

PORTUGUESE INTERVENTION IN THE MANILA GALLEON TRADE

THE STRUCTURE AND NETWORKS OF
TRADE BETWEEN ASIA AND AMERICA
IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES AS
REVEALED BY CHINESE CERAMICS AND
SPANISH ARCHIVES

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Introduction

The 16th-century world economy experienced a diverse change in many regions, the key products being silver, sugar, spices, slaves and silk. With the arrival of the Portuguese in Asian waters in the early 16th century, the regions began exporting to Europe spices (cloves, peppers) and other luxury goods, such as silk, Japanese silver and Chinese ceramics.¹ The Portuguese also exported slaves from Africa to Europe and America, and sugar from Brazil. This sugar/slave trade created a new economic cycle, exploiting sugar as a 'global' commodity. Additionally, after the conquest of America, Spanish interests began exporting great quantities of American silver to Europe and Asia, and brought silks and other Asian goods to America in return. By the 16th century silver was an important component of the Asian economy and before the beginning of the Manila galleon trade (1565), Japan had major interests in the supply of silver to Asia. The shortage of silver in the Chinese economy in the 16th century was the key driver of silk exports, in order to acquire silver, through trade with the Portuguese and Spanish. Large quantities of silk were traded in south China, Macao, Formosa, Nagasaki and Manila.

The objectives of this study

This work will study closely the trade structure and function of the Manila galleon trade, especially during the 16th and 17th centuries, in Asia and New Spain. The trading of silk for silver has been so exaggerated in terms of Asian and American trade that it is often overlooked that it also had a major influence on the transportation of other goods, peoples, cultures, and the actual merchants who participated in the trade between the two different regions. One core aim of this study is to propose the importance of the participation of Portuguese merchants in the Manila galleon trade in Asia using their extended network and their connections with New Spain, a factor which seems never to have been discussed in the past. Portuguese trade between Macao, Manila and Nagasaki has been studied by Charles Boxer,² Pierre Chaunu³ and Manel Ollé.⁴ Yoshitomo Okamoto⁵ and Koichiro Takase⁶ have carried out important studies on the trading

relationships of Japan and Macao and the intervention of the Jesuits in the circulation of slaves, silk and silver.

The Macao–Manila–Mexico route was important as a trunk network for Pacific trade, since Chinese and other Asian products to be shipped were first obtained in Guangdong and Fujian and then brought to Manila via Macao, or directly from southern China. Rivalry between Portuguese and Chinese merchants is often discussed, although supply from Macao, especially from early dealings until the prosperous period of the Manila galleon trade, was very important to the Spanish because of their lack of commercial and political knowledge and their connections to other Asian and Southeast Asian countries.

Many of the powerful merchants participating in this trade were Portuguese *conversos*,⁷ with their networks through Asia, America and Europe. These firms were especially important for their links with Mexican merchants and the Manila galleon trade. Although not all of these traders were successful in the new territories escaping from Portuguese controls, what differentiated them from other Portuguese, Spanish or Chinese merchants was that they had an extended network, being Jews, and thus were able to work as merchants in every location, with their local slaves, the trade in which they were actively engaged. The importance of Portuguese *converso* merchants in Mexican society has been studied by Jonathan I. Israel⁸ and Louisa Hoberman,⁹ the trading activities of these *conversos* on the Asian side has been partly studied by Lucio de Sousa.¹⁰ The Spanish merchant structure in Mexico (and its system in relation to trans-Pacific trade) has also been investigated by Carmen Yuste,¹¹ Carlos Martínez Shaw¹² and, of course, in the work of William Lytle Shurz.¹³ All the relevant historical facts were partially explored by these scholars, although a dedicated study integrating and connecting all these regions, social elements, traded products, as well as the

¹ Jingdezhen wares are mostly of 'porcelain' quality, although the author will use the term 'ceramic' so as to avoid confusion.

² Charles R.Boxer, *O Grande Navio de Amacao*. Fundacao Oriente, Macau, 1989.

³ Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique del Ibériques(XVI, XVII, XVIII siècles)*, S.E.V.P.E.N, Paris, 1960, pp. 204-206.

