

ACROSS THE PACIFIC

Art and the Manila Galleons





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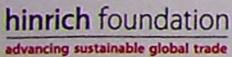
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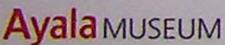
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Note to the reader

The Spanish viceroyalty of New Spain existed from 1521 to 1821 and governed Mexico, Central America, and the Philippines, as well as parts of the US and South America. Its capital was Mexico City. In this volume, New Spain refers to the political entity, while modern country names refer to geographic territories.

Common English names are used for well-known individuals.

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In memory of Richard Earle Lingner

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Manila Galleon trade routes,
16th to 19th century

Foreword

Across the Pacific: Art and the Manila Galleons accompanies the Asian Civilisations Museum's first-ever exhibition to explore the transpacific galleon trade, wherein enormous Spanish ships regularly brought luxury goods and other products from Asia to the Americas. The ships sailed from the historic entrepot of Manila in the Philippines and, after an exceedingly dangerous journey across the open ocean, arrived at the port of Acapulco in today's Mexico. In the Philippines and Spain, they are known as *galeón de Manila*, in acknowledgement of the role Manila played in the trade. In Latin America they are called *nao de China* (China ships) because they brought with them the fabled treasures of China and the rest of Asia.

The Manila-Acapulco route expanded networks of Asian trade across the globe. For centuries, trade from China to Europe had flowed westward via the Middle East. The galleons introduced an eastward flow of goods to Europe, with a stopover in the Americas.

The exhibition explores multiple aspects of this trade through dizzying array of objects gathered from museums and private collections in the Philippines, Mexico, Italy, and Singapore, and from our own national collection. There are maps and materials related to shipbuilding, exquisite works of sacred and religious art, shimmering pieces of silver, furniture and furnishings, vivid historical textiles, and contemporary fashion and dress. Many of these objects are cross-cultural, serving as tangible manifestations of the centuries-old exchange of people, ideas, materials, techniques, and sensibilities between two continents – three, if one considers that they eventually made their way across the Atlantic to Spain.

The exhibition has been many years in the making. Principal Curator Clement Onn and I first discussed the idea in late 2016, following the success of *Port Cities: Multicultural Emporiiums of Asia, 1500–1900*, only a few months after I took over as director. I am overjoyed that more than seven years later the exhibition is finally taking place.

In keeping with mission of the ACM, one of the exhibition's major themes is the important role Asia played in the spread of material culture to the Americas, where it precipitated new forms of identity and cultural expression. A case in point is the Manila shawl (*mantón de Manila*), a luxurious, heavily embroidered silk shawl that represents a cornerstone of Latin American and Spanish fashion today. The name refers to the port through which the shawls were traded, though they were originally made in southern China and found great favour in Spain. Other important examples include Talavera ceramics, which were made in the Mexican city of Puebla but have their roots in attempts by local potters to replicate blue-and-white Chinese porcelains brought to Mexico on the galleons.

I would like to thank all the lending institutions, museum staff, and academic advisors who contributed to the exhibition and publication. In particular, I thank the Hinrich Foundation and Hong Leong Foundation for their generous support, as well as the Mexican, Philippine, Spanish, Peruvian, and Italian embassies in Singapore for helping to facilitate loans. Finally, my deepest appreciation goes to Clement Onn for his tireless work in bringing this project to fruition, and to my predecessor Alan Chong for being part of this exhibition and catalogue.

Kennie Ting

Director, Asian Civilisations Museum







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Across the Pacific

Artistic exchanges around the globe

Clement Onn

Beginning in the late fifteenth century, advances in navigation and ship technology opened new routes between Europe and Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Large vessels carrying substantial cargoes could now sail thousands of miles, which allowed the rapid expansion of trade, military conquest, and the spread of Christianity, often with tragic results for the indigenous peoples of the world. As this new trading system established outposts in distant lands foreign cultures began to affect Europe and, just as important, cultures began to mingle along the routes. Global trade depended on networks of port cities which became vibrant hubs for the circulation of people, goods, technology, and culture.¹

The Portuguese pioneered European routes to Africa and around the Cape of Good Hope to the India Ocean. Portugal began to trade with Africa, India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan through its ports at Goa, Malacca, and Macao. The competing Spanish empire conquered Aztec Mexico in 1521, the same year that Ferdinand Magellan (a Portuguese navigator working for Spain) crossed the Pacific Ocean to land in the Philippines. Other Spanish expeditions to Asia followed, and in 1571 Miguel López de Legazpi secured Manila as Spain's outpost in Asia. After several failed attempts, a return voyage successfully crossed the Pacific from Manila in the Philippines to Acapulco on the western coast of Mexico in October 1565.

The transpacific ships, known as the Manila galleons, began carrying goods and people between Asia and Mexico. The system was controlled by the Spanish crown which regulated the construction of ships, the nature of the shipments, and their sale in Mexico. The cargoes were sold in Acapulco and transported overland to Mexico City, the capital of New Spain. Some goods continued on to Veracruz, the port on the Caribbean, where they were shipped to Spain or to other Spanish-controlled cities in the Americas.

The Manila-Acapulco galleon trade lasted from 1565 to 1815, with its heyday in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The ships, which could sail only once a year in each direction, were Spain's only link to Asia since the route around Africa was mostly controlled by the Portuguese and later by the Dutch and British. The Spanish depended on the safe crossings of the galleons, not only for profit, but for their political survival in the Philippines. Moreover, the galleons carried priests whose mission was to convert the inhabitants of the Philippines, Japan, and, it was hoped, China. However tenuous and dangerous, the galleon trade was a multifaceted instrument of European colonialism, not only as a means of buying highly desirable Asian commodities, but also because it ensured military control of the Philippines and furthered the Christianisation of Asia.

