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Chinese porcelain and other orientalia and exotica in Spain during the Habsburg dynasty

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5. CONCLUSION

Initially, this research aimed to give a survey of Chinese porcelain in Habsburg Spain (1517-1700), a topic that despite its intrinsic interest had only been addressed by art historians in passing. In addition, such a study promised to contribute significantly to an understanding of the role Spain played during this period in the interactions between East and West in the arts and material culture. Thanks to the few published property inventories⁸⁰⁸, a considerable amount of porcelain is known to have existed in the collections amassed by the Spanish royal family, the nobility and private individuals with the means and interest to collect porcelain. However, it soon became clear that the Habsburg collections currently in the hands of the Spanish National Heritage authorities included no pieces of porcelain. Therefore, it was necessary to broaden the scope of research and look at the wider role that Chinese porcelain played within Spain's material culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Inevitably, this gave rise to a series of reflections: what did the Spanish during the Habsburg period think of Chinese porcelain? How was it categorised within the culture? What were its distribution and consumption patterns? And above all, what happened to it that outside of the records so few traces of it can now be found in Spain? The answers to each of these apparently simple questions proved to be anything but straightforward.

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that the history of Chinese porcelain in Habsburg Spain did not occur in isolation. It must be considered within the broader context of the Habsburg empire and it must also be examined within the entirety of Spain's material culture in this period, particularly with regard to Spanish taste for exotic imports. It is a story that requires an interdisciplinary approach.

For the research, the primary sources from Spanish archives provided first-hand, direct evidence of the status that Chinese porcelain held within Habsburg society. However, methodological problems immediately arose when it was discovered that modern and contemporary sixteenth/seventeenth century definitions of 'porcelain' diverge markedly. Furthermore, of the numerous inventories consulted, very few list Chinese porcelain in any great amount compared to the numbers of other art objects, such as silver, or paintings. With regard to the terms for porcelain itself, the terminology used to describe the shape and decoration of objects was also frequently unclear, their exact meanings having in some cases been lost, preventing a clear vision of what the pieces in these descriptions were like. This last problem was partly solved by an etymological comparison of these terms in two dictionaries of the time (Covarrubias and Autoridades), and has resulted in a Spanish-to-English glossary that may have a wider use in the field of the decorative arts.

This study, however, also provided evidence of how porcelain was viewed in Spain during the Habsburg period. The Spanish classified objects of Oriental export art as *bujerías*, or knick-knacks (*miudezas* in Portuguese), and listed them as such in documents of the period, the porcelains being lumped together with lacquered writing desks or boxes, jewellery, semiprecious stones, fans, ivory etc. This term, used to embrace porcelain and other exotica, meant, according to the 1726 Autoridades

⁸⁰⁸ Sánchez Cantón, 1956-59, vol. 2, pp. 265-80; Fernández Bayton, 1975/81/85, vol. 1. p. 222; Urquizar Herrera, 2007, p. 156; Cervera Vera, 1977, p. 147.

dictionary, something 'of low price or value but made with care and grace, usually given to ladies and children'. This not only indicates a link between the feminine and porcelain at the time but it is also clearly pejorative (or at least condescending); sometimes porcelain and other exotica were even referred to as *bagatelas* – 'mere trifles'⁸⁰⁹. It is true that – apart from Philip II and a handful of other men – Chinese porcelain and other exotica are frequently the possessions of female members of the court and nobility. And woman could play a very important role in this period in establishing new fashions and consumer habits. In addition, most Chinese porcelain from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain has been found in convents – whether as surviving whole pieces or excavated as shards, an interesting sociological fact that deserves further study.