⁴ Manel Ollé Rodríguez, 'Macao-Manila Interactions in Ming Dynasty', *Macao During the Ming Dynasty*, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, I.P, 2009, pp. 152-176.

⁵ Yoshitomo Okamoto, *Jurokuseiki Nichiou Koutsushi no Kenkyu*, Hara Shobo, Tokyo, 1974, pp.140-260.

⁶ Koichiro Takase, Kirishitan Kyoukai no Boueki Katsudou-Tokuni Kiito Igai no Shouhin nitsuite, *The Socio-Economic History Society* 43 (1), Tokyo, 1977, pp. 54-72.

⁷ *Conversos* is a term used for those Jews who escaped the Spanish Inquisition in 1391. They fled first to Portugal, and again migrated to America when the Portuguese Inquisition began in 1536, keeping their Jewish faith within their families and close friends in secrecy.

⁸ Jonathan I. Israel, *Razas, clases sociales y vida política en el México colonial 1610-1670*, Fondo de Cultura económica, México, D.F. 1980, pp. 116-136.

⁹ Luisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite, 1590-1660. Silver, State, and Society*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1991, pp. 4-10.

¹⁰ Lucio de Sousa, 'Legal and Clandestine Trade in the History of Early Macao: Captain Landeiro, the Jewish King of the Portuguese from Macao', *Kanagawa Prefectural Institute of Language and Culture Studies*, 2012, pp. 49-63.

¹¹ Carmen Yuste, *El comercio de Nueva España con Filipinas 1590-1785*, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México, 1984.

¹² Carlos Martínez Shaw (ed.), *El Pacífico español de Magallanes a Malaspina*, Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y Lunweg Editores, 1988.

¹³ William Lytle Shurz, *The Manila Galleon*, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1939.



FIGURE 1: MODEL OF TRADE NETWORK

routes through Southeast Asia, southern China, Macao, Manila, Acapulco, Mexico, Veracruz, Seville (and indirect connections to the Atlantic coastal trade) has never been carried out.

The significance of this study crucially stands on this point: that all short-distance regional trades are connected to larger-scale trades, which in turn are again distributed in regional markets that further extend from the destinations of such large-scale trades (see Fig. 1).

The Manila galleon trade, using Pacific routes, constructed a complex trade network that extended and criss-crossed itself like a vast spider’s web. This worldwide trade network was operated by the Portuguese *conversos* with their well-developed connections from Asia to Europe. No other commercial network in the past had been carried out in a similar way by one single ethnic diaspora, and, therefore, it is possible to trace their communities and influence by studying genealogies, friendships, and, occasionally, even specific products, for example Chinese ceramics in which they had specific rights.

This present study will also focus on trade relations between Manila and Macao, which had always been maintained, although any entrance from Manila to Macao by the Spanish was officially prohibited. In a way, Manila relied upon daily supplies brought by the Portuguese and Chinese merchants. In addition, after Japan closed the borders and prohibited trade with the Spanish and Portuguese, the latter were obliged to obtain American silver from Manila to purchase Chinese goods.

Chapter I will include a discussion on the Asian market structure and the participation of Iberian powers in this regional trade. The historical background, which made the Portuguese and Spanish the first among the Europeans to expand their powers into Asia, must be

explained in order to understand the cause and effect of the new century of maritime trade in Asia. The rapid growth of Portuguese commercial activities was the key to the conversion of Manila into an international port polity at the beginning of Manila galleon trade. The Spanish used the commercial network established by the Portuguese, utilizing the existing Asian trade network and introducing many ships into Cavite to distribute American silver. The participation of Chinese merchants was always one of the major factors of Asian trade, but Chapter I will clarify that, in the case of Manila, the majority of Chinese immigrants earned their livelihoods as labourers and craftsmen rather than from trade, and that the true merchants supporting the Manila galleon trade were highly likely to have been the Portuguese.

