

**THE HISTORY OF THAT GREAT AND RENOWNED
MONARCHY OF CHINA. WHEREIN ALL THE
PARTICULAR PROVINCES ARE ACCURATELY
DESCRIBED: AS ALSO THE DISPOSITIONS,
MANNERS, LEARNING, LAWES, MILITIA,
GOVERNMENT, AND RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE**

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ALVARO SEMEDO

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The true Effigies of F. Alvarez Seme do
Procurator of y^e Prouinces of Japan & China. /
The first part
de novo et ab initio. 1627. p. 207.

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THE HISTORY
OF
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MONARCHY
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CHINA.

Wherein all the particular Provinces are accurately described: as also the Dispositions, Manners, Learning, Lawes, Militia, Government, and Religion of the People.
Together with the Traffick and Commodities of that Countrey.

Lately written in *Italian* by F. ALVAREZ SEMEDO, a *Portughefs*, after he had resided twenty two years at the Court, and other Famous Cities of that Kingdom.

Now put into *English* by a Person of quality, and illustrated with several MAPPS and FIGURES, to satisfie the curious, and advance the Trade of Great BRITTAIN.

To which is added the History of the late Invasion, and Conquest of that flourishing Kingdom by the TARTARS.

With an exact Account of the other affairs of CHINA, till these present Times.

L O N D O N,

Printed by E. Tyler for John Crook, and are to be sold at his Shop at the Sign of the Ship in S. Pauls Church-yard. 1655.



The Epistle to the Reader.

Courteous Reader,



Present thee with that long expected, most exact History of the Lawes, Government, Manners, and present state and condition of that great Monarchy of China; in its circuit little less then all Europe; Heretofore (as zealous of its rare treasures) shut and locked up from the curious eyes of strangers: so that this booke (first) yeilds to thee a full discovery thereof. & (I dare say) the most valuable, that this our world hath been acquainted with, since that of America; whereby now the furthest East, as well as West, is disclosed, and laid open to the present age. For, as for some former relations, thou mayst have seen thereof, thou wilt by this discern them to be as fabulous, as they are compendious and imperfect.

It was written by one, who, after, first, a strict education in all sorts of learning, for two and twenty yeares space lived in that Kingdome, was resident at the Court, and in the greatest Cities thereof: and in all that time

To the Reader.

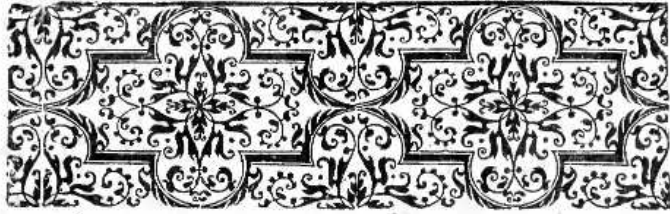
(as designing such a worke) was a diligent Observator and Collector of all their manners and customs ; as likewise (after much paines taken in the Language) a great student of their Histories, and Writings. Whose laborious worke, after it had already bin clothed in many other Languages, besides the Authors, and welcome entertained in most states of Europe, it was thought fit no longer to be concealed to a Nation, either for curiosity of knowledge, or industry of forraigne commerce, no way yeilding to her neighbours.

The variety of the subjects handled therein is so great (as comprehending the whole fabricke of that nation their Politicks, Oeconomicks, Sciences, Mechanicks, Riches, Merchandise, &c.) that those of whatsoever profession, may reap no small benefit in reading the designs, managements and practises therein, of so ingenious a People. Whose manners also (as their site) are so remote and different in most things from ours, that (I may say) in this piece is happily united, with the truth of History, the delight of a Romance: where it will be no small pleasure to thee to see their braines, as well as their bodies, as it were of a severall mould from the Europeans, and their inventions in many things, to walke antipodes to us, and yet in these no way below us, but in many superiour, or what in them appears less compleat, yet will the knowledge thereof not be ungratessull unto thee, because tis new and singular. As for many morall vertues, thou wilt find them so far to transcend us therein, that they may be proposed as an excellent patterne, (as also they are a shame) to Christian states. Lastly, to correct and reforme any their defects, and
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To the Reader.

