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Shylock in Fuquieo: Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and the Trial of a Portuguese Stranger by China's Courts in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*

Abstract: In 1548, the Portuguese merchant Galeotto Perera was captured along with his shipmates in the waters off China's southeastern coast. In his account of his time as a prisoner in Fuquieo (in contemporary Fujian province), Perera details his trial before the city's magistrates in a Chinese court of law, writing of his amazement when he and his fellow Portuguese merchants were acquitted of the charges brought against them by two of the city's most prominent men. Perera's prison account reached an Elizabethan readership via Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589), a sprawling compendium of European travel writing translated into English. In this essay, I maintain that the outcome of Shylock's trial in Shakespeare's comedy entails a reversal of Perera's legal fortunes in China. In light of Perera's assertion that the Chinese legal process "cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs," I argue that *The Merchant of Venice* asks why these European failures of justice, mercy, and truth sometimes happen in Europe's courts and in negotiations with non-Christian peoples. I aim to demonstrate that the comedy's treatment of economic and religious exchange with strangers is inflected by Perera's account of his encounters with the Chinese during his time in Fuquieo—as well as by other travel writings collected by Hakluyt that describe legal, financial, and inheritance quandaries that European traders faced during their travels to places like China, Java, and modern-day Myanmar.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Richard Hakluyt, global Renaissance, early modern maritime trade, early modern China, Galeotto Perera (Galeote Pereira), Caesar Fredericke.

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In 1548, the Portuguese merchant Galeotto Perera was captured along with his shipmates in the waters off China's southeastern coast in an anti-piracy sting operation led by the Ming Chinese general Zhu Wang.[1] Upon his arrest, Perera and his fellow crew members were imprisoned in Fujian—known to Perera as Fuquieo—where the Portuguese trader and his countrymen were made to stand trial before the Chinese authorities.[2] Due to China's staunch isolationist economic policies, which prevented foreign traders and merchants from doing trade within China's borders itself, Perera's account of his time in Fuquieo and his travels elsewhere within China offered one of the few eyewitness travel account by a sixteenth-century European available to early modern European readers. (Although it is not known how long Perera spent imprisoned, by 1553, five years after his capture, records show that he had managed to return to the Portuguese trading posts along China's Fujian coast.) Perera's account was known to early modern English readers via Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, a wide-reaching collection of European travel accounts in English translation, first published in 1589 and then in an expanded version spanning three volumes from 1598 to 1600. The majority of Hakluyt's collected travel accounts had never been published prior to their inclusion in the *Principal Navigations*, which made these tales of travel to places such as China, Indonesia, and Myanmar newly accessible for an English readership. Via Hakluyt's translation, Perera's recollections provided English readers a glimpse into the workings of the Chinese empire, its people, and the country's legal system.

In his travel account, Perera recounted his trial as a stranger in Fuquieo's court: "We poore strangers brought before them might say what we would," he remembered. Even though Perera and his fellow Portuguese travelers could speak no Chinese, and Fuquieo's courts had to rely on Chinese translators who had taught themselves imperfect Portuguese, Perera marveled at the fact that the Chinese were nonetheless keen on offering him a fair trial even in spite of these considerable hindrances: "yet did they beare with vs so patiently, that they

[1] Perera's name is sometimes modernized as Galeote Pereira or Galiote Pereira, but I have chosen to retain the original spelling of his name as presented in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, since this is how early modern English readers of Perera's account would have known and referred to him.

[2] In my references to the places mentioned by Perera and the other travel writers in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, I use their early modern names as they appear in Hakluyt's English translations, while supplying modern geographic identifiers when necessary. Perera's Ming-era Fuquieo has been referred to variously by readers as Fukien or Fujian, but those twentieth- and twenty-first designations suggest later developments in China's political and cultural reforms that are anachronistic in light of Perera's experience of early modern Fuquieo. Additionally, Ming dynasty urban and provincial designations do not map exactly onto China's modern and contemporary city zoning.

caused vs to wonder, knowing specially how litle any aduocate or Iudge is wont in our Countrey to beare with vs. … but we in a heathen Countrey, hauing our great enemies two of the chiefest men in a whole Towne, wanting an interpreter, ignorant of that Countrey language, did in the end see our great aduersaries cast into prison for our sake" (Hakluyt 11:208). Perera expressed bewilderment at the fortunate outcome of his own trial, in which the Chinese courts ruled in favor of the merchant strangers, even to the detriment of their accusers, who Perera noted were among two of the city's most prominent men.

Perera attributed his unexpected legal outcome to the rigorously fair legal process upheld in Chinese courts: "when any man is brought before them to be examined, they aske him openly in the hearing of as many as be present… Thus did they also behaue themselues with vs: For this cause amongst them can here be no false witnesse" (11:207). The Chinese legal attention to evidence and due process, Perera asserted, made their juridical process foolproof no matter who was on trial, allowing the Chinese courts to avoid the errors of judgment that Perera noted were sometimes made in European courts: "This good commeth thereof, that many being alwayes about the Iudge to heare the euidence, and beare witnesse, the processe cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs" (11:207-208). What made the Chinese judicial process foolproof, Perera reasoned, was the stark separation that the Chinese had between their religious beliefs and their attention to legal truth. Although Perera described the Chinese as both "heathens" and "idolaters" with respect to their religion, with regard to matters of justice he noted that the Chinese saw legal truth operating distinctly from matters of religion: "The Moores, Gentiles, and Iewes haue all their sundry othes, the Moores do sweare by their Mossafos, the Brachmans by their Fili, the rest likewise by the things they do worship. The Chineans though they be wont to sweare by heauen, by the Moone, by the Sunne, and by all their Idoles, in [legal] iudgement neuertheless they sweare not at all" (11:208). The strict separation of religion and due legal process in the Chinese judicial system, Perera reasoned, explained how Fuquieo's courts managed to treat strangers with partiality in matters of law, ruling on behalf of the Portuguese travelers who did not share Chinese religion but were regarded as having legal rights equal to their Chinese accusers under the Chinese legal code.

Perera ended his account of his trial by offering a thought experiment to his European readers. If the conditions had been reversed and an unknown stranger had found himself standing trial before a European court, Perera had no doubt that this stranger would have suffered a much less fortunate outcome: "For wheresoeuer in any Towne of Christendome should be accused vnknowen men as we were, I know not what end the very innocents cause would haue" (11:208). What would have happened to a Chinese stranger who by chance might have found himself standing trial before a Portuguese court?

