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Silk, porcelain and lacquer : China and Japan and their trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500-1644. A survey of documentary and material evidence

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Stellingen / Propositions

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Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer: China and Japan and Their Trade with Western Europe and The New World, 1500-1644. A Survey of Documentary and Material Evidence

Door / by

Teresa Canepa

1. Although the Iberians, the Dutch and English were trading similar types of Chinese silks, there was a much more prominent involvement in the trade, appreciation and use of Chinese silks in the Spanish colonies in the New World in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries than has conventionally been recognized. Moreover, Chinese silks were much more widely spread in the New World, in both geographical and social terms, than in the mother country Spain, Portugal, the Dutch Republic or England.
2. Only the Iberians and the Christian missionaries appear to have exerted influence on the Chinese silks made to order for them in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but their influence was quite limited. This contrasts with the influences Europeans exerted on the shapes and decorations of Chinese porcelain and Japanese lacquer.
3. The custom of displaying a large quantity of Chinese porcelain in a separate architectural space or room specially created for that purpose began much earlier than previously thought. This first occurred in Portugal in the early 1560s, then in England in the early 1600s. This puts an end to the long-lasting assumption that such ornamental displays of porcelain first appeared in the Dutch Republic and then spread throughout Europe.
4. Two English inventories taken in Exeter, one in 1596, the other in 1598, have provided the earliest written references known thus far of the use of the terms 'Carracke' and 'Carricke' to refer to dishes, which were in all probability made of *Kraak* porcelain. These textual sources prove that it was a common term (with slight variations in spelling) used in England as early as the late 1590s, while in the Dutch Republic the term 'caraek' is not mentioned in VOC documents before

1638. Furthermore, they prove that the Dutch term *kraak porselein* does not derive from a type of wall-shelf or ridge used for displaying blue-and-white porcelain in Friesland (the *kraak*).

5. Although the thicker and coarser Chinese porcelain from the private kilns of Zhangzhou (Fujian province) was imported into Western Europe and the European colonies in the New World in lesser quantities in comparison with that of Jingdezhen (Jiangxi province) during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it was much more widely distributed, appreciated and used than previously acknowledged.
6. The Spanish began importing the pure white Chinese porcelain, known as *Blanc de chine*, from the private kilns of Dehua (Fujian province) into their colonies in the New World and re-exporting some of it to the motherland Spain by the early 1640s, which is about ten years earlier than previously thought.
7. The Dutch, unlike the Portuguese in the sixteenth century, were not interested in having coat of arms or monograms depicted on the so-called Transitional porcelain made to order for them in the 1630s and 1640s. Instead, they desired porcelain that was made in European shapes which suited their own material culture. However, these porcelains made to order had to be decorated with 'exotic' Chinese motifs, thus creating an interesting dichotomy.
8. The Dutch and English trading companies ordered Japanese lacquer that suited European consumer habits in the early 1610s. This is about twenty years earlier than Chinese porcelains in European shapes were made to order for the Dutch at the Jingdezhen kilns. This historical fact had before lain unnoticed.
9. The Spanish colonial market was not only a direct consumer of large quantities of Asian goods, especially of Chinese silks and porcelain, and Japanese lacquer, but also a distributor via the trans-Atlantic trade route to both the Caribbean and the motherland Spain.
10. In the early seventeenth century, the Spanish viceroyalties in the New World and across the Atlantic the Dutch Republic in Western Europe, seem to have been the principal geographical places where imported Asian manufactured goods came

to be integrated into the daily life of a clientele of nearly all social classes and had a distinct function as markers of wealth and social status.

11. The cultural influence of the about 90,000 Chinese 'coolies', or unskilled peasants, that immigrated to Peru between 1849 and 1874 to work in agriculture is still felt today. This cultural influence can be clearly observed in a type of cuisine called *Chifa*, one of the most popular foods in the country, which reflects a fusion of Creole Peruvian and Chinese cuisine.