, partly, because they (the sailors) already possessed knowledge of that country, what, of course, must be even more pleasant. But on the islands only merchants are living. Since it is said that in Zaitun,²⁰ the most famous harbor, more merchant sailors are living than in the whole rest of the world. Every year more than one hundred ships, loaded with pepper, are supposed to leave that harbor, not counted the other ships loading different spices. That country is very populous, having many provinces, states and countless cities, being under the rule of a ruler who is called Great Khan,²¹ which means as much as King of the Kings. His domicile and his residence are mostly situated in the province of Cathay²². His ancestors wished to get into contact with the Christians. Already 200 years ago they sent to the Pope and asked for several clergymen for teaching them the faith. But on the way they met with obstacles and returned.

During the pontificate of Pope Eugene,²³ too, a legate came confirming him their great benevolence to the Christians. I, by myself, had with him long discussions about various things, the size of the royal palaces, the width and marvelous length of the rivers, the multitude of their cities on the river banks, which is so enormous that on only one river there are built about 200 cities, which are spanned by marble bridges of great width and length, everywhere decorated with columns. This country is worth to be visited by the Latins,²⁴ not only since there can be obtained immense treasures of gold, silver and all kinds of precious stones, but also because of the scholars, philosophers and experienced astrologers and for getting informed with which skill and spirit this so powerful land is governed and how it wages war.

¹⁸ Portuguese.

¹⁹ North Pole.

²⁰ Quanzhou 泉州.

²¹ The Europeans had not found out yet that in China the last Great Khan was overthrown by the Ming 明 in 1368.

²² Cathay = North China. Name derived from the 契丹 Qidan/Khitan (遼 Liao-Dynasty), who ruled in North China from 907 to 1125.

²³ Obviously Pope Eugene IV (pontificate: 1431-1447).

²⁴ Latins (in German: Lateiner): People speaking a Roman language.

From Lisbon to the west, in straight line, you have marked in 26 spaces,²⁵ each of them containing 250 miles, to the marvelous and big city of Quinsay.²⁶ This city has a circumference of 100 miles as well as 10 bridges. The name means “City of Heaven,”²⁷ and many wonderful stories are reported concerning its artisans and its incomes. The distance up to that place is almost one third of the circumference of the Earth.²⁹ That city is located in the province of Mangi,³⁰ in the neighborhood of the province of Cathay, in which the capital of the sovereign is situated. From the also well-known island Antilia, which you call the Island of the Seven Cities,³¹ to the famous island Cippangu³² there are 10 spaces. But that island is very rich in gold, pearls and precious stones; temples and palaces are covered with pure gold. Since the way to those places is not known yet, all these routes still have not been discovered, either; but surely one can get thither. There would be much more to describe, but because I already have explained that verbally and you, of course, understand all those facts clearly, I do not want to expound further. This may be enough as answer to your question, so far the shortness of time and my works give me allowance for corresponding. But I am at His Majesty’s disposal at any time.

Florence, June 25th 1474”

Moreover, Toscanelli encouraged Columbus to sail westward to East Asia. Doing so would not be very difficult and, in addition, Columbus would become very famous.

Similar opinions had the German geographer Hieronymus Münzer, as can be seen in his letter he wrote to King John II³³ of Portugal on July 14th 1493. At that time Columbus had already discovered America, but obviously that was still unknown in Nuremberg, where the letter was written. Its, in this connection, most important part is to be read as follows:

²⁵ Between meridians.

²⁶ Hangzhou 杭州.

²⁷ That translation, of course, is false. Having been expelled by the Nüzhen 女真 - Tartars (Jin-Dynasty 金朝, successors of the Liao-Dynasty 遼朝) from their former residence in Bianjing 汴京 (also: Bianliang 汴梁; now Kaifeng 開封), the Sung 宋 – rulers fled southwards and made Linan 臨安 (now Hangzhou 杭州) into their new capital in 1138, calling it “Xingzai 行在” (“Temporary Halt”). Therefore named “Quinsay” or similar by Marco Polo.

²⁸ On this occasion many thanks to Eleanor B. Morris Wu, author of the book “FROM CHINA TO TAIWAN/Historical, Anthropological, and Religious Perspectives” (Collectanea Serica, Monumenta Serica Institute, Sankt Augustin, Germany 2004) and others, for giving me some advice in English! Many thanks also to Student HUNG GUO CHIN 洪國欽, Central Police University/Taiwan, for much assistance!

²⁹ In reality: eastward. Westward: about two thirds.

³⁰ Mangi = South China. Derived from “Manzi 蠻子.”