By connection, for some Spaniards of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, porcelain and other exotica had the connotation of simply a *souvenir* of travels or of 'curious items', instead of being considered and priced as a luxury item as it was in northern Europe at this time. Even now in Spain, a *jarrón chino* (Chinese vase) means something superfluous and of no practical use. Thus, the etymological evidence all pointed towards Chinese porcelain as having a fairly low profile and value in Spanish society during the Golden Age of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – a conclusion that has been borne out (with notable exceptions since value lies in the eyes of the beholder) by evidence from other areas of this research. In addition some documents in the Archive of the Indies reveal that merchants sending Chinese crockery from the port of San Juan de Ulúa (Veracruz, Mexico) to Seville, would use almost any term to refer to porcelain goods from East Asia – sometimes they did refer to them as *porcelana*, but more often they were just *barro* (clay) or *loça* (tin-glazed pottery). It is clear that they were not very clear about and probably not very concerned with the particular qualities of the goods they were handling.

Chinese porcelain evolved from being relatively rare curios in the first half of the first part of the sixteenth century to become the everyday *bujerías* of the inventories, especially after the Portuguese established a base in Macao in 1557⁸¹⁰ and the Spanish settled in Manila in 1571. From 1573 regular trade (through the Manila Galleon) was established between the Philippines and New Spain, greatly enriching the material cultures of Spanish America. And trade in exotica and orientalia from China, the Philippines and Mexico became even more regular after 1580, with the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns. Although the Spanish authorities tried to limit the trade of Chinese porcelain and other exotic products in Mexico to rein in competition with products produced in the Iberian peninsula (and also to stop the tremendous drain of American silver back to Asia), until 1620-30 (when the Ming dynasty began its slow collapse and trade patterns started to change), Chinese goods must have arrived in New Spain in abundance. This is confirmed, for instance, by the cargo carried by Spanish merchant ships like the *Santiago* and the *San Juan*, which in 1573 carried 22,300 pieces of 'fine gilt china and other porcelain wares.'⁸¹¹

Unfortunately, it was impossible to quantify how much was actually transported by Spanish ships because shipping records only list boxes or bundles, the contents of which were described only very generically, if at all. In addition, a great deal of trading was clandestine and therefore left no trace in any records. The information provided by these records was therefore insufficient to enable a reliable year-by-year survey of Chinese porcelain exports or to outline price developments. Archaeological

⁸⁰⁹ Tomé Pinheiro da Veiga, *Fastiginia. Vida cotidiana en la corte de Valladolid*, Valladolid, 1989, p. 105.

⁸¹⁰ It is clear that Portugal imported a much larger amount of Chinese porcelain than Spain, especially after Macao was established as their permanent foothold in the East. However porcelain also came to Spain via Lisbon. In fact, Chinese *Kraak* influence on Talavera pottery came from the pieces coming from Portugal into Extremadura in Spain.

⁸¹¹ Schurz, 1985, p. 30.

excavations in Mexico and in the other Spanish colonies in Central and South America have yielded an important amount of shards of Chinese and Japanese porcelain and a thorough investigation of sixteenth and seventeenth century inventories and appraisals of goods in the different cities of Spanish America will eventually demonstrate the extent to which Oriental exotica played a part in the households of the Spanish American colonies. The role and appreciation of Oriental porcelain in these societies is largely unknown and urgently needs further research.

What published records and archaeology of the period clearly reveal is that Chinese porcelain was plentiful and cheap both in the Philippines and Mexico, with considerably less of it continuing onwards to Spain. While Chinese porcelain was the second most important cargo in the Manila galleon (from Manila to Acapulco), it was only a minor component in the cargoes of the so-called Fleet of the Indies (about 20 merchant ships), that almost every year did the second part of the journey across the Atlantic from Veracruz to Seville. Their cargo included mixed commodities of Asian and American products. But for Spanish traders silver was clearly the most important and profitable commodity, as were different raw materials such as cochineal or indigo for dyeing, ginger or sarsaparilla for medical uses and new plantation products such as tobacco, sugar and cocoa, all of which were becoming very popular products in Spanish markets during the second half of the 17th century. Among the luxury items, pearls and gems from the New World were the most important trade items, and Chinese porcelain clearly figured as a very minor import to the Iberian peninsula. According to historian Jose Luis Gasch-Tomas⁸¹², who made a comparative study of probate inventories of the elites of Mexico and Seville from 1580 to 1630, twenty-five per cent of Mexican inventories contain Chinese porcelain but only ten per cent of the inventories from Seville register porcelain. It is clear that supply and demand for Chinese porcelain was low in Spain in comparison to its demand in the Spanish Americas.

