A Note to the Illustrations

Study of the illustrations of Asia published in seventeenth-century Europe shows that the artists and illustrators tried in most cases to depict reality when they had the sources, such as sketches from the men in the field or the portable objects brought to Europe—plants, animals, costumes, paintings, porcelains, and so on. Many of the engravings based on sketches and paintings are convincing in their reality, such as the depiction of the Potala palace in Lhasa (pl. 384), the portrait of the "Old Viceroy" of Kwangtung (pl. 323), and the drawings of Siamese and Chinese boats. A number of Asian objects—Chinese scroll paintings, a Buddhist prayer wheel, and small animals—appeared in European engravings and paintings for the first time. Asians, like the Siamese emissaries to France, were sketched from life in Europe and their portraits engraved.

When sources were lacking, the illustrators and artists filled in the gaps in their knowledge by following literary texts, or by producing imaginary depictions, including maps. The illustrations of Japan, for example, are far more fantastic than those depicting other places, perhaps because Japan so stringently limited intercourse over much of the century. Printing-house engravers frequently "borrowed" illustrations from earlier editions and often "improved" upon them by adding their own touches which had the effect of Europeanizing them.

Illustrations were "translated" along with texts in various ways. If the publisher of a translation had close relations with the original publisher or printer he might borrow the original copperplate engravings or have the original publisher pull prints from the original plates to be bound with the translated pages. Engraved captions could be rubbed out of the plate and redone in the new language, although many printers did not bother to do
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so. Lacking the cooperation of the original printers, new engravings could still be made from a print. The simplest method was to place the print face down on the varnished and waxed copper plate to be engraved and then to rub the back of the print causing the ink from the print to adhere to the waxed surface of the plate. The resulting image was then used to engrave, or etch with nitric acid, the new plate, and being reversed it would print exactly as the original version printed. If the engraver wanted to avoid damaging the print, however, which he might well need to finish the engraving, he would use a thin sheet of paper dusted with black lead or black chalk to transfer the image from the print to the new copper plate. He might further protect the print by putting oiled paper on top of it while he traced the picture. This procedure worked whether the print was face down or face up against the plate. In fact it was easier to trace the picture if the print were face up, in which case the new plate would be etched in reverse of the original plate. For a seventeenth-century description of the ways in which new plates could be etched from prints see William Faithorne, The Art of Graving and Etching (New York, 1970), pp. 41-44 (first edition, London, 1662). See also Coolie Verner, “Copperplate Printing,” in David Woodward (ed.), Five Centuries of Map Printing (Chicago, 1975), p. 53. We have included a number of illustrations that were “borrowed” by one printer from another: see, for example, plates 113 and 114; 117, 118, 121; 174; 312 and 313; 412 and 413; 419-21.

Most of the following illustrations were taken from seventeenth-century books held in the Department of Special Collections in the Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago. Others have been obtained from libraries and archives in Europe and the United States, which have kindly granted us permission to reproduce them. Wherever possible, efforts are made in the captions to analyze the illustrations and to provide relevant collateral information whenever such was available.

Almost all of the four hundred or so illustrations were reproduced from the photographs taken (or retaken) by Alma Lach, an inveterate photographer and cookbook author. We were also aided and abetted by the personnel of the Special Collections department—especially the late Robert Rosenthal, Daniel Meyer, and Kim Coventry—in locating the illustrations and in preparing them for photography. Father Harrie A. Vanderstappen, professor emeritus of Far Eastern art at the University of Chicago and a man endowed with marvelous sight and insight, helped us to analyze the illustrations relating to East Asia. C. M. Naim of the Department of South Asian Languages at the University of Chicago likewise contributed generously of his skills, particularly with reference to the Mughul seals (pls. 117, 118, and 121) here depicted. The China illustrations have benefited from the contributions of Ma Tai-loi and Tai Wen-pai of the East Asian Collection of the Regenstein Library and of Zhijia Shen who generously gave freely of her time and knowledge. The captions for the Japan illustrations have been im-
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To all of these generous scholars we express our sincere gratitude for their contributions to the illustration program.