³¹ Regarding legends, after the Christian Visigoths had been beaten by the Muslim Arabs in the battle of Jerez de la Frontera (711), the bishop of Porto (today the second biggest city of Portugal), together with six other bishops, fled westward to an island named “Antilha” (“Anti-Island”) where they founded seven cities. “Seven Cities” were sought in the West for a long time (the “Seven Cities of Cibola,” for instance, in the territories of the later US-states New Mexico and Arizona) but, just as the island, never found.

³² Ribenguo 日本國 = Japan.

³³ John (João) II (ruled from 1481 to 1495).

“I maintain that the beginning of the habitable east of the earth is situated very near to the end of the habitable west. Evidence therefore consists in the elephants, of which very many are living at both sides as well as in the reeds from the east coast the storm washes up on the banks of the Azores Islands.³⁴ Moreover, there is countless, and I am allowed to say sure proof, from which can be concluded that the sea westward to the eastern Cathay can be crossed within a few days.”³⁵

Regarding the size of the Earth, above-mentioned geographers obtained their knowledge from the Roman scientist Ptolemy of Alexandria,³⁶ who considered the circumference of the Earth as too small.³⁷ Their information on East Asia they got mainly from Marco Polo.

Around 1510 it was obvious that the new territories discovered by Columbus³⁸ and his successors were no parts of Asia. The Spanish expedition (1519-1522) under the command of the Portuguese captain Magellan (Fernão de Magalhães) and, after he was killed on the now Philippine Mactan Island (27th April 1521), Juan Sebastián Delcano (del Cano; Elcano), clarified that “America” in reality was far away from East Asia.

From about 1430 on, Portuguese seafarers sailed along the west coast of Africa, trying to find a route to India and the “Far East.” After Diogo Cão had explored large parts of the Southwest African coast from 1482-86, in 1487 and 1488 the Portuguese captain Bartholomew Diaz (Bartolomeu Dias) circumnavigated the southernmost parts of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope (Cabo da Boa Esperança; Hao Wang Jiao 好望角) and Cape Agulhas.³⁹ Then Vasco da Gama, leading three ships with 150 seamen, reached India (Calicut) in 1498. Eleven years later the Portuguese commander Diogo Lopes de Sequeira arrived at Malakka, which the Portuguese, under command of Afonso (Affonso) de Albuquerque, conquered on 15th August 1511.⁴⁰ In 1513, the Portuguese (under leadership of Jorge Álvarez) entered proper Chinese soil for the first time: the Tunmen 屯門島 – Island.⁴¹

Those maritime expeditions of the Portuguese opened the relations between Europe and China for good, i.e. from that time on they were never interrupted again. The voyages of Columbus,

³⁴ Maybe, at least partly, from America.

³⁵ German translation: Hennig, *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol.IV, pp. 236-239.

³⁶ Claudius Ptolemaeus (Latin) / Klaudios Ptolemaios (Greek); c.100 - c.170 AD.

³⁷ Ineradicable legend: Ptolemy considered the Earth as a “disc.” That is not correct; he claimed otherwise!

³⁸ 1451-1506.

³⁹ Cape Agulhas [“Agulhas” (Portuguese) = “Needles”] is the southernmost tip of Africa.

⁴⁰ From the voyages of Zheng He 鄭和 on, the Ming 明 government considered Malacca as a vassal of China. Thus the conquest of that city marred the Portuguese-Chinese relations already at their beginnings.

⁴¹ Portuguese names: Tamão and Tamam. Also called: Lingding 伶仃. Portuguese names: Ilha de Lentem; Ilha de Veniaga.

but with still much more serious consequences (mostly even deadly for the American natives⁴²), produced similar results: Europe and America, as well as the “Old World” and the “New World,” within a short time were much more connected than ever before, and till today those connections became stronger and stronger. Consequently, from the point of view of world history, the question to what extent Columbus must be considered as the discoverer of America is easy to answer: Columbus was in no way the **discoverer** of America; he was rather **the** discoverer of America.

2) The discovery of Taiwan by the Europeans and the naming “Ilha Formosa”

About 1510, as the Portuguese started sailing into the South China Sea, they were informed, as Tomé Pires,⁴³ crown factor in Malacca from 1512 to 1515 and later the first, hapless Portuguese ambassador to China, pointed out, of the existence of the Ryukyu (Liuqiu 琉球; Lequeos/Guores⁴⁴) – Islands, probably more or less including Taiwan:⁴⁵

“The Lequeos are called Guores - they are known by either of these names. Lequios is the chief one. The king is a heathen and all the people too. He is a tributary vassal of the king of the Chinese. His island is large and has many people; they have small ships of their own type; they have three or four junks which are continuously buying in China, and they have no more. They trade in China and in Malacca, and sometimes in company with the Chinese, sometimes on their own. In China they trade in the port of Foquem [Fukien]⁴⁶ which is in the land of China near Canton – a day and a night sail away. The Malays say to the people of Malacca that there is no difference between Portuguese and Lequjos,⁴⁷ except that the Portuguese buy women, which the Lequjos do not.