Research has also thrown up a great deal of information about how porcelain and other Orientalia were commercially dispersed in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries once they did arrive there – especially from Seville to the royal capitals of Madrid and Valladolid. It is inescapable to conclude, after analyzing a large number of documents, that the claim by some authors that porcelain ‘flooded’ the peninsula in ‘great quantities, around 40,000 to 60,000 pieces per year,’⁸¹³ cannot be substantiated in the inventories, where Asian exotica are in fact relatively scarce. For example, according to a recently published investigation into the trade in Chinese silk⁸¹⁴ – the most important Asian commodity – in Mexico and Seville between 1580 and 1600, the total amount of Chinese silk in stocks of Mexican textiles was about 20-25%, while only 2% was registered in Sevillian stocks. It tells us that the arrival in Spain of galleons loaded with Asian products from Mexico did not trigger the same kind of mania for Orientalia as it did in Portugal, England and the Netherlands. Although it would need more investigation, one possible reason for this is the generally conservative and closed nature of Spanish society following the centuries of the Reconquista and the fact that Spanish aesthetic models came from Italy and from the Moorish art tradition deeply rooted in the south of Spain.

In addition to investigating ships’ records and trade patterns, one of the main goals of the research was to establish what collections were amassed in Spain during the Habsburg reign. This was done by using four different primary sources: archives, archaeology, still life paintings and the study of a

⁸¹² I am grateful to Jose Luis Gasch-Tomás for the information taken from his unpublished article *Southeast Asia and New Spain in the making of World History. The Manila Galleons and the Circulation of Asian Goods in the Hispanic Empire, c. 1565-1650*.

⁸¹³ Crick, 2010, p. 40.

⁸¹⁴ Jose Luis Gasch-Tomás, “Los textiles de los galeones de Manila. Notas para la historia del consumo a la luz de la nueva historia trans-nacional”, in Daniel Muñoz Navarro (ed.), *Comprar, vender y consumir. Nuevas aportaciones a la historia del consumo en la España moderna*, Valencia, 2011, (pp. 55-76), p.70.

few extant objects found in-situ. An exhaustive search was carried out for contemporary descriptions of porcelain and other Oriental exotica in literature and valuations and appraisals in published and unpublished inventories of royal, aristocratic, bourgeois and other individuals in Spain.

The first Spanish Habsburg, Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) had very few pieces of porcelain registered in his inventory (just two plus another two mentioned as belonging to him in his son Phillip II's inventory). Further research in Lille into inventories held there of the emperor's possessions in the rest of the empire would be needed to determine the finality of that statement – but certainly in Spain he did not seem to have indulged in any passion for Oriental exotica. As far as the Spanish Habsburg kings are concerned, it is Philip II who stands out in contemporary records for his porcelain. He had a deep interest in non-Western cultures, a porcelain collection of over 3,000 pieces, the ability to distinguish between Chinese and Japanese lacquer and the habit of sending gifts of Chinese porcelain to his daughters, family and members of his court. The porcelain listed in his inventory is the first among the Spanish Habsburgs to be grouped in an independent section as 'Porcelains, glazed pottery, *búcaros*, and pottery,' further classified according to their place of manufacture, which included China. The Chinese porcelain in Philip II's collection was very varied; he had it displayed in the New Tower of the Alcázar, where the king had his glass collection as well. He obtained his pieces through different channels, for himself or for his close family, and also sent porcelain as Royal gifts to his Habsburg relatives in Vienna, Prague, Munich and Innsbruck. In this context, the connection between Spain and other branches of the Habsburg families throughout Europe would be an interesting subject for future studies.