Chapter II will explain what products were actually exported to New Spain. Silk and other textiles and ceramics of course, but the quantities of ceramics have always been vague in previous studies, and some of the statistics taken from Blair and Robertson, and used by many scholars, are unreliable, as the original sources have not been indicated. Other products and commodities, such as slaves, were almost never mentioned in previous studies, but it is very important to consider the early Asian migrations into America and the Caribbean areas, along with their cultural impact on local societies. The participation of religious orders in this trade is also mentioned in Chapter II, linking to the following chapter on the fact that many Chinese ceramics have been excavated from monasteries and convents. The nature of Mexican merchants and the importance of Portuguese *converso* merchants, who made their fortunes trading Asian goods and other products, is a central issue to be discussed here, along with their wide supporting network behind them. The connection of *conversos* to New Spain will be explained how and why they were important to the Mexican economy and society.

Chapter III is dedicated to the ceramic trade routes from southern China to Macao and on to New Spain. This includes studies on some of the wreck sites, and shows how Chinese and Portuguese merchants segregated their trade products in an attempt to co-exist in the China–Manila trade, rather than creating conflict and rivalry. Further discussion is mainly given to the Chinese ceramics found in New Spain, analyzing how the supply and demand changed over the course of time and considering why the zenith of ceramic exports was in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and also explaining the absence of Chinese ceramics in the mid-17th century. How these ceramics were accepted among the societies of New Spain, and were involved in its original development will also be discussed in order to understand the impact that Asian products had on the material culture.

Chapter IV will look at the excavated material from Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands. This archaeological

study indicates the differences in material culture among these leading European nations in the 16th and 17th centuries. The datings, quantities and types of Chinese ceramics from each site demonstrate the mercantile structure, route and likely trading volume for each period. The acceptance of Chinese ceramics by Spanish and Portuguese societies, and their further distribution throughout Europe, can be differentiated by analyses of the Chinese ceramics excavated. Asian products, such as silk and ceramics, were highly valued in Europe from the previous period and were traded by Arab merchants. After the conquest of Malacca in the early 16th century, these products were directly traded and transported by Portuguese merchants to Lisbon. The nature of Asian goods were converted from being a desirable objects for the upper class aristocrats into consumer items of middle class merchants. This helps provide an overview of trade and material culture in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, just prior to the 'boom' in Oriental goods of the 18th century.

European power and Asian entrepôts in the 16th century

The beginning of trade between Manila and Acapulco, the longest maritime trading distance in history, changed Manila into one of the most important entrepôts in Asia. The island of Mindoro appears in a Chinese document already in the 13th century as 'Ma-I' (麻逸) in 'Zhufanzhi' (諸蕃誌). However, the nature of the Asian ports of the 16th century was very different from that of earlier periods following the arrival of European powers into Asian waters. Macao was officially permitted by the Chinese authority to undertake trade between Portuguese and Chinese merchants in 1557. Although it never functioned as a trading port in earlier periods, Macao became an important base for the Portuguese to acquire silks, damasks and other silk-derived goods from Guangdong. Winter-related goods from Guangdong provided opportunities for exports to India, Commodities such as silk, gold, musk, ceramics, rouge and rhubarb were brought down-river to Macao from Guangdong in large vessels known as *lanteas*, although considerable quantities of goods were also smuggled into Macao to be sold clandestinely.¹⁴ Formosa was also a newly-established port city. Chinese from the mainland began to settle gradually there from the 1200s, but it was originally a small harbour where fishermen came to barter goods until the Fujianese and Portuguese began to call in to trade. After failing to capture Macao, the Fujianese pirates established themselves along the southwest coast of Formosa and fortified the port, which became a distribution destination for Chinese silks, Japanese silver and copper.¹⁵ Nagasaki was another

small fishing village (of only 100 households) until 1570, when Omura Sumitada (大村純忠) established a port open to Portuguese shipping. These were newly-established ports connected to Portuguese trade, where Chinese silk and Japanese silver were mainly bought and sold by Portuguese, Chinese and Japanese merchants. The Portuguese played an important role as middlemen in this trade, buying Japanese silver with Chinese silk. Among the circumstances enabling this was the fact that official trade between China and Japan was prohibited by the activities of the local 'warrior merchants' (*Wako*) along the coastal area. Additional factors included the large demand for Japanese silver in China and the growing appetite for Chinese silk in the Japanese market.¹⁶ The majority of Chinese silks exported from Macao went to Nagasaki, although a significant quantity was left for supply to India, Europe and Spanish America (via Manila).