The Lequjos have only wheat in their country, and rice and wines after their fashion, meat, and fish in great abundance. They are great draftsmen and armourers. They make gilt coffers, very rich and well-made fans, swords, many arms of all kinds after their fashion. Just as we in our kingdoms speak of Milan, so the Chinese and all other races speak of the Lequjos. They are very truthful men. They do not buy slaves, nor would they sell one of their own men for the whole world, and they would die over this.

⁴² More: Mann, 1491.

⁴³ Armando Cortesão, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* [written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515], p. 128-131; Boxer, Charles Ralph, *The Christian Century in Japan*, p. 11f.

⁴⁴ Guores: probably derived from the Arabian “Ghur” or “Al-Ghur.” Boxer, *Christian Century* p. 14.

⁴⁵ The Chinese called the original Ryukyu Islands “Big Ryukyu” (“Da Liuqiu 大琉球”), but the much bigger Taiwan Island “Little Ryukyu” (“Xiao Liuqiu 小琉球”). Therefore the name “Lequeo Pequeno” (“Little Ryukyu”) or similar given to Taiwan by the Europeans.

⁴⁶ Remark in Boxer, *Christian Century* p. 10.

⁴⁷ The inhabitants of Ryukyu.

The Lequjos are idolaters; if they are sailing and find themselves in danger, they say that if they escape they buy a beautiful maiden to be sacrificed and behead her on the prow of the junk, and other things like these. They are white men, well dressed, better than the Chinese, more dignified. They sail to China and take the merchandise that goes from Malacca to China, and go to Japan, which is an island seven or eight days' sail distant, and take the gold and copper in the said island in exchange for their merchandise. The Lequejos are men who sell their merchandise freely for credit, and if they are lied to when they collect payment, they collect it sword in hand.

The chief [merchandise]⁴⁸ is gold, copper, and arms of all kinds, coffers, boxes with gold-leaf veneer, fans, wheat, and their things are well made. They bring a great deal of gold. They are truthful men – more so than the Chinese – and feared. They bring a great store of paper and silk in colours. They bring musk, porcelain, damask; they bring onions and many vegetables.

They take the same merchandise as the Chinese take. They leave here in [blank],⁴⁹ and one, two or three junks come to Malacca every year, and they take a great deal of Bengal clothing. Among the Lequjos Malacca wine is greatly esteemed. They load large quantities of one kind which is like brandy, with which the Malays make themselves [run]⁵⁰ amuck. The Lequjos bring swords worth thirty cruzados each, and many of these.”⁵¹

Furthermore, as far as we know, Tomé Pires was the first European calling Japan (“Jampon”) by a direct precursor of its current names in western languages:

“The island of Japan (Jampon), according to what all the Chinese say, is larger than that of the Lequjos, and the king is more powerful and greater, and is not given to trading, nor [are]⁵² his subjects. He is a heathen king, a vassal of the king of China. They do not often trade in China because it is far off and they have no junks, nor are they seafaring men.

The Lequjos go to Japan in seven or eight days and take the said merchandise, and trade it for gold and copper. All that comes from the Lequjos is brought by them from Japan. And the Lequjos trade with the people of Japan in cloths, fishing nets, and other merchandise.”⁵³

It seems that Tomé Pires got (intentionally?) much false information about Japan.

⁴⁸ Remark in Boxer, Christian century p. 11.

⁴⁹ Ditto.

⁵⁰ Ditto.

⁵¹ Cortesão, Suma Oriental: Boxer, Christian Century pp. 10-11.

⁵² Remark in Boxer, Christian Century, p. 11.

⁵³ Cortesão, Suma Oriental: Boxer, Christian Century p. 11.

During the following decades the Portuguese spared no effort to achieve a base for trading in China,⁵⁴ what they succeeded in Macau/Aomen 澳門 in 1557/82. Furthermore, via the Strait of Taiwan and the East China Sea, they advanced to Japan, where they arrived in 1542 or, more likely, in 1543.⁵⁵ More or less simultaneously, as Father Alonso Sanchez stated, Taiwan was, for the first time, called by the name “Ilha Formosa” or, more probably, by a predecessor of it (i.e. “Fermoza,” “Hermosa” etc.):

“...an island they call hermosa because of the fine appearance of this part possessing high and green mountains between which and the coast of China the Portuguese since about forty years get through on their way to Japan neither having recognized it nor having arrived on it.”⁵⁶