King Philip III's interest in porcelain seemed to be largely limited to its use as tableware, for instance for serving *consommé* or fish. We also know he continued his father's tradition of sending gifts of Chinese porcelain: to his sister at the court in Turin and to Archduchess Maria of Bavaria in Barcelona, who received 100 porcelain vases in June 1599. It is noteworthy that during his reign the royal collection began gradually to diminish – probably in part due to these gifts, but also, since the porcelain was in everyday use, it was prone to breakage (though new porcelain would appear in the inventories to replace the broken pieces). This last issue is, in fact, one of the most interesting discoveries obtained from the inventories, because they disclose how the porcelain was manipulated, used and damaged. Although many pieces were sold at auction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we can follow some of the pieces that are identified in early inventories, for instance certain cauldrons or jars. They had suffered a lot by the end of the Habsburg period, when they are described as broken (inventory of King Charles II). This information should prove useful to any future researcher interested in tracking the 'life' of objects in the Habsburg collections, such as the earthenware David and Goliath group which is regularly mentioned and gradually gets increasingly damaged (appendices, pp. 43, 75, 84, 93, 111, 116, 120, 123, 128). Furthermore, during the economic crises of the seventeenth century, porcelain, silverware and other goods started to be smuggled out and sold by the palace's servants, *in lieu* of their unpaid wages. Equally, porcelain was given as vessels containing royal gifts of food to nearby convents and monasteries – the same religious institutions where archaeological excavations have uncovered shards of Chinese porcelain.

King Philip IV is famous for assembling one of the most impressive collections of paintings and sculptures, most of which still serve as the core collection of the Prado Museum while other elements of it are to be found in several palaces of the Spanish National Heritage. Unfortunately, however, a complete inventory of the king's *objets d'art* has not been found. There are nevertheless fragmentary inventories (drawn up eleven years before his death in 1665) that list Chinese porcelain, one with a section entitled 'Porcelains from India of Portugal.' By then, his grandfather Philip II's original collection of porcelain had suffered sale at auction, dispersal as legacies and gifts, breakages and replacements, and the overall quantity of Chinese porcelain remaining in the royal collection would

have been much reduced and mixed in with European ceramics. Some pieces showed up again in the 1674 inventories, from the regency of Queen Mariana of Austria (1665-1675), but curiously, the appraiser neglected to assign them any value at that time.

One of the most interesting sources related to the reign of Philip IV deals with the confiscation on the part of the crown in 1656 of 2,774 pieces of Chinese porcelain by the Duke of Medinaceli from the trader Juan Vangel (of the Southern Low Countries?), who was smuggling them into the city of Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cadiz. This large group of pieces seems to have vanished from later royal inventories.

The 1701 inventory of King Charles II, the last Habsburg, mentions several pieces of porcelain. These were not only listed in the records of the *guardajoyas* (Keeper of the Jewels, *garde des joyaux*), but also in other palace departments, like the Bureau of Foods and Sauces. In general, he and his court used Oriental porcelain for various domestic purposes. Descriptions of late-seventeenth-century porcelain reveal the new decorative trends for porcelain, including three-coloured *Imari* and *famille verte*. Beginning in Charles II's reign, Chinese exports in the inventory were joined by Japanese wares, although it is impossible to tell them apart on the basis of the inventories. Chocolate was very popular in Spain in the last third of the seventeenth century and the inventories of the king's first wife, Marie Louise d'Orléans and other members of the aristocracy, confirm this passion for chocolate with records of large numbers of Chinese cups (*jícaras*) for drinking chocolate. Queen Marie Louise d'Orléans (appendices, pp. 103-7) had a collection of Chinese porcelain that she kept locked away in a cabinet in the Room of the Tower (probably referring to a Tower on the Queen's side of the Alcázar) under the safe guard of her lady-in-waiting, the Marquise of Cadereyta (and presumably away from the pilfering hands of the servants). The Marquise remained in charge of keeping the keys to the collection after Marie Louise's death in 1689. It is clear that Marie Louise herself held her porcelain in very high regard.