Conversely, Manila had already existed as a trading port in earlier periods. In the Ming dynasty the Sino-Filipino relationship was considerably developed, both commercially and economically, and almost all the trading ports were visited by Chinese merchants. Envoys from the Philippines travelled to China and paid tribute to the Ming court.¹⁷ After the establishment of Spanish interests in this city in 1571, Manila became one of the most important ports in all Southeast Asia, where merchants from New Spain, south China, Portuguese from Macao as well as merchants from India came and traded. The nature of Manila as a port was mostly focused on acquiring American silver, however various products from other Asian bases entered the port of Cavite. Direct contact between Chinese merchants and the Spanish in Manila began around 1572: six Chinese ships arrived in Cavite in 1574, 12-15 in 1575, and 40-60 ships in 1580. The major increase in numbers of Chinese ships entering Manila can be confirmed over a short period of time.¹⁸ *Las Cartas de Indias* (Letters from India), written between 1588 and 1591, mentions that merchants from many places, including Japan, Macao and Siam, came to trade silks, black and coloured damasks, embroideries and other textiles, *inter alia* large quantities of black and white cotton cloth. In return they brought beeswax, cotton, wood and shells, which in some places were used for money.¹⁹ Another document also refers to active trade between Manila and China, with the major items brought from China to the Philippines being ceramics, jars, iron, silks, fine ceramics, mercury, gunpowder, peppers, cinnamon, cloves, sugar, copper, oranges, rice, gold powder, wax, etc.²⁰ When the Manila

¹⁴ Charles R. Boxer. *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Chinese in the Philippines*, Philippine Social Science and Humanities Review vol. XXIX Sep-Dec. 1964, no.3-4, pp.315-323.

¹⁸ William Lytle Shurtz, *op. cit.*, pp.72-73.

¹⁹ Blair, Emma Helen, and Robertson, James Alexander, (eds.) *The Philippine Islands; 1492-1898*, Vol. VII, Cleveland, 1903-1909, p.35.

²⁰ AGI México 19-82, *Carta de Martín Enríquez a SM*, fol. 3.

¹⁴ Charles R. Boxer, *The Great Ships from Amacon. Annales of Macao and the Old Japan Trade, 1555-1640*, Centro de Estudios Históricos Ultramarinos, Lisboa, 1959, pp. 5-10.

¹⁵ Charles R. Boxer. *op. cit.*, pp. 1-5.

galleon trade began, these Asian products were traded for American silver and exported to Acapulco. This trade transformed Manila into a port where silk and Asian luxury goods were concentrated and into a centre for silver distribution into Asia. The city was said to be highly cosmopolitan, with Japanese, Malays, Javanese, Italians, French, Greeks, Portuguese, and a large number of Chinese merchants residing in the city.²¹

Rivalries and dependence between Spain and Portugal in Asia

The great difference between Portuguese and Spanish trade in Asia was that the Spanish rarely intervened in Asian commerce, and never in the same way as the Portuguese. As previously mentioned, they were middlemen between southern China, Nagasaki, and Manila. Even the wealthy Cantonese merchants shipped their goods to Manila and Nagasaki via Portuguese merchants.²² Silk and silver in Asia circulated between Guangdong, Macao, Formosa, Nagasaki, and Manila, with the merchants connecting these ports being Portuguese and Chinese. Chinese merchants provided silk and other textiles, whereas the Portuguese offered Japanese and American silver and silk. The trade link between Manila and Macao was quite open, and Portuguese merchants frequently brought Chinese goods acquired in the markets of Guangdong to Manila, to be sold to the Spanish at prices higher than those of Chinese merchants. However, the taxes paid by Portuguese merchants in Manila were far less than Chinese merchants had to pay, and this was complained of by the Spanish on many occasions. The relationship between the Portuguese and the Spanish in Asia was barely affected by the politics of the Iberian Peninsula, and, although the two kingdoms were united until 1640, the Portuguese had to pay taxes when trading in Manila, while the Spanish were officially prohibited from travelling to Macao from Manila. Such rivalry between two countries was prominent in Asia. On the other hand, the Portuguese authorities often requested military support from the Spanish government against Ternate, and also economic support for Formosa. On the other side, the existence of Portuguese merchants in Asia offered fundamental support for the Spanish in the Philippines. Spain needed Portuguese merchants, the latter being much more integrated and better informed in terms of Asian trade, and thus used them as intermediaries to acquire goods and participate generally in trade matters. On the other hand the Portuguese government, which did not have a stable base in Southeast Asia, and which continuously faced armed conflicts, especially from the Dutch, depended on Spain for soldiers and money. Portuguese merchants needed silver to continue