The oldest still existing source recording one of the above-mentioned names, i.e. “I.fremoza,” for Taiwan is a map drawn by the Portuguese cartographer Lopo Homem in 1554.⁵⁷ Further maps followed, in some of them constructed, south of the Formosa Island, together with numerous other islands, one named “Little Ryukyu” (“Lequeo minor”⁵⁸ etc.), although this, too, was a (Chinese) name for Taiwan. It seems that many European geographers had still not realized that “Formosa” and “Little Ryukyu” were the same island (at the other hand, others may not have known about the existence of an island named “Formosa” in the “Far East” at all), offering two possibilities:

⁵⁴ Completely, of course, in agreement with the Chinese. Although the Portuguese had better weapons, conquest of Chinese territory was then out of question.

⁵⁵ In 1542 António da Mota, Francisco Zeimoto and António Peixoto left Siam (from 1939 on: Thailand) and sailed to the coast of Fukien near Quanzhou for trading. On their return journey they got into a typhoon (tuffão) and had to anchor between some islands without knowing where they were. Their inhabitants, called “Nipongi” or “Nipponjin” (=“Japanese”), received them very warm-heartedly. It seems that these three Portuguese were the first European discoverers of Japan and not, as Fernão Mendes Pinto (Portuguese adventurer and writer; c. 1510-1583) claimed, he (=Pinto), Cristóvão Borralho and Diogo Zeimoto in 1541: Boxer, *Christian Century* pp. 21-27. Gomes, Luís Gonzaga, *Efêmero Comércio Português, no Séc. XVI na China do Norte* (Ephemeral Portuguese Trade in North China in the 16th Century). *Boletim do Instituto “Luís de Camões,”* Macau, October 1967, p. 124. Luís Vaz de Camões (1524/25 – 1580): most famous Portuguese poet.

⁵⁶ “...una ysla que llaman hermosa por la linda apariencia que tiene desta parte de montañas altas y verdes por entre la qual y la costa de la China a ya quarenta años poco más o menos que los portugueses pasan a Xapon sin nunca haberla reconocido ni llegado a ella.” *Labor evangélica*: Francisco Colín, *Historiados*, tomo I, p. 299; Boxer, Charles Ralph, *The Great Ship from Amacan*, p. 44.

hermosa (Spanish) = formosa (Portuguese) = beautiful (female) = meili 美麗 (女性).

isla (Spanish) = ilha (Portuguese) = island = dao 島.

⁵⁷ Ts’ao Yung-ho 曹永和, *Taiwan Zaoqi Lishi Yanjiu 臺灣早期歷史研究* (Study of the early history of Taiwan), Taipei 2006, p. 300f; map 3A. Wen-hsiung Hsu, *From Aboriginal Island to Chinese Frontier: The Development of Taiwan before 1683*. In: Knapp, Ronald G., *China’s Island Frontier*, p. 10f, 161f. Ts’ao Yung-ho refers to Japanese works and Wen-hsiung Hsu to Ts’ao Yung-ho, speaking of “I. Fremosa” and “I. fremoza” respectively. In my opinion, the name can also be read as “I.fermoza” (from a copy of map 3A of Lopo Homem in Ts’ao Yung-ho, *Studies*).

⁵⁸ minor (Latin) = pequeno (Portuguese) = pequeño (Spanish) = little (male) = xiao 小 (男性).

1. Little Ryukyu and Formosa were different islands.⁵⁹
2. The Portuguese, in the 16th century, gave, except Taiwan, one or some more islands in Southeast Asia also the name “Formosa” (or similar) and therefore sometimes another island having this name was meant.

The latter seems to be very improbable but perhaps cannot be excluded completely, because the Portuguese were very generous in calling islands “Formosa.”

As the Portuguese seafarer Fernão do Pó vainly tried to find a sea route to India, he discovered, probably in 1469, an island. Fascinated by its beauty, he called it “Formosa” [“Beautiful One” (female)]. Later that island was named, after its (European) discoverer, “Fernando Póo.” From 1979 on it is officially called “Bioko.”⁶⁰

Furthermore, an island, belonging to Guinea-Bissau, the former Portuguese Guinea, also has the name “Ilha Formosa (Formosa)” (“Beautiful Island/Meilidao 美麗島”).