Individual members of the aristocracy mirrored the sporadic enthusiasm for Chinese porcelain as expressed by the royal household. A handful of noblemen clearly admired objects of this sort, but the inventories of many others do not mention porcelain at all. Again, the general preference was for other objects, in particular silver. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, porcelain failed to capture the imagination of many of the period's great aesthetes. One of the most important art collectors from the reign of Phillip III (1598-1621), Don Francisco Gomez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duke of Lerma (1553-1625), was the King's *valido* or Royal favorite, and the most powerful noble during the first decade of the 17th century in Europe. His palace at Lerma (Burgos) was decorated with great magnificence. In 1601 the government issued sumptuary laws (proscribing conspicuous consumption of luxury goods) and the Duke urged wealthy Spaniards to buy 'services of tin-glazed pottery' (*barro vidriado*) instead of silver ones. But he certainly did not suggest purchasing Chinese porcelain – which is strange as it was relatively inexpensive, a better quality of ceramic and available either through merchants in Seville or Lisbon. And indeed the Duke's own inventory revealed very few pieces of Chinese porcelain, and some of those were recorded as being broken and smashed. Perhaps the Duke promoted tin-glazed pottery because it was a domestic product and thus he encouraged the production of Talavera pottery and not foreign imported porcelain.

One superb collection of Chinese porcelain did enter the registers, that of the Prince of Éboli, Don Ruy Gómez de Silva, who assembled many exotic items and porcelain 'from the Indies of Portugal' (appendices, pp.131-45). Several others had Chinese porcelain in their cabinets. The Duchess of Alba had in her palace of Alba de Tormes (Salamanca) a cabinet full of glass and pottery in 1573. Pedro Fernández de Córdoba, Marquis of Priego, had in 1606 a cabinet in his palace of Montilla, Seville, full of fine glass and pottery from Portugal and some pieces from China (appendices, p. 245 and Urquizar Herrera, 2007, p. 156). Unfortunately, the detailed inventory of this collection has not been

‘discovered’, but it is recorded that these pieces were given as dowry to one of his daughters. The Marquise of Velada also had a Chinese porcelain and glass cabinet in her palace in Ávila in 1616 and in 1653 Don Juan Alonso de Pimentel, Count-Duke of Benavente, had in his palace in Valladolid a Chinese porcelain cabinet. In the inventory dated 1619 of the VI Duke of Béjar, Alonso Diego López de Zúñiga Sotomayor, pieces are described on shelves, in fixed arrangements on walls bellow architraves but other nobles place Chinese porcelain in larders (*alacenas*) like Ana de Mendoza, VI Duchess of El Infantado, or window-display cabinets or *escaparates*.

And aside from about 20 blue-and-white bottles preserved in non-Spanish or private collections decorated with the coat-of-arms of Castile and Leon, no actual pieces of Chinese or Japanese porcelain survive from the 16th and 17th centuries that can be definitely connected with any Spanish individual or institution.⁸¹⁵ The only specially commissioned piece from a Spanish client still surviving was ordered by a Spanish noble, the Marquis of Cañete, while he was in Peru serving as Viceroy from 1590 to 1596. (fig. 7).