Despite the fact that Perera's writings about China and Hakluyt's collected travel writings about the Far East were widely accessible to an English audience, little scholarly work has been done on Hakluyt's possible influence on Shakespeare's ideas about East Asia. Although there has been scant scholarly attention to the importance of East Asia in the making of the global Renaissance, the promise of securing maritime trade networks with Asian nations tantalized merchants, diplomats, and politicians during Shakespeare's lifetime. The English crown invested considerable naval resources in finding a maritime route to East Asia via the fabled Northwest Passage over the Arctic Pole, commissioning fleets, in 1583 and 1591, bound for the Asian nations of "Cambaia [Khambhat in Gujarat, India] and China" (Hakluyt 4.12). These ventures were initiated in part because of the enthusiastic petitioning of the explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who presented Elizabeth I with a plan to expand England's maritime reach from the Americas to China in his 1576 treatise *A Discourse of a Discouerie of a New Passage to Cataia*. The prospect of locating, mapping, and establishing trade with the mythical Cataia or Cathay fascinated early modern Europeans—even as Europe's foremost cartographers still lacked even foundational knowledge about China's geographic whereabouts. Most tellingly, in his map of Asia, the Flemish cartographer Jodocus Hondius depicted China twice—as China and Cataia—and Beijing three times. Hondius's map of Asia suggests that while Europeans had a fairly accurate geographical grasp of subcontinental South Asia and the archipelago nations of Southeast Asia—the places that are now contemporary Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore—Ming China's longstanding policy against conducting open trade with foreign merchants meant that Europeans knew comparatively little about the East Asian nation."[3]

In spite of this lacuna in the scholarship on Shakespeare's literary engagement with East Asia, what is clear is that the travel accounts from the *Principal Navigations* were known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. G. K. Hunter (51) observed nearly sixty years ago that the Elizabethans had access to accounts of non-Christian peoples and cultures in places as far away as Malacca and Fukien, via accounts of those like Perera and Hakluyt. Likewise, Claire Jowitt has suggested that Shakespeare not only knew of Hakluyt's travel writings but appropriated these travel tales in plays such as *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest* (Jowitt, "The Architect of English Expansion"). Shakespeare never imagined a Chinese stranger on trial in a Portuguese court, but he comes close in *The Merchant of Venice*, in which the Jewish moneylender Shylock comes to court to prosecute his debtor, the Christian merchant Antonio—only to discover that Antonio's trial is actually his own trial, when the Venetian courts end up prosecuting Shylock using legal statues specific to his status as a resident alien. If Perera

[3] I have previously discussed Ming China's closed-door trade policy and Shakespeare's engagement with Cathay in *Twelfth Night* (Hokama 254-9).

described the true account of a Portuguese merchant tried in Fuquieo's courts, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* offers an elaboration on Perera's hypothetical "unknown stranger" made to stand trial before Europe's Christian courts.

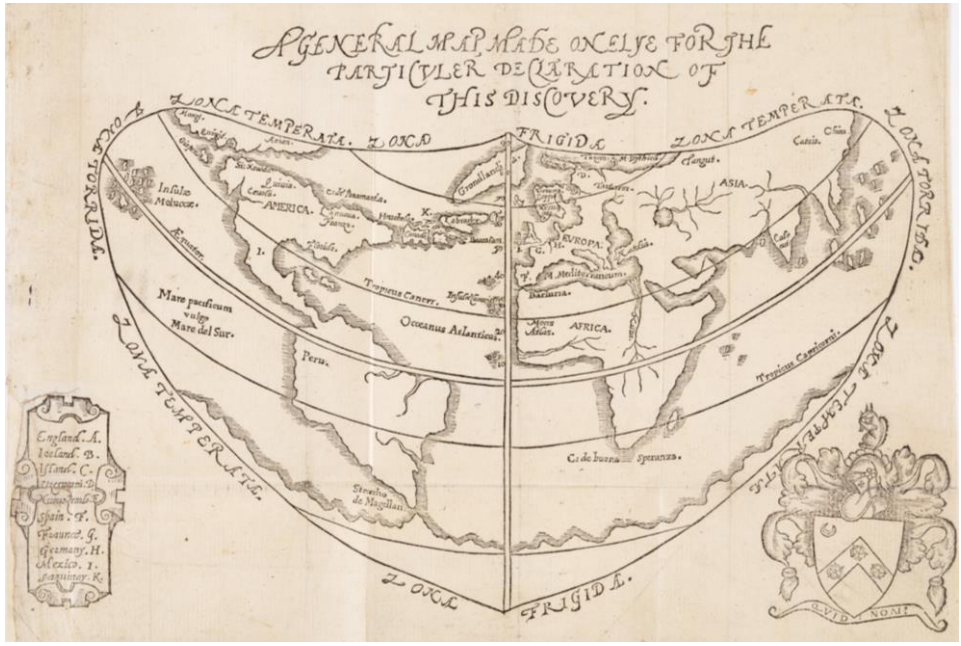

Figure 1. Map of the world depicting the fabled Northwest Passage to China, as imagined by Sir Humphrey Gilbert in his treatise *A Discourse of a Discouerie of a New Passage to Cataia* (London, 1576). Copy from the Huntington Library

I suggest Perera as a possible sixteenth-century source for *The Merchant of Venice*—alongside a growing body of plausible source materials for the play such as Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (ca. 1378-1385) and the trial and subsequent execution in 1594 of the Portuguese converso Roderigo Lopes for his alleged attempts to poison Elizabeth I while serving as her physician-in-chief. Another possible source for Shakespeare's comedy is the 1596 London legal suit brought against two Portuguese conversos Ferdinand Alvares and Alvaro de Lyma, which has been previously discussed by C. J. Sisson (38-51) and James Shapiro (72). Importantly, *The Merchant of Venice* departs from all of these other possible sources in a number of ways. For example, in Fiorentino's novella, unlike in Shakespeare's retelling of the story, the character referred to only as "the Jew" is not tried under statutes specific to his status as a non-resident alien. This addition is Shakespeare's innovation and resonates profoundly with the thought experiment from Hakluyt's tale of the imaginary Chinese stranger tried in a Christian court—from which Shakespeare could have imaginatively drawn as much as he likely did from the contemporary trials of Lopes, Alvares, and de Lyma.