The first reference to the real name “Formosa” for Taiwan dates from 1564, stated by an anonymous Portuguese (“hum Português homem honrado” = “an honorable Portuguese”), who, under extremely bad weather conditions, went by ship from Macau to Japan, passing thereby the islands “Formosa” and “Little Ryukyu” and recording those facts in a letter:

“We left for Japan on the 6th July 1564 and on the day that we left the port,⁶¹ when we spread only our foresail, the ship listed so badly that we almost put back, for many times I saw her ship water over the side, although such a mighty vessel. That night we slept between the islands which are near Amacao⁶² and we took five days to sail from there to Chincheo⁶³ or about as far as that. Coasting along the island Formosa and little Liquio, a storm blew up which forced us to lie-to...”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ That follows particularly from maps constructed by the Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598) in 1570: Ts’ao Yung-ho, Study, maps 12 and 13.

⁶⁰ Claimed by Portugal till 1789, the island was ceded to Spain in the same year. Since 1968, Fernando Póo/Bioko belongs to Equatorial Guinea, the former Spanish Guinea.

⁶¹ Macau or Lampacau (Langbaijiao Island 浪白滯島): Boxer, The Great Ship from Amacon, p. 309.

⁶² Macau.

⁶³ Fukien Fujian 福建 Province, and more precisely the cities of Zhangzhou 漳州, Quanzhou 泉州 and their surroundings: Boxer, The Great Ship p. 309.

⁶⁴ Cartas que os Padres e Irmãos de Companhia de Jesus escreverão dos Reynos de Japao e China aos da mesma Companhia da India, e Europa, desde anno de 1549 até o de 1580 (Letters, written by the Fathers and Brothers of the Jesuits from the Kingdoms Japan and China to those of the same Society in India and Europe from 1549 to 1580), Évora/Portugal 1598: Boxer, Charles Ralph, the Great Ship p. 309 and p. 345. 1580 is written falsely for 1589: Boxer, The Great ship p. 345.

Whereas maps, as already mentioned, without exception show Little Ryukyu in the south of Formosa, the anonymous author quotes them in opposite order.

3) The first Europeans come to Taiwan

In 1575 the Spanish Augustinian Father Martín de Rada⁶⁵, coming from Manila, together with 18 companions traveled around the Chinese province Fukien (Fujian 福建). On the way back, as on the voyage out by Chinese ships, they first set course to Penghu 澎湖, the main island of the archipelago of the same name.⁶⁶ Having missed that island, they arrived at a river mouth, probably that of the Zhuoshui 濁水溪 - River on the west coast of Taiwan.⁶⁷ Consequently, Martín de Rada and his companions seem to have been the first Europeans entering Taiwanese soil.⁶⁸ About that occurrence he wrote as follows:

“Having left the city of Hogchiu⁶⁹ on 22 August 1575, we reached the port [of Amoy]⁷⁰ at the beginning of September. After quickly preparing for our voyage, we set sail on the 14th of the same month, and navigating with variable winds, we reached a river which is but a short distance from the island of Pehou,⁷¹ whither we were holding our course. And entering further in, for it was very great and mighty, we learnt from the country people that the pirate Limahon⁷² had anchored in it with his fleet over a month ago; for having left Luzon in a very shattered state he had gone thither, since it was his old haunt, to repair and refit himself from the damage he had suffered. For out of his thirty-seven ships which he had taken from Pangasinan,⁷³ he had only brought eleven; of the which, only the one in which he came was of any size, another two being rather smaller, and all the others were small and ill-furnished, most of them being without sails. We were greatly vexed at this news, for we had believed that Limahon was already destroyed; however, notwithstanding, we suspended our

⁶⁵ 1533-1578.

⁶⁶ Mostly called in western languages “Pescadores [(Portuguese, Spanish) = “Fishermen”] – Islands.”

⁶⁷ Boxer, Charles Ralph, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 257.

⁶⁸ Moreover, as far as we know, Martín de Rada was the first person identifying “Cathay” with “China”: Boxer, *South China* pp. lxxv-lxxvi. “The Country which we commonly call China was called by Marco Polo the Venetian the kingdom of Cathay, perhaps because it was then so called; for when he came there, which was about the year 1312, it was ruled by the Tartars.” *Relation of the things of China, which is properly called Taybin* [Da Ming 大明] (written in late 1575 or early 1576, and translated from a Manila MS. of c. 1590 in the editor’s [C.R.Boxer’s] possession). *Ibid.*, p. 260. Marco Polo (allegedly?) lived in China from 1275-1292.

⁶⁹ Fuzhou 福州. Boxer, *South China* p. 247.

⁷⁰ Remark of C. R. Boxer. Amoy = Xiamen 廈門.

⁷¹ Penghu 澎湖.

⁷² Lin Feng 林風; then notorious Chinese corsair. The Spaniards, in cooperation with Chinese officials and sailors, tried to eliminate or at least to catch him; but Lin Feng escaped. More: Lo Jung-pang, Lin Feng, *Dictionary of Ming-Biography*, pp. 917-919.