Because most of the documents found in the archives are simply inventory lists, sometimes without any appraisal of the porcelain items, it has not been not possible to give a development of the prices of the pieces in these collections in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition any evaluation of price would be further complicated by the constant fluctuation of the currency and of the price of metals during the Habsburg period. However, by comparing the valuations and prices that are given for other luxury commodities, some idea of porcelain’s value at different points during the Habsburg period can be achieved. According to Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza’s account of 1585, Chinese porcelain was so cheap in China that for four *reales* “they give you 50 pieces”. On the other hand in 1596, two years before king Philip II’s death, princess Isabella Clara Eugenia, bought 6 bowls and 6 plates of Chinese porcelain for 4 and a half *reales* each and by comparison she paid two *reales* for one pound of fibre to wrap these porcelains up, two *reales* for a wicker basket and two *reales* to pay the King’s muleteer for one day to transport the porcelains. Almost two decades later a plate, appraised in 1620 (appendices, p. 213, from the inventory of Juana de Córdoba Aragón, Duchess of Frías), was valued at 6 *reales*. Possibly, the devaluation of the *real* due to economic fluctuations was the determining factor in the change in value. A comparison by an economic historian of these prices with the constantly fluctuating price of silver over these two centuries might allow a more precise valuation of those pieces within the Spanish market at the time they were sold, but it would still remain an estimate and probably not more exact than what the above research has revealed.

The value of porcelain during most of the Habsburg period seems to have been fairly notional, reaching a high point with the collecting passions of Phillip II and members of his court, while being worth not nearly as much before his reign and decreasing steadily after it. Some appraisals of Chinese porcelain in inventories from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries clearly reveal that sometimes porcelain was not given a separate value unless it had been fitted with a silver gilt mount – prompting the conclusion that the real value was considered to be attached to the metal mount instead of the piece of porcelain. And with certain inventories, the lack of valuation is actually made explicit: in the inventory of 1701 of King Charles II, the porcelain pieces were not valued because they had at this stage a more sentimental than ‘an intrinsic’ value (it is unknown whether the pieces in his inventory included those of his wife’s collection). That ‘sentimental’ value also gives a clue as to why there are no pieces remaining from the Habsburg royal collections, since in the end the objects that have the best chance of being preserved from generation to generation are those with an economic and not

⁸¹⁵ So far there is no documental evidence to know whether the *Guan*-type blue-and-white jars decorated with the emblem of the Augustinian Order – the double-headed eagle over a heart pierced with arrows beneath a coronet dated circa 1575 and found in several public institutions – and the blue-and-white bottles decorated with the coat-of-arms of Castile and Leon were ordered for the Spanish or Portuguese market.

merely a sentimental value. The varying fortunes of the later Spanish Habsburgs and their Bourbon successors, as well as palace fires, economic crises in the royal household and several wars, are the reason that very little – even of those items that did have an economic value, such as jewellery – can't be traced to the Habsburg reign, and certainly nothing breakable and with only a 'sentimental' value.

Archaeological findings divulge the same story about Chinese porcelain as given by the above-mentioned inventories. Very few Chinese porcelain shards have been unearthed in archaeological excavations, compared to the huge quantities of terracotta and tin-glazed pottery. What is more, the Chinese porcelain shards found are very ordinary, indicating mass production. Most of them are fragments of what is known as *Kraak* porcelain, made in the last third of the sixteenth and the first third of the seventeenth centuries. Quite surprising is the lack of shards of the better quality polychrome porcelain of the *Kinrande* type (gold brocade) - only one piece in the monastery of San Clemente – especially when there are so many descriptions of gilt porcelain in the inventories, or of Transitional porcelain (1620–80) (only in paintings). No shards of commissioned objects decorated with Western elements, the so-called *chine de commande*, or of porcelain in the *famille verte* style have been found either. From the geographic point of view, so far no Chinese porcelain shards at all have been found in the area of the Basque Country of northern Spain.