Figure 2. Jodocus Hondius's map of South, East, and Southeast Asia—which depicts China twice and Beijing three times. *Asia Nova Descriptio Auctore Jodoco Hondio* [New Description of Asia by Jodocus Hondius] (Amsterdam, 1610). Copy from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology library special collections

In a seminal essay about converso Jews living in early modern London, Sisson outlined the details of the lawsuit brought against Alvares and de Lyma. In 1596, Mary May, the widow of the English merchant John May, brought a suit before the Court of Chancery against Alvares and de Lyma over the question of a debt that Mary May claimed the Portuguese Jews owed to her late husband's estate. John May, Alvares, and de Lyma had previously invested in a series of naval expeditions to Portugal and Spain, using ships that were owned by a syndicate of Portuguese Jews (Sisson 41). The court ultimately determined that Alvares and de Lyma did not owe John May's estate the contested debt, an outcome that has led Sisson to maintain that the Chancery court did not indicate "any hint of prejudice against the heretic stranger in London," and indeed demonstrated a "scrupulous concern for impartial and equitable treatment of both parties" (Sisson 50). Sisson goes on to conclude: "There was no oppression of the Jews in Shakespeare's London, provided that they outwardly confirm to the minimum requirements of the law which government all Englishmen in their relation to the State and to its Church" (Sisson 49-50). But in this regard, the

conversos of Sisson's case study were unlike Shakespeare's Shylock, who at the start of the play openly professes his Judaism before the Christians when he initially refuses Bassanio's dinner invitation on account of his adherence to kosher dietary laws: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following. But I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (Shakespeare, "The Merchant of Venice," 1.1.29-32). Shylock insists that he will not "smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into" (1.1.28-29). Another significant point of divergence between the historical conversos and Shylock is that while Alvares and de Lyma were granted the legal and political rights of full European citizens (Sisson 50), Shylock remains a resident alien in Venice—and indeed, his legal downfall is contingent upon his status as a foreigner in Venice.

Like many of Shakespeare's sources, it is impossible to ascertain with complete certainty whether Shakespeare had known about the charges Mary May brought against Alvares and de Lyma. Yet despite the considerable differences between Shylock and these historical conversos, Sisson and Shapiro nonetheless see the Chancery court case as a valuable cultural parallel for Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*: "All things Elizabethan seem to turn into a commentary upon Shakespeare," Sisson has noted. "Shylock usurps the interest due to the living records of the race which he incarnates. The imaginative transcends the real" (Sisson 38). Shakespeare's mind was an absorptive one, attentive to the resonances between his own literary output and the cultural world that his early modern audiences would have known firsthand. Stephen Greenblatt has similarly proposed that Shakespeare may have perhaps found inspiration for the family dispute at the heart of *King Lear* in the 1603 lawsuit brought against the aging Brian Annesley by his daughters regarding ownership rights to their father's estate. Of the possible linkages between the Annesley lawsuit and the Lear plot, Greenblatt writes: "Whether or not the Annesley case actually triggered the writing of the tragedy, Shakespeare was singularly alert to the way in which the Leir legend was in touch with ordinary family tensions and familiar fears associated with old age. For his play's central concerns, Shakespeare simply looked around him at the everyday world" (Greenblatt 357). In a similar vein, whether or not Galeotto Perera's prison memoirs of his time in China inspired Shakespeare to write *The Merchant of Venice* cannot be known for certain, but I propose that Perera's thought experiment about the foreign stranger tried in Europe's courts should be read as a textual suggestion that exists in parallel to Shylock's own trial as a non-citizen alien in Shakespeare's imagined Venice. When read alongside Perera, Shakespeare's Venice becomes the European and Christian counterpart to Perera's Fuquieo, a city of heathens where Christian strangers nonetheless receive justice in matters of the law.

In this essay, I argue that it is possible to read Shylock's trial as a dramatic enactment of Perera's thought experiment: what would happen to a stranger tried by European courts? In light of Perera's assertion that the Chinese legal process "cannot be falsified, as it happeneth sometimes with vs," I maintain that *The Merchant of Venice* asks why these European failures of justice, mercy, and truth sometimes happen in Europe's courts and in Christian exchanges with non-Christian strangers. Although Shakespeare never imagined a Chinese character for the Globe's stage, I aim to demonstrate that *The Merchant of Venice*'s exploration of cross-cultural and interreligious exchange between European Christians and strangers responds to the questions raised by Perera's account of his encounters with the Chinese during his time as a prisoner in Fuquieo, as well as by the other accounts of European travels to the Far East in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*.

Fuquieo: Venice of the East

During his several years as a prisoner in Fuquieo, Galeotto Perera was given considerable freedom by his Chinese captors to explore both the city as well as the freedom to travel to other cities in China as far away as Paquin (Beijing) and Quinsay (Hangzhou). In his account, Perera described Fuquieo as a major hub for China's domestic and international trade: "there be a great number of Marchants, euery one hath written in a great table at his doore such things as he hath to sel. … the market places be large, great abundance of al things there be to be sold" (11:212). Perera also described Fuquieo's peculiar urban infrastructure, with its many homes and buildings built over the numerous rivers and canals which intersected the city. He noted that the Chinese used small barges as their preferred mode of transportation to navigate along the city's waterways:

> The city standeth vpon water, many streames run through it, the banks pitched, and so broad that they serue for streets to the cities vse. Ouer the streams are sundry bridges both of timber and stone, which being made leuel with the streets, hinder not the passage of the barges too and fro, the chanels are so deepe. Where the streames come in and go out of the city, be certaine arches in the wal, there go in and out their Parai, that is a kind of barges they haue.
>
> (11:212)

The city's streams and barges, and its many "wel made" shopfronts "wherein marchandize is laid," made Fuquieo "as it were to seeme another Venice" (11:213, 212). Perera marveled, "It is a world to see how great these cities are" (11:213). In Perera's account, Fuquieo is Venice's Chinese sister city—a Far Eastern trading port that rivaled the urban planning, geographical layout, and

commercialism of Europe's most cosmopolitan trading hub. If Shakespeare found the dramatic kernel of Shylock's trial in Perera's thought experiment about the hypothetical stranger made to stand trial before Europe's Christian courts, he might have also found in the Portuguese travel account the idea of using Venice as a setting for the trial of this unknown stranger on European soil.