make the nation perfectly happy, the light of Christianity hath of late visited this people, who sate in darknes: so that now (after America also enlightned) there is no end of the world left, wherinto the sound of the Gospel is not gone forth. The foundation of which being (there) already laid, there is great hopes that it may sooner cometo a full purity, reformation & perfection, & the indefatigable pains & undaunted courage of those laborers who cultivate it in the East, provoke a greater diligence and emulation therein, in our planters in the West; where the Gospel (as following a conquest) may be advanced both with much more safety and authority.

To the end of this Treatise, I have added the History of the Tartarian invasion of China, much enlarged & freed from divers Erratas of the former Edition; which gives thee an account of the Chinesse affaires till the yeare 1653. (Reader, thus much I thought good to advertise thee in the front of this Booke, that thou mayst not be so great an hinderance to thy selfe, as not to be acquainted with so curious and beneficiall a discourse. Farewell)



The Preface.



Who writeth of things farre remote, doth almost alwayes incurre the inconvenience of many, and those no small defects : hence it is, that we see many Books, whose Authours, for their personal Qualities, might deserve more credit than may justly be given to their writings. As for those, who have written of *China*, I have perused some of them, who leaving in oblivion almost all Truths, take the liberty to wander in discourses altogether fabulous : for this Kingdome being so remote, and having alwayes with much Care avoided all Communication with Strangers, reserving onely to themselves the knowledge of their own Affairs, with a most particular Caution : hence it followes, that nothing is knowne without the Confines thereof, but what doth, as it were, overflow into the skirts of the Country of *Cantone*, (a part of this Empire, whither the Portugheeses have been suffered to come) so that the most internall and secret knowledge thereof hath been reserved, either for the Natives of the Country, who know well enough how to conceale it; or for those, who, upon a better Motive, have, to discover it, little lesse then forgotten their own nature, their language, their customs, and manner of living, and transformed themselves into the naturall humour of that Country.

Now this last hath by divine dispensation, fallen to the lot of
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The Preface.

of the Religious of the Company of *Jesus*; who although they came late to the Culture of the Church, are, notwithstanding, arrived to that honour to be reckoned among the first, that after Saint Thomas the Apostle, did cultivate those remote Confines of the world.

It is now fifty eight years, that they have laboured under this so distant Climate, where directing all their force and endeavours, to the conversion of Souls, they account it a manifest Theft, to employ any otherwise that time which they owe to the Service of God, and is of so much importance for the Eternall Salvation of men. Hence it is, that never any yet did, or would it have been permitted him, if he had desired it, to employ himselfe in writing the Relation of this Kingdome; except it were Father *Nicolaus Trigalzius*, after he had by permission with-drawn himself from the culture of Christianity among the *Chineses*, and passed from thence into *Europe*.

Vpon the same occasion I have undertaken to give a briefe account thereof, sufficient at least for the instruction of those, who desire to be informed concerning those parts: forbearing to make a more large discourse at the present; but reserving it for another time; which may be, when wee shall returne to that vast Country, with new Labourers in so great a number, that some of the greatest Authority and Experience among us, may find leisure and convenience to undertake a perfect Relation.

In the mean time, abbreviating, as much as 'tis possible, this Information, without rendring that knowledge confused, which wee pretend to gratify the world with, we shall divide the work into two parts. The first containeth the materiall part of the Kingdome; that is, the Provinces; Land, and Fruits; and in a manner, the formal part too; that is, the people, their learning, and customes. The second, the Beginning of Christianity there, the progresse thereof, the persecutions suffered therein; and finally the condition, wherein I left it, at my departure thence. I hope this worke shall gain some esteem and credit, if not for the greatnesse of the Appearance, at least for the certainty of the reality of it; having
taken