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**Dutch demand for porcelain: The maritime distribution of Chinese ceramics and the Dutch East India Company (VOC), first half of the 17th century**

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## Summary and overall conclusion of this dissertation.

The aim of this thesis is to give a systematic interpretation of the maritime trade and transportation of Chinese ceramics in a historical perspective from the ninth-century Tang dynasty up to the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is on Dutch demand for porcelain, which types of porcelain were ordered and what the Dutch East India Company (VOC) transported. I found that most orders were sent between 1634-1644, a relatively short period and porcelain deliveries peaked between 1638-1644. This was the result of effective Dutch demand for porcelain. The VOC plays an essential role in this process because Chinese ceramics were not only shipped to the Dutch Republic itself, but also throughout eastern and western Asia.

For this study, I have drawn on three distinct areas of research: maritime trade and archaeology, Chinese export ware, and the history of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). I have used maritime archaeology to analyse the types of export ceramics that were transported overseas from China. I argue that objects salvaged from shipwrecks show that during the pre-Western period of trade in Asia, ceramics were for the most part shapes intended for the Chinese domestic market, but gradually came to include items to suit the preferences of a certain region and/or clientele.

From the same perspective, I have sought to demonstrate that after the arrival of the first Western merchants in Asia, the Portuguese and the Spanish, only slight adaptations such as the application of a heraldic or religious decoration were made. However, it seems that there was no mass production of shapes destined specifically for the Iberian markets. Items from the *São João* (1552) and the *São Bento* (1554) shipwrecks are illustrative of porcelain available to the Portuguese in that period; these were for the most part bowls and some flatware, all regular Chinese domestic shapes. A significant change can be seen from the *San Diego* shipwreck of 1600, which revealed flatware with a panel-decoration not retrieved from earlier shipwrecks. In later years, this type became known as Kraak porcelain, the core subject of this dissertation.

From an etymological perspective, I argue that the term *carrack/kraken* was used by the English and the Dutch only to describe a specific type of North European trading vessel used from early 15<sup>th</sup> century in the North Sea regions. When people from this area were confronted with Iberian ships resembling those they were acquainted with, they used the general term for trading vessels, *carracks/kraken*.

From an art-historical perspective, I conclude that the Dutch did not use the term Kraak in combination with porcelain for Chinese porcelain at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The combination only starts to appear regularly during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but then with the meaning of old or antique porcelain. As has been the case regarding other export ware, Kraak is a Western label, comparable to 'transitional ware', *famille verte*, *famille noire* and *famille rose*. I suggest that the principal decorative feature, panels or cartouches, which distinguishes this type of export ware from others produced during the same period, should preferably be chosen as the reference point to describe Kraak porcelain. Terms like 'blue and white panel-decorated Chinese porcelain made for export', or simply, 'panel-decorated Kraak porcelain', 'Kraak-panelled porcelain', all serve the purpose.

I have used archaeological data from Jingdezhen to illustrate that items for the domestic market were produced and fired in the same kilns as Kraak-panelled porcelain, using the same types of materials. I illustrate the shapes that are for the most part foreign to the Chinese, using the typology made for the items retrieved from the *Witte Leeuw*, as they represent the majority of Kraak-panelled ware. My reinterpretation of dating Kraak-panelled porcelain is to correct the idea that this type of porcelain was produced as early as 1570. This analysis is again based on shipwreck finds since these are of a fixed date, contrary to those from museum or private collections of which the provenance is uncertain.

From a historical perspective, I demonstrate that Dutch demand for porcelain only gradually developed. This analysis is mainly based on VOC orders and cargo lists. Commissions were initially sent to Asia irregularly; the focus was on flatware and shallow bowls. However, as far as I know, there are no orders for items to be decorated with a panel pattern. VOC shipwrecks from 1609 and 1613 are illustrative of what was transported to the Dutch Republic. At this stage, their contents are a mixture of Kraak-panelled porcelain and Chinese domestic ware. I analyse and illustrate the quantities on cargo lists by several tables to show the fluctuation in shipments of porcelain by the VOC.

In 1624, the VOC established a trading post on Formosa (present-day Taiwan), which remained in operation until 1662. Historical documents such as the *Dagregisters van het Kasteel Zeelandia* show that ceramic shipments from China to Formosa are mostly listed generally as either 'coarse' or 'fine', without further detail. From 1634,

deliveries became more constant; orders increased and contained more specific instructions as to shapes and designs, often accompanied by samples to be copied. These included Western items as beer tankards and candlestick holders, but the designs should be non-Western, Chinese figures and landscapes and no Dutch flowers. Such items have been categorized as 'transitional wares'. I analyse, again by way of a table, that the peak in the quantities transported by the VOC occurred during a relatively short period, between 1635-1645. It is therefore not surprising that illustrations of Dutch interiors dating prior to this period do not depict large numbers of Chinese porcelain.

The dissertation has presented a comprehensive analysis of the history of Chinese export ceramics based on archaeological finds, combined with the art-historical aspects of one particular type, Kraak porcelain. I arrived at a sharper definition and a clearer chronology of this specific type of porcelain, the main sort produced for Europe. Dutch demand for porcelain was decisive in stimulating the porcelain production in China; Western shapes were in demand and quantities rose, but only during a relative short period. Items from shipwrecks are helpful to show what was transported during this period. The VOC was the main company ordering and storing Chinese porcelain and distributed it within Asia and to Europe during the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This gave the Company an exceptional place in the history of Chinese export ware.