Elsewhere in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, Shakespeare would have had access to other firsthand accounts of European encounters with Chinese merchants outside of Cathay's borders. Although Perera offered the only eyewitness account available to a sixteenth-century European readership describing firsthand travels within Cathay, it was not uncommon for Europeans to travel to other East Asian and South Asian trading ports in Pegu (Bago, in modern-day Myanmar) and Bantam (in modern-day Java, Indonesia) in order to procure the luxury goods and silks that the Chinese merchants brought out from China. In an account of an expedition to Bantam that Hakluyt included in the *Principal Navigations*, a Dutch merchant detailed his encounters with the Chinese merchants that he met in that city. The merchant described the dizzying array of Chinese merchandise available to European traders in Bantam's ports, noting that the Chinese preferred to come aboard the Dutch ships in order to lay out their wares for purview: "When we came first, before Bantam, they came euery day in great companies into our shippes, and there set out their wares to sel, as silkes, sowing silkes, and porselines, so that our vpper deckes were full of pedlers, that wee could hardly walke vpon the hatches" (10:237). What is surprising about the Dutch merchant's account is that he appeared less interested in what the Chinese merchants had to offer than in the practices and behavior of the Chinese themselves. The Dutch merchant noted that Bantam's Chinese merchants prioritized financial gain above all else—even to the extent that they made their own bootlegged spirits from fermented rice to sell to the local Muslim population, profiting from the Javanese demand for illegal alcohol: "The Chinars are very subtill and industrious people, and will refuse no labour nor paynes to yearne money, there they make much Aqua vitæ of Ryce and Cocus [coconut], and trafficke much therewith, which the Iauars by night come to buy, and drinke it secretly, for by Mahomets law it is forbidden them" (10:236). According to the Dutchman, the squalid living conditions of the Chinese merchants of Bantam stemmed from their love of money, and their willingness to take on even the most grueling and filthy tasks for economic gain: "These people liue very hardly and poorely within Bantam, for there is not any work or labour how filthy soeuer it be, but they will do it to get money, and when they haue gotten something they returne againe to China" (10:236-237). Just as Fuquieo's riverways and mercantilism reminded Perera of Venice, the Chinese of Bantam reminded the Dutch merchant of the Jews of Holland: "They are verie like Iewes in our country, for they neuer goe without a paire of ballances, and

all thinges is good wares with them, and are ready to do any seruice" (10:237).[4] For the Dutch merchant, the financial practices of the Bantam Chinese had obvious moral resonances. Their eagerness to violate local religious prohibitions against alcohol and their willingness to reduce themselves to squalor in the quest for financial profit presented a vision of a money-obsessed people without moral conviction that resonated in the Dutchman's mind with contemporary early modern stereotypes about European Jews. In the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare himself imagines Shylock holding up the accoutrement of the Chinese traders of Bantam: "Are there balance here to weigh /The flesh?" Portia asks the court (4.1.253-254). "I have them ready," (4.1.245) Shylock replies. Portia turns Shylock's balances against him in the trial, telling him that he must cut off no "less nor more / But just a pound of flesh" (4.1.323-324). Portia declares that "if the scale do turn / But in the estimation of a hair— / Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate" (4.1.328-330). Portia has the usurer hoisted not by his own petard but by his balances—the shared symbol in the Dutch merchant's imagination of Jewish and Chinese greed.

In addition to describing the Chinese's obsession with financial gain in spite of all costs, the Dutch merchant also offered an account of Chinese religion. He noted that the Chinese of Bantam were idolaters who prayed to the devil himself: "They haue no special religion, but pray vnto the Deuill, that he would not hurt them, for they know that the Deuill is wicked, and that God is good, and hurteth no man, therefore they thinke it needlesse to pray to God. … In their houses they have great painted Deuils, before the which they place wax candles, and sing vnto them, praying them not to hurt them, and the more monstrous that their shapes be, the more they honour them" (10:236). The Dutch merchant apparently had no name for Chinese traditional religion with its admixture of ancestor worship, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucian belief. (By contrast, he had a much clearer understanding of the Islam practiced by the Javanese inhabitants of Bantam, who he describes as "Mores:" "The Iauars and inhabitants of Bantam… they hold the law of Mahomet" [10:237]) Like the Dutch merchant in Bantam, Perera had no name for Chinese traditional belief and practice, but offered a more generous account of Chinese religion. According to Perera, although "the inhabitants of China be very great Idolaters," they were not devil worshippers—as the Dutchman believed—but were worshippers of the sun and moon: "all generally doe worship the heauens," Perera averred (11:204-205). Perera went on to describe the Chinese belief in reincarnation, in which one might hope to be reborn as "a diuel if he haue lived well in this world," or "a bufle, oxe, or dogge" if he has lived badly in this life

[4] In a related vein, Rachel Trubowitz (153-58) and Walter Lim (225) have argued for the similar positions of the European Jews and the Chinese in Milton's providential theology.

(11:205). In a marginal note appended to Perera's account in the *Principal Navigations*, Hakluyt suggested his own characterization of the nameless belief of the Chinese, deeming their religion "Pythagorean like" (11:205). If Shakespeare had read Perera's account via Hakluyt, he may have had Hakluyt's brief assessment of Chinese traditional religion in mind in dramatizing the Christians' caricature of Shylock's religious and moral perversions. In the trial scene, Graziano attributes Shylock's insistence upon justice to a vengeful nature born from Pythagorean reincarnation, positing that Shylock's soul had occupied the body of a wolf in a former life:

> GRAZIANO
> O, be thou damned, inexecrable dog!
> …
> Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith—
> To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
> That souls of animals infuse themselves
> Into the trunks of men. Thy currish spirit
> Governed a wolf who hanged for human slaughter;
> Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet
> And, whilst thou layest in thy unhallowed dam,
> Infused itself in thee; for thy desires
> Are wolvish, bloody, starved and ravenous.
> (4.1.128, 130-138)

Graziano imagines Shylock's moral failures—his "currish spirit," his hunger "for human slaughter," and his "wolvish, bloody" desires—in distinctly religious but decidedly non-Christian terms. Graziano's invective against Shylock evinces the play's larger worry that economic traffic and cultural exchange with strangers might cause one to "waver" in one's faith—a fear that the Christian characters allude to a number of times in *The Merchant of Venice* and one that lurks at the margins of Perera's own account of the Moors of Fuquieo.