Yet other sources for analyzing the material substance of daily life in the Habsburg period were literary sources and paintings reflecting Oriental porcelain. Research of a number of paintings of the period (religious paintings, still lifes, flower and genre paintings) reveals very little evidence of Chinese porcelain. Vessels of silver, bronze, crystal and pottery predominate in all genres, especially in still lifes. Most often depicted are the *búcaros* imported from both Mexico and Portugal, and Spanish pottery from Triana and Talavera. On the rare occasion where Chinese porcelain appears in these paintings, we do get an insight in to how it was being used in everyday life. We find plates and bowls holding fruits, sauces or flowers; we find them up-side down in the monks refectory table during dinner; they are to be used later in the meal for drinking chocolate; or they sit on a crowded kitchen table surrounded by other utensils together with fruit, meat, fish or game. Wherever we see a piece of porcelain in one of these paintings, it usually is being used as a vessel for daily use in a domestic environment. Two pictures from Antonio de Pereda illustrate very well the everyday use of porcelain ware at the time and the wear and tear they were subjected to: the broken cup in *Still Life with an Ebony and Marquetry Table* (fig. 220) or the dishes on the floor in *Two Figures in a Kitchen* (fig. 223). The paintings provide a wealth of information on the day to day life in the Habsburg period as well as revealing hitherto unknown wares from the first half of the seventeenth century, specifically made for Spanish customers. In general, the porcelains depicted in the paintings confirm the archaeological evidence that mostly low-quality *Kraak* wares were used in Spanish households, no matter their wealth or station: primarily vessels intended for domestic use, such as plates, bowls and especially bell-shaped cups or *jícaras*. There is even some indication that by the second half of the century they were considered old-fashioned.

In essence, the research has demonstrated that, in general, Spanish society of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries placed a relatively low value on Chinese porcelain and when it was used, it was identified with women and the home. However, there were a handful of enthusiasts interested in porcelain, ranging from the royal family itself down to the bourgeoisie. The research has also provided insights into Spanish tastes of the period for luxury products like silver or more humble goods such as earthenware. This has been the first time that such a detailed survey of one item (i.e. porcelain) has been given in the context of Spanish material culture and hopefully the results will stimulate other researchers to use a similar approach. Another interesting study would be a comparison of the *objets d'art* of the Spanish Habsburg king's inventories, although some lists are not preserved in their entirety. Although there have been several studies addressing the issue of the

art-trade connections between Spain and other European countries, it would also be very interesting to carry out a comprehensive research on the collecting policies for 'minor' objects such as porcelain among the different Habsburg families in comparison to their Spanish relatives.

This dissertation has addressed the history of Chinese porcelain in Habsburg Spain through various aspects, such as appropriation, distribution and consumption. Because Habsburg Spain was a society that had easy access to exotic products and liked pomp and ceremony, one of the reasons that Chinese porcelain from the era is so scarce might be the royal family's and aristocracy's preference for ostentatious luxury and religious opulence. This is revealed in their choice of items. Costly materials like gold and silver, precious stones, pearls and tapestries testified to and were expressions of their noble lineage and were good vehicles to show-off wealth and prestige in religious and lay use. Precious metals were certainly the best for extolling divinity and royalty, and they also had the virtue of being easily re-shaped as bullion or coin if circumstances required. As a consequence of this, it is also interesting to highlight that no pieces of domestic silver are extant in the royal holdings from the Habsburg period; only religious objects of gold and silver have been preserved because they were in the safekeeping of religious communities.

Starting in the eighteenth century, with the departure of the Habsburgs and the arrival of the new French dynasty of the Bourbons, interior decoration in Spain underwent a transformation. For an eighteenth-century Spaniard, a palace without porcelain, the 'new white gold,' would be inconceivable. Porcelain was re-valued, rose in status and became an indispensable part of luxury furnishings and for table services. But if the Spanish nobility finally gave Chinese porcelain pride of place in their interiors, they did so in imitation of the great Bourbon model in matters of aesthetics, France.

To summarize, this research and its dissertation fills a gap in the history of the introduction of Chinese porcelain to the European markets of the early modern period. It reveals the presence and value of porcelain in different Spanish communities during Spain's so-called Golden Age of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While studies have been made of the role of porcelain in other European countries (such as England, the Netherlands, France), Habsburg Spain had until now not been examined. It is my hope that this research might lead to further discoveries. I am sure that even today there are pieces in the most unlikely of places, which in time will come to light and will provide further knowledge about Chinese porcelain in Habsburg Spain.