developing trade with China and other countries in Southeast Asia (especially after Japan gradually closed the country off in the first decades of the 17th century), and they endeavoured to reinforce the link with Manila to acquire American silver, even sending ships directly to New Spain from Macao.

The intervention of the European powers in the Asian region beginning from the 16th century resulted effectively in redrawing the map of Asia and establishing new port-cities such as Macao, Nagasaki and Formosa, trading silver and large quantities of silk and other textile exports from China to other Asian ports, some destined for the New World and European markets. Conversely, this intervention meant a direct connection in terms of the world economy between Asia, Europe and the New World, transporting goods from Asia to New Spain, crossing the Pacific, or to Lisbon via The Cape of Good Hope. People, various products and cultures were more closely connected between Europe and Asia than before.

The influence of Asian luxury goods on Mexican culture

Asian products (silks, ceramics, lacquer wares, cotton and other textiles, furniture, wax, etc.) were well accepted all over the New World, from Mexico to Peru and other Spanish colonies. Silk was exported in large quantities from Manila to Acapulco, and from there distributed to all the other countries and cities of the continent. (In many documents silks appear as *ropas chinas* (clothes from China).²³ Silk clothes from China were quite common and were acquired, probably at reasonable prices, by middle-class Mexican society. In his book, Thomas Gage refers many times to women wearing Chinese silk and shops selling the fabric.²⁴ The Parián, located in the Plaza Mayor, was a market where all Asian goods were sold. Chinese porcelain, in particular, was highly prized by the wealthier classes of American society. Great quantities of ceramics, dating from the 16th to the 18th centuries, have been excavated from the wider vicinity of Zócalo. These ceramics were bought and used in monasteries, convents, and residences of rich families, where wealth was naturally concentrated.²⁵ Plates and bowls are the shapes most commonly found from excavation sites, although some forms, such as jars or tall cups for coffee or chocolate, are also found, helping to characterize the material culture of Mexican society at the time.

²³ It is unclear from the original Spanish documents if silk was actually woven in China and exported as items of clothing.

²⁴ Thomas Gage, *Nuevo Reconocimiento de las Indias Occidentales*, 1ª edición, 1648, Fondo Cultura Económica, México, D.F., 1982, pp. 178-180.

²⁵ Some Chinese ceramics are noted as heirlooms in wealthy Mexican homes. Antonio Rubial García (coordinador), *Historia de la Vida Cotidiana en México, Tomo II: La Ciudad Barroca*, El Colegio de México y Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 2005, p. 94.

²¹ Manel Ollé Rodríguez, *Macao-Manila Interactions in the Ming Dynasty*, Macau During the Ming Dynasty, Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, I. P. 2009, pp.152-176.

²² Charles R. Boxer. *op. cit.* p. 12.