Conversion and Commerce: Shylock's Venice and Perera's *Fuquieo*

During his travels in Fuquieo, Perera encountered "certain Moores," who had been living in the Chinese city for several generations as descendants of merchants and traders whose origins somewhere west of China were hazy even to the Moorish descendants themselves. As a result of their assimilation into Chinese society, Perera noted that the Moors of Fuquieo "knew so litle of their secte, that they could say nothing else but that Mahomet was a Moore, my father was a Moore, and I am a Moore" (11:218). Beyond this, Perera noted that these Moors could no longer read the Qur'an and many had taken to eating pork, such

that these descendants were only Moors in name but not in belief or custom: "they haue nothing of a Moore in them," Perera observed (11:219). According to Perera, that these certain Moors had forgotten their origins was not coincidental. This development was the consequence of Chinese protectionist policies that had several generations ago led to the execution of a number of prominent Moorish traders, as well as local city politicians and their family members who had converted to Islam through their exchange with the traders, based on rumors "of a conspiracie pretended betwixt [the Moors] and the Loutea [city official] against their king" (11:219). In his account, Perera related how the Chinese allowed these Moors to live peaceably in the country—until the local ruler of "a litle Towne standing in the hauens mouth" and his entire family decided to "become Moorish," and subsequently mandated that those in his jurisdiction adhere to Muslim dietary laws (11:218). Perera noted that this policy angered the local population, who subscribed to the belief that "In this part of China the people be at libertie, euery one to worship and folow what him liketh best" (11:218). The local population complained to the magistrates, and Perera noted that the central government took decisive action on behalf of the people, quickly executing both the Moorish traders and the local Chinese ruler and his family who had converted to Islam.[5] For all their initial openness to the Moorish

[5] In a study of nearly a thousand protests in early modern China, Ho-Fung Hung has argued that successful instances of Chinese protest frame the people's desire for justice in terms of loyalty to a strong imperial center: "In Qing times (1644-1911), a common remedy for powerless subjects abused by local officials was to travel all the way to Beijing to appeal to the emperor as their grand patriarch, hoping that he would sympathize with their plight and penalize corrupt local officials" (Hung 1). The political dynamics that Perera described in his account of the tensions among the pork-loving Cathayan villagers, the city's newly converted regional officials, and Cathay's central government can be understood by comparison to a contemporary political uprising in southern China. In an illuminating analysis of a 2011 political uprising among farmers in the Chinese city of Wukan, in Guangdong province, the former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew described the way the central Chinese government managed to meet the farmer's demands while retaining power in the central government. In the Wukan unrests, land disputes led several hundred farmers to mobilize nearly twenty thousand villagers in protests against land developers and local officials. In the central government's response to the uprisings, the state acknowledged the legitimacy of the farmer's complaints about the disputed farmland and a chief organizer of the protests was made a new village chief by means of a local election. Lee maintained that the central government's response to the protests should not be understood as evidence of China's trend toward democracy; on the contrary, he argued that the Wukan protests reveal strategies that the Chinese state has used for millennia to quell political and economic unrest: "Before any incident escalates, the very powerful state security apparatus can come down hard on unrest to nip the problem in the bud. But it is also able to take the side of villagers against corrupt local officials" (Lee 14). "For 5,000 years, the Chinese have believed that the

traders, Perera's account made clear that the Chinese central government would not tolerate any attempts at conversion within Chinese borders, which it regarded as a threat to state power. As a result of Ming China's decisive anti-conversion stance, Perera noted that the roughly two hundred descendants of those original Moorish traders who still reside in Fuquieo are "so confused" about their ancestral religion that a number of them even eat pork: "they haue nothing of a Moore in them but abstinence from swines flesh, and yet many of them doe eate thereof primly" (11:219).

In his account of the Chinese state's suppression of the Moorish traders and the converted city officials, Perera averred that the real reason for the political crackdown stemmed from the Chinese people's voracious appetite and love of pork: "all these countreymen and women chosing rather to forsake father and mother, then to leaue off eating of porke, by no meanes would yeeld to that proclamation. For besides the great desire they all haue to eate that kinde of meate, many of them do liue thereby" (11:218). In Perera's account, the Chinese appetite—and not any particular anxiety about the continuity of Chinese state power—was the central source of political upheaval.[6] Considering the historic suppression of the Moors of Fuquieo, Perera wondered whether interreligious exchange and even conversion were possible among the Moors of Fuquieo and the local Chinese inhabitants of the city: "I asked them whether they conuerted any of the Chinish nation vnto their secte" (11:219). The Moorish descendants answered that they had managed to convert a number of the "Chinish" women via marriage—but only with great difficulty, considering the Chinish women's attachment to "eating swines flesh and drinking of wine" (11:219). In spite of the Chinese state's crackdown on the Moors' attempts to convert the Chinese officials to Islam, and the difficulty of getting even the Chinian wives to conform to their Moorish husbands' dietary rejection of pork and wine, Perera remained enthusiastic about the Portuguese project of drawing the Chinese into the bounds of Christendom: "I am perswaded therefore, that if this Countrey were in league with vs, forbidding them neither of both, it would be an easie matter to draw them to our Religion, from their superstition" (11:219). Considering that the Christians did not forbid the consumption of either pork or

country is safe only when the centre is strong" (Lee 13). Likewise, Lee explained that Chinese protesters realize that their political demands can only be heard if they oppose local officials while maintaining allegiance to the central state: "This has been a common strategy taken by the Chinese protestors for thousands of years. They know that opposing the central authority means certain annihilation. So they oppose wrongdoing by local officials while declaring loyalty to the centre" (Lee 15).