⁷³ Bay of Lingayen, on the west coast of Luzón/Philippines.

judgement until we could learn for certain the truth of what had happened. Aumòn⁷⁴ and Sinsay⁷⁵ summoned a council of the captains and military commanders in order to decide what should be done in this case. Some were of the opinion that information thereof should be sent to China, so that a fleet could be sent to seize him. Others said, and among them were Aumòn and Sinsay, that we should go against the corsair, since we were numerous enough and our ships were large and strong; and according to the story of some fishermen, Limahon did not have his fleet together, but some vessels were in the river and others in Palahoàn,⁷⁶ to seek provisions, and to cut canes to make sails. However, our General, who was of a very different opinion, did not agree with this, giving as an excuse that he had no orders to fight; that if he had been sent for that purpose they would have given him more ships and fighting-men, and that the veteran soldiers of Limahon were very courageous, accustomed to fighting and the terror of China, whereas his own were mostly raw recruits and inexperienced. He added that he had been sent only to conduct the Padres to Luzon, and to ascertain the condition of the blockade of Limahon, and that thus he would do nothing else, - but that if the others wanted to fight, they could go and he would not prevent them, even though he would not go with them. And thus they could do what seemed best to them, since his person would be no great loss to them, and he would go in one of those fishers' boats to China, to inform the Viceroy⁷⁷ of the state of affairs and the reason why he returned. There were various arguments and opinions among them concerning this matter, and they finally persuaded themselves (perhaps from expediency) that the news which the fishers gave of Limahon was false, and that it was not possible for him to have left Pangasinàn in the way which they related; and they therefore ordered that nobody should speak further with the fishers on this affair, and that we should hasten on our voyage, without touching at the island of Tacen,⁷⁸ for fear of the stormy weather which was threatening.

We left Pehou at midnight on 11 October, and at dawn we were off some islets called Guenio,⁷⁹ towards the south a quarter to the South-west. The following night, it came on to blow hard, with which two ships of the fleet parted company; one of them being that of Aumòn, in which we were, and another small one. Finally, after various storms and misadventures, the whole fleet reached the island of Luzon after five days sailing...⁸⁰

In 1582 a Portuguese ship, on the way from Macau to Japan and aboard among others the Jesuit Fathers Pero (Pedro) Gomes, the already mentioned Alonso (Afonso) Sanchez

⁷⁴ Wang Wanggao 王望高: Bazong 把總 (=commander of the coast watch of a city).

⁷⁵ Xinshi 信師: Chinese merchant, acting as interpreter.

⁷⁶ Palahoàn = Palawan? A Philippine island, but comparatively far away from Taiwan!

⁷⁷ Xunfu Dutang 巡撫都堂. Usually called "Viceroy" by the Europeans.

⁷⁸ Possibly an allusion to Southwest - Formosa. Boxer, South China p. 258.

⁷⁹ Presumably the outlying islets of the Pescadores/Penghu 澎湖. Ibid.

⁸⁰ Narrative of the mission to Fukien [Fujian 福建], June-October, 1575 (translated from Fr. Gaspar de San Agustín, O.E.S.A., *Conquistas de las islas Philipinas* [Conquests of the Philippine Islands], Madrid 1698): Boxer, South China pp. 257-258.

(Sánchez) and Francisco Pires, stranded on Taiwan. Repairing their ship, they had to stay there for 2 1/2 months, before, enforced, returning to Macau. Regarding this undertaking, Father Pero Gomes (Pedro Gómez) left behind two letters (one in Spanish, one in Portuguese),⁸¹ Father Alonso Sanchez a treatise in Spanish and Father Francisco Pires (Pirez) one in Portuguese.^{82,83} Remarking those events, Pero Gomez wrote about “Little Ryukyu” (Spanish: “El Lequeo pequeño,” Portuguese: “Liqueo piqueno”), Alonso Sanchez, as already mentioned, of “Hermosa,” Francisco Pires of “Fermoza.” Consequently, “Formosa,” in connection with predecessors of this name, was, at least de facto, equated with “Little Ryukyu” for the first time.

Some excerpts from the letter written by Fr. Pedro Gómez S.J. to another Jesuit priest in Macau, 13 December 1582:⁸⁴

“On the sixth of July 1582, we, four priests and a brother, left that College of China on the orders of the Visitor⁸⁵ who stayed behind. It is worth knowing who they were: Fr. Alonso Sánchez, an old priest, a Spaniard and a man of letters, who came here from Luzon under orders of obedience...;⁸⁶ Fr. Alvaro de Toro and Fr. Cristobal Moreira, both of whom came from Japan with the Visitor in order to be ordained and later return as priests; another brother from that college who accompanied me; and myself...