Chinese ceramics also had a great influence over Talavera wares, with many of the designs and motifs deriving from the Jingdezhen repertoire. The *biombo*, a Japanese folding screen (*biobu* in Japanese), was also an item very much favoured among rich Mexicans, and the technique was copied to produce a local version of the product, featuring the scenery of Mexico city.²⁶ Lacquer wares also became very popular, and the inlaid shell technique of *raden* was later copied by the Mexicans and reproduced as *enconchado*, a wooden art form featuring shell inlay.²⁷

The trade and transport system in New Spain

Asian products were acquired in Manila and transported to Acapulco; from there they went overland to Lima or Mexico. When the galleon reached the coastal area of Baja California, ships known as *barcos de aviso* (ships sent to Acapulco in order to notify arrivals) were dispatched to inform the port of Acapulco.²⁸ When the galleon docked the market (*feria*) opened and many items were sold. This market continued for a month and a half, starting from January until February. Before opening this market, the government inspected the cargo in order to confirm if the cargo register in Acapulco matched that from Cavite. This inspection was to put a limit on the cargo tonnage and prohibit contraband, although in many cases the tonnage was falsified and more goods than initially registered were normally loaded. Moreover, in order to register goods at lower prices, silk and other products of less quality were placed above the higher quality silk. On arrival at Acapulco the price of each product was reviewed and fixed among the merchants of New Spain and the Philippines.²⁹ Once the price was agreed upon the market in Acapulco was opened to the public, although the major part of the cargo was transported directly to Mexico. Trade between Acapulco and Peru was prohibited in 1582 so as to stop Peruvian silver being excessively transported towards Asia via Acapulco, nevertheless smuggling was always active and the flow of goods between the two regions never ceased. Peruvian merchants travelled to Acapulco when the galleon entered the port twice a year. The Peruvian economy heavily depended on silver exports and brought great quantities of silver to Mexico. Basic

commodities were traded and Asian products and Peru–Mexico trade continued to represent commercial connections in America through the colonial period. What is interesting is that these Asian products were not only distributed in determined places, but can be found in almost all locations along the Caribbean coastal areas, e.g. Florida, Panama, Guatemala, Cuba and Puerto Rico.³⁰

What this indicates is that the material culture of the New World was affected by the Manila galleon trade, and Asian luxury goods were in demand in almost every American settlement of any size among the wealthy classes. Those Asian products appreciated in important colonial cities, such as Mexico, Lima and Havana, were also in demand by almost all societies.

Cargoes destined for Mexico City were reloaded on mule caravans in Acapulco and headed towards the capital. The caravans normally had contracts with those merchants who were the cargo owners and picked up the merchandise in Acapulco and delivered it to the cities where the merchants resided. When entering the city of Mexico, each caravan owner had to register the cargo. Raw silk, silk and cotton clothes were more common among the products purchased by the merchants. Ceramics and storage jars were also goods frequently brought into Mexico City. It is difficult to know how much benefit these Asian products brought to New Spain, although fragile items, such as furniture and ceramics, were always among the goods transported to Mexico by land and which were probably sold at higher prices. The route used to transport goods from Acapulco to Mexico was known as *Camino de la China* (The Chinese Route). The actual 16th-century route is not known and Francisco Carletti's famous journal account of his travels by land from Acapulco to Mexico remains short or details and obscure. The chronicle of Sebastian Cubero, who travelled from Acapulco to Veracruz in 1670, refers to a route that passed by Papagayo, the Papagayo River, Tixla, Chilapa, Atlixco, Puebla and Veracruz.³¹ In 1697, Francisco Gemelli Careri passed by the Papagayo River, Cañahuatal, Dos Caminos, Acahuizotla, Mazatlán, Las

²⁶ Sofia Sanabrais, *The Biombo or Folding Screen in Colonial Mexico, Asia & Spanish America, Trans-Pacific Artistic & Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, Oklahoma University Press, Denver, 2009, pp. 69-106.

²⁷ Sonia Ocaña Ruiz, 'Enconchado Frames: The Use of Japanese Ornamental Models in New Spanish Painting', *Asia & Spanish America, Trans-Pacific Artistic & Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, Oklahoma University Press, Denver, 2009, pp. 129-150.

²⁸ Etsuko Miyata Rodríguez, 'The Early Manila Galleon Trade: Merchants' Networks and Markets in 16th- and 17th- Century Mexico, *Asia & Spanish America, Trans-Pacific Artistic & Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, Oklahoma University Press, Denver, 2009, p. 43.