[6] In a similar vein, Robert Markley (71-4) offers an illuminating account of communities of ethnic Jews in early modern Kaifeng who forgot their ancestral religion as they became assimilated into Chinese culture.

alcohol, Perera imagined that the Chinese would have been much more amenable to the Christian faith. Perhaps Perera was being facetious in his commentary about the possibility of converting the Chinese to Christianity—or perhaps he had misread or willfully chosen to ignore the Chinese insistence upon social and religious uniformity underpinning the state's crackdown on the Moors of Fuquieo. But if he was joking, Perera's tongue-in-cheek commentary about conversion nonetheless highlighted the tensions between the Moors of Fuquieo and the local Chinese population with respect both to interreligious marriage and the consumption and selling of pork.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, a comedic exchange among Lancelot, Jessica, and Lorenzo about Jewish conversion and the price of pork contains echoes of the Chinese anxiety about interreligious marriage and of Perera's joke about the Chinese wives' love of pork. In 3.5, Lancelot riffs on Jessica's recent conversion from Judaism to Christianity as a consequence of her marriage to Lorenzo, a Christian Venetian. Like the Chinese wives of the Moors of Fuquieo, Jessica has given up her father's religion in choosing a husband of a different faith. It is this act of conversion, Lancelot jokes, that will harm the Christian commonwealth by raising demand for pork: "This making Christians will raise the price of hogs; if we grow all to be pork eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money" (3.5.20-22). A few lines later in the exchange, Jessica reiterates the joke to Lorenzo: "He tells me flatly there's no mercy for me in heaven because I am a Jew's daughter; and he says you are no good member of the commonwealth, for in converting Jews to Christians you raise the price of pork" (3.5.28-31). Lancelot's joke about the price of pork is lifted nearly verbatim from Perera's account of Chinese eating habits and their cultural and religious preferences for the flesh of all sorts of animals. In his travels throughout China, Perera took note of the wide range of culinary preferences of his hosts, noting the types and prices of animal flesh sold at their markets: "There is great aboundance of hennes, geese, duckes, swine, and goates, wethers haue they none: the hennes are solde by weight, and so are all other things. Two pound of hennes flesh, geese, or ducke, is worth two foi of their money, that is, d. ob. sterling.[7] Swines flesh is sold at a penie the pound. Beefe beareth the same price, for the scarcitie thereof" (11:200). Perera opined that "the Chineans are the greatest eaters in all the world, they do feed vpon all things, specially on porke, which, the fatter it is, is vnto them the lesse lothsome. … Frogs are solde at the same price that is made of hennes, and are good meate amongst them, as also dogs, cats, rats, snakes, and all other vncleane meates" (11:200). In their love for all meat, and especially of pork, Perera joked that the Chinese appetite

[7] In his 1625 reprinting of Perera's account, Samuel Purchas glossed this amount as "three halfe pence" (3:199).

had the consequence of driving up the per-pound cost of animal flesh. He lamented that were the Chinese to adopt the vegetarianism of the Jains and Hindus of India, the price of pork and other animal victuals would be considerably reduced for Portuguese traders in China: "And if this Countrey were like vnto India, the inhabitants whereof eate neither henne, beefe, nor porke, but keepe that onely for the Portugals and Moores, they would be sold here for nothing" (11:200).

Perera may have been joking about how the Chinese voraciousness for all kinds of flesh had the inadvertent consequence of raising the price of pork for Christians, but Shakespeare took the underlying suggestion of Perera's joke seriously in *The Merchant of Venice*, which explores Perera's implicit suggestion that in matters of foreign trade and commerce, the dietary preferences of one nation might inevitably holds monetary consequences for another. Not only does Shakespeare adapt Perera's logic in Lancelot's joke about Jewish converts to Christianity raising the price of pork, he also incorporates the logic of Perera's joke into Shylock's much more serious criticism of how Antonio's practice of offering interest-free loans hinders his own ability to lend at interest: "He lends out money gratis and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice" (1.3.38-39). The terms of Shylock's bond contain echoes of Perera's joke as well, and Shylock's assessment of the possible monetary value of the bond to himself echoes the Portuguese merchant's catalogue of the various kinds and relative values of animal flesh prized by the Chinese. In lending Antonio his requested 3,000 ducats without interest, Shylock argues that the terms of the bond afford him nothing of commercial value: "If he should break his day, what should I gain / By the exaction of the forfeiture?" (1.3.156-157). The clause that Antonio must hand over a pound of his own flesh if the bond is not repaid in three months' time, Shylock notes, is useless to him from a monetary standpoint considering that a number of other animal fleshes would be more profitable to him than a pound of human flesh: "A pound of man's flesh taken from a man / Is not so estimable, profitable neither, / As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats" (1.3.158-160). Noting that his motives for defining the peculiar terms of the bond are not financial, Shylock suggests instead that he offers Antonio the interest-free loan as a token of kindness and to earn reciprocal kindness in turn from the Christians: "To buy his favor I extend this friendship … / And for my love I pray you wrong me not." (1.3.161-163). Importantly, Shylock notes that the bond marks a kind of financial transaction that does not traffic in the logic about monetary value that form the basis of both Perera's and Lancelot's respective jokes about the relative price of pork—one that diverges from his usual practice of usury, which he acknowledges has been hindered by Antonio's interest-free loans. Shakespeare's appropriation of Perera's monetary logic of interreligious exchange suggests that Shylock is motivated by something other than commercial gain in proposing the bond's peculiar terms of repayment. In devising

the bond, Shylock was perhaps making his own joke about the value of a pound of flesh—one that he had never intended to carry through considering Antonio's considerable financial credit (Shylock twice calls him "sufficient" [1.3.14-15, 22]) and the merchant's own promise to return "thrice three times the value of the bond" (1.3.152) in a mere two months' time.

Shylock's expected payment in agreeing to the bond is his hope that the Christians will treat him fairly—"I pray you wrong me not"—from that point forward. But the Christians use Shylock's willingness to loan the 3,000 ducats to Antonio in order to rob him. Bassiano invites Shylock to a dinner party to celebrate the agreement of the bond, and it is during the few hours' time that Shylock is away from home that Graziano colludes with Lorenzo, Solerio, and Solanio—with aid from Shylock's daughter Jessica—to rob Shylock of his ducats and jewels. "[W]e will slink away in supper time" (2.4.1), Lorenzo says to his co-conspirators. Indeed, it is unclear, from a business perspective, why Shylock's attendance at the dinner party is required of him. The terms of the bond have already been notarized by the end of 1.3: "This kindness will I show" (1.3.136), Shylock tells Antonio and Bassanio. "Go with me to a notary; seal me there / Your single bond" (1.3.137-38). And when the Christians first approach Shylock about the loan, Shylock initially turns down Bassiano's invitation to dinner—as I noted above—on account of the fact that he will not "smell pork" with them (1.1.28). But by the end of the agreement, Shylock has changed his mind about dining with the Christians: "I am bid forth to supper, Jessica. / … But wherefore should I go? / I am not bid for love—they flatter me—" (2.5.11-13). For whatever reason, Shylock decides to go to the dinner party even as he intuits—rightfully, as it turns out—that there is something foreboding about the occasion: "I am right loath to go; / There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, / For I did dream of moneybags tonight" (2.5.16-18).