Our lord allowed – I do not know if it may be said that Divine Providence willed it – that in the morning of 16 July, on the fourth moon of this month, amidst rough waters, our junk collided against an island called Liqueo pequeno.⁸⁷ I do not know if the Portuguese had ever landed [on this island.]⁸⁸ ...

After abandoning the ship, we gathered on the shore, some in rags, others naked, others soaked to the bone, and everyone with a new fear of not knowing where we were or what we were to do. Soon, around 20 pagans of the land approached us. They were naked and

⁸¹ Letter in Spanish language in ARSJ, tomo IX, vol. I, p. 108-109 v, carta de Pero Gomez, escrita de Macau, aos 11. [13.?] 12.1582, para o Geral dos Jesuitas, Acquaviva): Enciclopédia Luso-Brasileira de Cultura, volume 8, p. 1276f. Letter in Portuguese language in Cartas (=letters), 1581-1589, Évora 1598, sheets 83-86. Look also in: Boxer, The Great Ship p.44.

⁸² Pires, Francisco, Pontos do q’me a lembrar (Points I can remember), sheets 4-6, Lisbon, 1747; Boxer, The Great Ship p. 44.

⁸³ These accounts are by no means without discrepancies.

⁸⁴ Translation of the whole letter into modernized Portuguese and into English with many explanations: Mateo, José Eugenio Borao, Spaniards in Taiwan, Vol. I, pp. 2-9.

⁸⁵ A certain Alexandro Valignano. Visitor: clerical inspector of clerical institutions (Roman Catholic Church).

⁸⁶ Pedro Gómez, too, was a Spaniard. Mateo, Spaniards p. 2.

⁸⁷ “...hũa ilha & costa braua, onde não sei deraõ nunca Portugueses, que se chama Liqueo piqueno...” (“...an island with a rough shore, at which I do not know if no Portuguese have arrived, named Liqueo piqueno...”)

Cartas, Évora sheet 83.

⁸⁸ All extra remarks in these three letters made by the translator, i.e. José Eugenio Borao Mateo.

covered only by a loincloth like the ones of the Canary Islands.⁸⁹ Their hair was loose and reached down to the ears. Some of them wore strips of white paper like a crown. All of them bore arches and a fistful of arrows with very sharp and long tips. They came and, without saying anything, began to gather all the white cloth that was around us: linen, towels, shirts, etc. Our Portuguese companions not only allowed it, but also gladly gave up the things because we had no weapons, and [the Portuguese] did not know what kind of people they were, whether they ate human flesh or not. They dared not defy them in any way, principally because did not want to provoke [the natives] to shoot or kill us with their arrows, leaving no one alive. This was already a great favor from God. Because of this, [the natives], freely loaded themselves and made off with [the things], hiding them in the field. And they would come for more, confidently and swiftly, as though no one else was on the beach. Only the gold bars and the silver pieces that the men hid escaped a similar fate. Despite this, they had already borne away a good part of one cargo...

Later, due to some disorder, the negros [i.e., natives] were so scandalized by [our behavior] that they ceased to be our friends and to bring us aid. Instead, they shot arrows and spied on us as they would their enemies. They killed a cafre [i.e., black slave] with their arrows and shortly, another three. Each one had three or four arrows buried in his body. They killed two Chinamen from our company and we killed one negro [i.e., native] from their side..."

A section from the account of Fr. Alonso Sánchez, written on August 15th 1583.⁹⁰

"[The distance between] Macao and Japan is 300 leagues,⁹¹ sailing eastward through the coast of China; and between Japan and Luzon, there are more than 200 leagues, going southwest. Thus one can see the great roundabout [taken]. We sailed eight or 10 days from Macao to Japan, beset by difficulties, as this gulf had such a generous share of storms and hurricanes that - as people say when we returned - neither mast nor rudder was spared. In the end, God did not want us to go there.

Along the way, traveling through this gulf, is an island called Hermosa, for its tall and green mountains seen from this side are a sight lovely to behold. The Portuguese have traveled to Japan between this island and the Chinese coast for about 40 years without ever exploring or landing on it. This [the accident] we owe to the pilot's negligence. It was a Sunday at midnight. [There was a] great wind. The junk or ship which I boarded was very big and carried all of Macao's wealth because the other [boat] ahead was small and carried little

⁸⁹ Their native inhabitants, the Guanche and Canario (Guanches y Canarios), were subjugated by Spain in the 15th century. Now completely extinct (wiped out?) or absorbed by the Spaniards.

⁹⁰ Translation: same as the letter of Pedro Gómez: Mateo, Spaniards pp. 10—11.

⁹¹ 1 league (legua) = about 5 kilometers.

cargo.

