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

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Stellingen/Propositions

Behorende bij het proefschrift / with the PhD thesis

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

Door / by

M.C.I. Krahe Noblett

1. Philip II was exceptional among the Spanish Habsburg kings for his deep interest in non-Western cultures, as testified by his collection of over 3,000 pieces of porcelain; by his ability to distinguish between Chinese and Japanese lacquer; and by his habit of sending gifts of Chinese porcelain to his daughters and members of his court.
2. In the 16th and 17th centuries, some members of the Spanish royal and noble families used Chinese porcelain for everyday use at the table.
3. Archaeological excavations of 16th and 17th century sites in Spain have produced a number of mass-produced Kraak wares. However, the fairly low quality of these wares indicates that for most people in Spain porcelain was not considered the status-enhancing commodity it was in other European countries.
4. Most Chinese porcelain from the 16th and 17th centuries in Spain, whether as shards or complete pieces, have been found in and around convents.
5. Although archaeological excavations in Mexico and in the Spanish colonies in Central and South America have yielded shards of Chinese and Japanese porcelain, the role and appreciation of Oriental porcelain in these societies is largely unknown and urgently needs further research.
6. During the 16th century in Spain, costly materials like gold and silver, precious stones, pearls and tapestries were used to demonstrate status or wealth in both religious and lay contexts. During the 17th century, this shifted towards the acquisition of prestigious paintings.
7. Chinese porcelain was classified in Habsburg period documents as ‘buxerías’: something “of low price or value [...] usually given to ladies and children”. This not only indicates a link between the feminine and porcelain at the time, but also shows that Spanish men thought that Spanish women could be given something inexpensive.
8. Some inventories of the 17th century show that Chinese porcelain did not have an intrinsic value. Yet, at the same period Chinese porcelain was deemed precious and expensive elsewhere in Europe. Were the Spanish showing a considered nonchalance in the face of a fashion sweeping the rest of Europe – or is it simply a case of pearls before swine?
9. Even today Spaniards tend to meet outdoors, preferring public places to the privacy of a home. This helps explain why visual art forms may have taken precedence in Spain.

10. A number of Spanish words of the 16th and 17th centuries have lost their meanings altogether.

11. The dictionaries of *Covarrubias* (1611) and *Autoridades* (1726) are invaluable sources for the appreciation, value and use of ceramics in Spain during the Habsburg period.

12. Research into the material culture in Spain during the Habsburg period has been greatly facilitated by the frequency at this time within royal and aristocratic circles of auctions or *almonedas* with their accompanying inventories of the goods of the deceased in order to cover their debts. They also point to the fact that the cost of a royal or aristocratic lifestyle often far exceeded what one could actually afford.