In the end, the Christians use the dinner party, funded perhaps by Shylock's borrowed ducats, to rob Shylock of his remaining ducats and jewels. Shakespeare may have even adopted the plot device of staging a dinner party for a stranger from Perera's travel account, in which the Portuguese traveler detailed the lavish dinner parties that the Chinese threw for him during his time as a stranger in Fuquieo. Perera described how his Chinese hosts treated him and his companions not as prisoners but as honored guests during their visits to the homes of dignitaries throughout the country:

> When we lay in prison at Fuquieo, we came many times abroad, and were brought to the pallaces of noble men, to be seene of them and their wiues, for that they had neuer seene any Portugale before. Many things they asked vs of our Countrey, and our fashions, and did write euery thing, for they be curious in nouelties aboue measure. *The gentlemen shew great curtesie vnto strangers, and so did we finde at their hands*. (11:219, emphasis mine)

Perera's report gave European readers a firsthand account of a people who showed courtesy unto strangers. More remarkable still is his hosts' kindness in spite of Perera's status as a prisoner: again and again in his narrative, Perera marveled at the Chinese's treatment of him, while doubting that the Europeans would ever show similar generosity to a stranger in their own lands. At the dinner parties held in his honor, Perera described in detail the eating habits of his hosts: although the Chinese sat at tables with chairs as the Europeans did, they differed in that they preferred to chop up all of their meat and victuals before serving, and in this way were able to avoid eating with their hands. Instead, Perera noted that his hosts "feede with two sticks" (11:204). As a result of these novel dining habits, Perera marveled that the Chinese were able to eat their meat "very cleanely," using "neither tablecloths nor napkins" (11:204). But even more marvelous than the Chinese cleanliness at supper, Perera noted, was their exceptional courtesy toward strangers like himself: "Ne is the nation only ciuill at meate, but also in conuersation, and in courtesie they seeme to exceede all other. Likewise in their dealings after their maner they are so ready, that they farre passe all other Gentiles and Moores" (11:204). Shakespeare did not stage the dinner party at Bassanio's house, leaving it up to his audience to decide whether the evening went well for Shylock or not. But regardless of what transpired at supper, Shylock returns from dinner with the Christians to a home ransacked by Christians. If *The Merchant of Venice* reverses the major episodes of Perera's chronicle of his time in China, situating his trial and his accounts of the Chinese dinner parties on European shores, Shakespeare was interested in exploring the implications of Perera's realization that the foreign stranger "in any Towne of Christendome" would not fare nearly as well as he did as a stranger among the Chinese: "I know not what end the very innocents cause would haue" with us Christians, he mused. What do Chinese civility and justice suggest about European civility and justice, both Perera and Shakespeare implicitly ask, if the Chinese can extend fair treatment under their laws to their city's foreigners and extend kindness to strangers at their dinner tables in a way that the Christians cannot?

According to the Chinese standards of civility toward strangers that Perera described, there would have been no doubt that Shylock was abused by the Venetian Christians. But the Christians regard their own treatment of Shylock, and their seizure of his ducats both by legal and illegal means, as acts of mercy. At the end of his trial, when by Antonio's request Shylock is made to "presently become a Christian" (4.1.385), the Christians choose to see Shylock's forced conversion—instead of outright execution—as a Christian act of mercy: "Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke" (4.1.361), Portia commands Shylock. "What mercy can you render him, Antonio?" (4.1.376), she asks of the merchant. The seizure of Shylock's wealth—to be managed and used by Antonio—and the requirement that he convert to Christianity are the Christian

courts' acts of "mercy" for the resident stranger in their midst. Shylock's coerced conversion and the seizure of his Jewish wealth for Christian use is foreshadowed earlier in the play, in the moments leading up to his robbery at the hands of the Christians. Lorenzo frames the robbery as an act of mercy—indeed, an act of conversion that might bring Shylock salvation: "How I shall take her from her father's house, / What gold and jewels she is furnished with, / … If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven, / It will be for his gentle daughter's sake" (2.4.29-30, 32-33). In Lorenzo's logic, Shylock's hope of salvation rests upon Jessica's goodness—that is, her willingness to help him convert her father's Jewish wealth into "Christian ducats" (2.8.16). Just as Perera saw the possibility of Chinese conversion as the first step in an economic alliance that would prove financially beneficial to the Portuguese, in a similar way, Lorenzo understands the benefits of Shylock's conversion in terms of its monetary benefit for himself. Lorenzo's logic foreshadows the coerced conversion that Antonio and the Duke demand of Shylock as part of his punishment; at the end of the trial, the Venetian state seizes Shylock's wealth as part and parcel of his conversion. If the play raises the anxiety that Jewish conversion holds economic dangers for Christians, as Lancelot's joke about Jessica's conversion and the rising the price of pork suggests, Shylock's fate demonstrates that at least this specific act of conversion is nothing but economically valuable to the Christian state. Shylock is made to become Christian, and his Jewish wealth is transferred into Christian coffers and Christian management.

"Christian Ducats" in Foreign States: *The Merchant of Venice* in Pegu and the Indies

If Shylock could not keep either his Jewish religion or his Jewish money as a resident alien in Venice, what would prevent a Christian stranger in a foreign land from losing his identity and his wealth under local laws that privileged residents over strangers? Perera's and Lancelot's parallel jokes about how the voracious appetites of the Chinese and the conversion of the Jews raise the price of pork for Christian consumers encode a wider anxiety that many of Hakluyt's writers articulated about what would happen to their Christian money if they found themselves in difficult circumstances in foreign lands, subject to foreign legal statues. This concern is paramount in one of Hakluyt's collected travel accounts by the trader Caesar Fredericke, who the English translator Thomas Hickocke described as a "Marchant of Venice" whose voyages took him "into the East India, and beyond the Indies" where he spent eighteen years in pursuit of "merchandises and commodities, as well of golde and siluer, as spices, drugges, pearles, and other iewels" (11:224). In his account, Fredericke described the inheritance customs and death taxes of the kingdom of Pegu, in

modern-day Myanmar, in which it was customary for the state to seize a third of an individual's wealth upon death, noting that European merchants were not exempted from this local custom and legal statute: "they that die in the kingdome of Pegu loose the thirde part of their goods by antient custome of the Countrey, that if any Christian dieth in the kingdome of Pegu, the king and his officers rest heires of a thirde of his goods" (11:293). Fredericke noted that the Christian merchants accepted this statute because it was applied equally to both Pegu's inhabitants and foreigners alike: "there hath neuer bene any deceit or fraude vsed in this matter" (11:293). In short, Pegu's legal terms were clear to all Christian foreigners who came to do business in the city.