We managed to get off with some planks, while others swam until they got exhausted. In short, the great junk fell into pieces and all the goods were scattered on the shore and rotted there. Later, some natives, naked and [armed] with bows and quivers, fell on us and with great spirit and determination, without hesitating and without hurting anyone, divested us of everything that we had. They came everyday, and more often at night, killing some and wounding many with their arrows, to the point that we had to defend ourselves the best we could. We remained in this condition more than three months⁹² [feeding on] available rice until we finally finished building a small boat out of the pieces we retrieved from the large one.

We boarded [this boat], over 290 of us⁹³, and left without ballast or supplies-only with five or six jugs of water and a little rice because the shoal through which we passed was so shallow and the coast extremely rough that it was impossible to leave with more cargo. The departure itself was so difficult since we spent over a month planning how to bring the boat to [the water] without having it fall into pieces, and thus leaving us with no other alternative but to be the next meal for those barbaric people whom we knew to be cannibals.

Finally, we left. God gave us such a wind that in seven or eight days we returned to Macao where we were received with so much sorrow and sadness among old and young alike [over the loss of goods] because there was no one so poor as not to send his cornadillo⁹⁴ to Japan, for they had no other job or other means to sustain themselves.”

And some excerpts from the statements of Francisco Pirez:^{95,96}

“How we disembarked in Isla Formosa and the things that came to pass until we returned to Macao.”⁹⁷

Captain Andre Feyo⁹⁸ with some men and the fathers Pedro Gómez, Alonso Sánchez, Alvaro Días, and I boarded the sampan. And because it was already low tide, we reached land with great difficulty through the sandy area and vast seas. It must have been ten minutes to eleven in the morning. The inhabitants of the land who lived in the jungle, men and women wielding bows and arrows, later went to the beach to collect the scattered cargo...

We tried to buy a boat but failed, which left us in the same bad condition. For after having finished our boat, storm and rains came by the hand of St Matthew, filling up the stream that

⁹² Evidently just 2 1/2 months.

⁹³ “...We were some 90 passengers in it...” In above-mentioned letter of Pedro Gómez. Mateo, Spaniards p. 9.

⁹⁴ What “cornadillo” means is not explained.

⁹⁵ Pires, Pontos. Also translated and explained (with extra remarks) by Mateo, Spaniards pp. 12-15.

⁹⁶ Francisco Pirez (Pires) was a Portuguese Jesuit. Mateo, Spaniards p. 12.

⁹⁷ “De como desembarcíamos na Ilha Fermoza, e do que passou até tornarmos à Macao.” Pires, Pontos sheet 4.

⁹⁸ Also: André Feio.

bore off our boat despite it being held down by seven mooring ropes. God willed that in a turn of the river [the boat] stopped with minimal damage. And so we remained hoping for fair weather and high tide, which was a very difficult thing to do since it was a rough coast, deep, and ruled by the northern winds that had started to blow.

Our Lord willed in the afternoon of the day of St Michael [September 29] that we be granted a strong current and high tide that took the boat out to where we all could embark. And we sailed into the open sea on the day of St Jereme [September 30] with a brisk wind, leaving behind the artillery, one bell and the entire cargo, fearing that the boat would be destroyed. As I have mentioned, this was a rough coast. We arrived in Macao on a Sunday afternoon on the day of St Francis [October 4], rejoicing that we had reached safe port. But the city [i.e., Macao] was in great sorrow because we abandoned the goods [in Isla Hermosa]. Fr. Alexandre⁹⁹ in particular felt it deeply because he had put all his hope on this trip.”

Conclusion

Therefore, with some security, can be said as follows:

1. The Europeans, namely Portuguese, learned, at least indirectly (Ryukyu/Liuqiu 琉球), about the existence of Taiwan in 1510 or some years later.
2. The first naming of a predecessor of “Ilha Formosa” (i.e. “Hermosa,” “Fermoza” etc.) took place about 1542, more or less at the same time as the Portuguese discovered Japan.
3. The name “I. fremozza” (“fermoza?”) appears for the first time on a map, constructed by the Portuguese cartographer Lopo Homem in 1554.
4. The real name “Formosa” for Taiwan, as far as we know, is mentioned for the first time in a letter, written by an anonymous Portuguese in 1564.
5. The first Europeans entering Taiwanese soil were presumably the Spanish Augustine Father Martín de Rada and his companions (1575).
6. The first (de facto-) equation of the name “Little Ryukyu” (“Lequeo pequeño”, “Liqueo piqueno”). with “Formosa” (“Hermosta”, “Fermosa”) occurred in 1582 and few years later by the Jesuits Pero Gomez, Alonso Sanchez and Francisco Pires.

⁹⁹ Visitor Alexandro Valignano.

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