²⁹ María Ramón Serrera, *El Camino de México a Acapulco*, El Galeón de Manila, Aldeasa, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2000, pp. 41-42.

³⁰ Chinese ceramics found in Florida and Panama may be viewed online at the website of the Florida Museum of Natural History: https://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/histarch/gallery_types/open_search_proc.

asp Luis A. Romero, 'La cerámica de importación de Santo Domingo, Antigua Guatemala', in J. P. Laporte, B. Arroyo y H. Mejía (eds.), *XX Simposio de Investigaciones Arqueológicas en Guatemala*, Museo Nacional de Arqueología y Etnología, Guatemala, 2006, pp. 1529-1545 (digital version). Mónica Pavia Pérez, *Arqueología Subacuática en Cuba. Reseña histórica*, Habana Patrimonial, Dirección de Patrimonial Cultural, Habana, 2011, online at: <http://www.ohch.cu/articulos/arqueologia-subacuatica-en-cuba.-resena-historica/> Meiko Nagashima, 'Japanese Lacquers Exported to Spanish America and Spain', *Asia & Spanish America, Trans-Pacific Artistic & Cultural Exchange, 1500-1850*, Oklahoma University Press, Denver, 2009, pp. 107-118.

³¹ Serrera, Ramón María, *El Camino de México a Acapulco, El Galeón de Manila* (catalogue), Aldeasa, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2000, pp. 41-42.

Petaquillas, Chilpancingo, Zumpango, Rio de las Balsas, El Nopalillo, Pueblo Nuevo, Amacuzac, Ahuacutzingo, Alpuyecá, Cuernavaca, and Tlatenango. This route referred to by Francisco Gemelli Careri did not change until the cessation of the Manila galleon trade in the 19th century, and it is still used as federal road.

Asian products brought by the Manila galleon trade were acquired mostly by merchants of New Spain, through 'agents' residing in Manila. These agents were normally family members of the merchants or business partners. They received orders from their offices in New Spain or Peru and purchased goods from the *sangleyes* (Chinese) or Portuguese in Manila, or whoever came with goods to Manila. On the other hand, merchants in Mexico, La Puebla, Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Lima also had relationships with the merchants in Spain and sent orders from merchants in Seville or other cities to Manila via their agents. In other words, some of merchants in Spain bought Asian goods via merchants in Mexico or other large cities. These merchants in New Spain formed an association referred to as *consulado* (consulate), taking its model from the Basque and Catalanian merchants' association. The *consulado* facilitated commercial activities in New Spain by their own budgets. It also managed a cartel among the merchants to fix the price of imported goods and independently functioned to benefit their trading activities. Most of the merchants of New Spain who controlled these imports of Asian goods to Spain were from either Mexico or Veracruz.³²

Veracruz to Seville

Some of the Asian merchandise brought to New Spain was then in turn transported by land to Veracruz, and from there shipped to Seville, which was one of the largest and most important ports in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was a port where all the goods from America, especially silver, could enter with other goods, such as leathers and dye materials. Although Asian goods were never the major products traded in Seville, they did come through the port and were consumed in Spain. Silk was traded on a fairly regular basis, but other luxury goods, such as ceramics, were very small in number but were traded as personal gifts. Most of these items were probably consumed in Seville, the city where wealth concentrated within Spain. The distribution of Asian goods within the Spanish territory hardly spread towards the interior regions. The only part of the country which always traded in certain Asian goods, especially Chinese porcelain, was the coastal Galician province located in the northwest of Spain.³³ This phenomenon was the result of geographical factors, the region being adjacent to Portugal and traditionally

maintaining active commercial relations by sea routes. It will later be discussed that the earliest Chinese pieces entered Spain via Lisbon and the Galician coast, and that these were possibly moved further north to Amsterdam, which was destined to become the largest consumer market for Chinese ceramics in 17th-century Europe.