A way for long-term Christian residents to avoid Pegu's death tax, Fredericke noted, was to simply make sure that one went home to die back in Europe: "I haue knowen many rich men that haue dwelled in Pegu, and in their age they haue desired to go into their owne Countrey to die there, and haue departed with al their goods and substance without let or troubles" (11:293). Fredericke's account of the Pegu kingdom's willingness to hold both citizens and foreigners as equal under inheritance law, and to allow foreigners the loophole of leaving the country in full possession of their wealth and goods without being subject to an exit tax, made Pegu an enticing place for European foreigners to live as long-term resident aliens, as the Venetian merchant's account suggests. But while Pegu subjected both citizens and foreigners to the same set of laws, Fredericke noted that there were other trading cities that allowed European Christians to be tried under different laws that made exceptions for foreign traders: "In all the cities that the Portugales haue in the Indies," Fredericke noted, the local magistrates—for a small bribe—were willing to allow Portuguese traders to be exempt from local inheritance laws so long as they provided the state with a copy of their Christian will and testament: "the gouernours whereof, if you giue them for their paines, will take a coppy of your will and Testament, which you must always cary about you; and chiefly when you go to the Indies" (11:292). Fredericke sought to quell European anxieties about unfair legal or commercial treatment while resident in these foreign states, noting that it was customary for these cities in the Indies to allow Christian merchants the privilege of being tried in separate Christian tribunals: "In the countrey of the Moores and Gentiles, in those voyages alwayes there goeth a Captaine to administer Iustice to all Christians of the Portugales. Also this captaine hath authoritie to recouer the goods of those Marchants that by chance die in those voyages" (11:292). Indeed, it was not the local officials who the merchants had to be wary of but rather the Christian ship captains, who often kept the goods of dead sailors for themselves: "they that haue not made their Wills and registred them in the aforesayde schooles, the Captaines wil consume their goods in such wise, that litle or nothing will be left for their heires and friends" (11:293). What Fredericke's account makes clear is that to be tried

under Christian laws might actually pose a financial liability rather than offering a safeguard for unsuspecting European traders in the Indies.

Fredericke took pains to note that in the Portuguese trading cities that dotted the coasts of the Indies, and in the trading ports of Pegu, Christian merchants could expect to be treated equally—if not exceptionally—under local laws, and could trust these foreign states to deal fairly in their exchange of goods and money. The local rulers in this port cities were keen on attracting European foreign trade, and made legal exceptions for these strangers in order to ensure that their own cities would remain at the forefront of global commerce and exchange. Shakespeare raises this very question of what cities owe to strangers in broaching the question of how cities can attract foreign traffic and trade. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio makes the case for Shylock's right to his bond—both legally and commercially—from his cell in the debtors' prison. Antonio's speech contains echoes of Fredericke, that other merchant of Venice. Like Fredericke, Antonio understands that for a state to thrive economically, it is necessarily to extend certain legal and commercial rights to the strangers who do business and trade within the city:

> ANTONIO
> The Duke cannot deny the course of law,
> For the commodity that strangers have
> With us in Venice, if it be denied,
> Will much impeach the justice of his state,
> Since that the trade and profit of the city
> Consisteth of all nations.
> (3.3.26-31)[8]

In *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, Tyndale argues that Jews, Saracens, and Turks are owed a right to earthly profit and material happiness under legal and civic structures that should regard all people as equal under natural law: "the infidels"—so long as they abide by earthly laws—"have promises of worldly things," Tyndale maintained (65). According to Tyndale, a state's legal code ought to treat Christian and non-Christian equally under the commonwealth's laws, which ought to guarantee even non-Christians the right to pursue peace and worldly advancement. To deny non-Christian peoples this temporal right is to violate natural and divine law, and Tyndale asserts that God would intervene on behalf of a Turk or Saracen wronged by an unjust Christians: "Whosoever

[8] Coincidentally, the seafaring Antonio in *Twelfth Night* articulates a similar argument to the one made by the merchant Antonio of *The Merchant of Venice* in favor of economic restitution to one's foreign enemies—one not grounded in considerations of moral fairness but rather directed toward the interests of international trade and naval exchange, "for traffic's sake" (Shakespeare, "Twelfth Night," 3.3.34).

therefore hindreth a very infidel from the right of that law, sinneth against God and of him will God be avenged" (65). To wrong a non-Christian on earth is, Tyndale maintains, tantamount to committing doing wrong against God. Shakespeare's early modern audiences would have had at least a passing familiarity with Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man*, as well as his arguments about the theological justification for regarding Christian and non-Christian alike as equals before the law. Thus it is striking that the reasons Antonio offers in defense of Shylock's right to his bond diverge from Tyndale's theological argument in favor of a purely economic one. According to Antonio, Jews must be regarded as equals to Christians in matters pertaining to "the justice of the state" not because they were spiritual equals but in order to advance Venice's status as a global hub for international trade and exchange. The merchant's reason for why infidels should have justice in Christendom are, in the end, purely mercantile. Despite his divergence from Tyndale, it is Antonio who in fact offers the best counterargument to Portia's legal pronouncement—even if the play's outcome ultimately does not take into account his suggestion for how a Christian state ought to treat its non-Christian residents in matters of worldly pursuit.

When we read Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* against the backdrop of the travel tales of Caesar Fredericke, that other "Marchant of Venice," and alongside the prison memoirs of Galeotto Perera, a Portuguese stranger in Fuquieo, it is clear that Shakespeare's play reverses some of the implicit anxieties and questions raised by European travelers to Asia in Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. What does it mean that the courts, monetary laws, and civil codes in these faraway Asian cities extended to these European Christian strangers the very freedoms that Shakespeare's Venice has denied to Shylock, a Jewish resident alien of their city? Shakespeare's reversals of Perera's and Fredericke's travel accounts compel us to wonder whether the Europeans were indeed more merciful and just than the strangers who they met on their travels to the East, or whether—as Perera suggests—Asian jurisprudence and international policy might instead serve a models for Christian Europe's new forays into global exchange and trade.

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