Spanish markets for Asian products

How Asian products were circulated and accepted in the Spanish society of the 16th and 17th centuries is still not very clear as there are so few Asian products found as heirlooms or excavated materials, although they did have some influence directly or indirectly on Spanish decorative arts, such as ceramic productions. Many of the Spanish ceramics of the 17th and 18th centuries copied the Chinese blue-and-white motifs of the late 16th and the early 17th centuries. Portugal in the 16th century was the largest importer of Chinese ceramics in Europe and traded large quantities from the beginning of the Asian expansion in the early 16th century.³⁴ The Netherlands took over from Portugal in the 17th century after the establishment of the Dutch East India Company and became the largest importer into Europe. Compared to these countries, which were competitors to Spanish influence in Asian waters, Spain imported very few Chinese ceramics. Later, England, and Germany too, began to import Chinese ceramics, and in the 18th century almost all the western European countries created certain levels of demand for Chinese ceramics and this boom became a general social phenomenon. However, in case of Spain, imports of Chinese ceramics were fairly modest from the 16th century, when the Manila galleon trade began, and was able to import Asian goods for New Spain. Although the 18th century shows a different scenario, with more imports of Chinese polychrome ceramics, it must be said that the quantities were still limited compared to other European countries.³⁵

Each component of the Asian trade, trans-Pacific trade, American trade, and Atlantic trade was organized and connected by the Chinese, Malays, Japanese, Portuguese, Spaniards, Mexican and Dutch merchants. Within this large scheme, Chinese ceramics are one of the commodities that will enable us to understand the actual nature of the trade route and the distribution of Asian goods to Europe by the very fact that ceramics survive whereas many so other materials (wood, paper, textiles, etc.) eventually disappear. Studying the spatial distribution of ceramic materials from various excavation sites demonstrates how Chinese ceramics were traded in Mexico and Spain together with other Asian products. The presence (or absence) of material

³² See Appendix.

³³ Etsuko Miyata, 'Chinese ceramics from Spain: their significance in the 16th and the 17th century Atlantic coastal trade', *52 Congreso Internacional de Americanistas 2009*, online distribution.

³⁴ Jean Paul Desroches, 'Oriental Ceramics and Porcelains', *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires, The Last Voyage*, Verbo, Lisbon, 1998, pp. 233-234.

³⁵ See Appendix. This issue will also be discussed in Chapter IV in detail.

from specific periods shows the rise and fall of trade activity as influenced by the cultural trends of the time and the economic conditions. The general tendency of the Chinese ceramics trade in Asia, America and Europe shows that the end of 16th century and into the early 17th marks the zenith of such trade, and a great quantity of ceramics of the Ming (明) period were exported over almost all the world. The mid-17th century was a time when many societies experienced some form of economic crisis and, especially, it is believed that Jingdezhen (景德镇) production ceased by the time of the civil war that occurred at the beginning of the Qing dynasty (清朝). Consequently very few pieces of this period are present in the excavation sites in Mexico, Portugal, the Netherlands and Spain. The types of ceramics also show a change over the course of time, adapting to the demands of each market. When the ceramic trade with European countries began in the early 16th century, first with Portugal, the forms, which were completely based on Asian prototypes, began to evolve to suit the cultures of Europe and America (i.e. flat plates, coffee cups and saucers). For example, from the third quarter of the 17th century, tall, thin cups began to be produced and can be found in

various excavation sites in Mexico and Europe. These were probably used to drink coffee or chocolate, and in the 18th century, large quantities of cups and saucers were produced and exported to the European market. These forms can hardly ever be found in excavations in Asia, except for some port-cities where Chinese ceramics were loaded and exported by Dutch merchants. Henceforth, the presence of a specific shape in one culture, and its absence in another, indicate the difference in eating/drinking habits and cultures between countries. The variety of types and shapes of Chinese ceramics increased greatly from the third quarter of the 16th century in order to suit the needs of export markets; it continued to increase until the 18th century, when polychrome ceramics became popular in European societies instead of the earlier blue-and-white style. This probably reflected the tastes of the European market, where traditionally colourful ceramics were more favoured, as can be seen on Majolica ceramics in Italy and Spain, whereas in Asia, blue-and-white wares continued to be the major preference. Ceramics as archaeological material inform about material culture and its change over time, strongly related to the economy and trading activities in each society or region.