China and silver

At the start, Spain undoubtedly wanted to establish a foothold in Asia to obtain spices from Southeast Asia, spread Christianity, and enter China. It was long thought that Europe's desire for Chinese products like silk, porcelain, and other luxuries was critical to East-West trade. But recent research has established that China was the fundamental driver in the galleon trade, not as a supplier of goods, but as a consumer of silver. The breakdown of China's much-lauded paper currency, and the inadequacies of gold and copper coinage, meant that China needed silver to run its economy. Japan provided much of the metal in the sixteenth century, but this was replaced by vast silver resources of Mexico and Bolivia.

With the Spanish crown taking a 20% tax on silver production in the Americas, and further taxes on galleon cargoes, this meant that the Spanish empire was essentially funded by China, the largest economy in the world in the seventeenth century. China wanted no Western products at this period, only silver. Its primary export to the West was silk, of which extremely little survives from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, leaving us with scant indication of what this trade was really like.

Across the Pacific

On the eastward journey from Manila to Acapulco, the galleons principally carried Chinese silk in addition to porcelain, Japanese and Chinese lacquerware, Indian cotton textiles, and spices from Southeast Asia. They returned laden with Mexican silver and plant products from the Americas. The volume of a ship's cargo was limited through a system known as the *permiso* (permission). This was a concession to the merchants of Seville, who wanted the Manila trade abolished altogether because Chinese merchandise competed with their own products. In practice, the restrictions on galleon cargoes were widely ignored, with the result that ships often carried merchandise worth four times the official allowance. Despite the dangers of overloading, merchants and officials conspired to falsify ship registries in order to carry as much merchandise as possible. Indeed, fraud was so commonplace that in the eighteenth century, authorities attempted to tax the contraband at the rate of 16%.²

The galleons also carried slaves, although this was officially forbidden. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, countless enslaved individuals from India and Southeast Asia were sent to Mexico. Regardless of their ethnic and linguistic differences, these peoples were grouped under the category of "chinos". In time, they came to be classified legally as "indios", the term for all indigenous peoples in Spain's colonies, and after 1672, they became vassals of the Spanish crown. This legal change was crucial, for as *indios*, they could no longer be held as slaves.³ Their stories, not often told, transpired in the wider context of the Spanish empire.

The galleons themselves were modern technological marvels. The long and dangerous passage across the Pacific Ocean required robust vessels and careful planning. The journey between Acapulco and Guam in the Mariana Islands was the longest passage in the world that was regularly attempted. The westward journey from Acapulco to Manila was relatively straightforward. The galleons departed Acapulco in February or March and used favourable trade winds to reach Guam, where supplies could be replenished before continuing on to the Philippines. Records from the mid-seventeenth century show that these journeys averaged around 40 days if the winds were favourable. The return fleet would depart Manila for Acapulco in late June or early July. The eastward journey was much more arduous and could take as long as six months, which put pressure on provisions, sanitation, and the mental health of the crew.⁴ Of the 400 sailings in the 250-year history of the Manila galleons, there were 59 shipwrecks.⁵ However,

the galleon crossing across the Pacific was shorter and considered less difficult than Portuguese route around Africa to Goa and Macao.⁶

The galleons were funded by the Spanish royal treasury, which attempted to set strict guidelines on their size and design. The emphasis was on solid construction to safeguard cargoes on the long sea voyage. Each vessel required a crew of about a hundred men, a number which increased during the eighteenth century to between 150 and 250. The crew always included an armed force of infantry and sea gunners, plus a surgeon, chaplain, notary, cook, and water steward. The officers and sailors usually came from Mexico or Spain, while the remaining crew was mostly Filipino, who had the reputation of being skilled sailors, with some Chinese and Southeast Asians.⁷ A law of 1620 required that indigenous sailors be clothed properly and treated humanely, but it is estimated that Filipino sailors received half the rations the Spanish did.⁸

The viceroyalty of New Spain

Spain administered its far-flung colonies through a system of viceroys. The first viceroyalty to be established, in 1535, was New Spain which governed Mexico, Central America, as well as the Philippines. Peru was the second viceroyalty, established in 1542, which ruled South America until two additional viceroyalties were carved out in the eighteenth century. The Portuguese had a similar system, with a viceroy installed in Goa in 1505, which governed all their Asian activities, and another in Brazil in 1694. Representing the Spanish crown, the viceroys were paid lucrative salaries to prevent them from using their position for personal gain or, more importantly, from declaring independence. In return, they were responsible for collecting tax on merchandise, shipping, and mining industries (see essay by Villamar).

In 1519, Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortés sailed from Cuba to the Yucatán and found a great empire of twenty million inhabitants that extended to the Pacific. European contact with the Aztec empire, and subsequent invasion and conquest in 1521 – depicted vividly on a painting that once appeared on the reverse of a folding screen in the exhibition (fig. 1) – sent shock waves through Europe. In the painting, the conquest narrative begins at the upper right, as Cortés is welcomed into Tenochitlan by Moctezuma II, an emperor whom the Spanish could compare with their own Charles V. The centre of the painting shows the main plaza where fierce fighting took place. Cortés only succeeded in his conquest because he was able to secure crucial alliances with local peoples, such as the Tlaxcalteca, who bore great resentment



Fig. 1 Conquest of Tenochtitlan. Attributed to Diego Correa, Mexico, 1690s. Wood, fabric, oil paint, varnish. Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, Ciudad de México, Secretaría de Cultura (INAH).

against the Aztecs. Similar revelations followed when in 1531 Francisco Pizarro led a group of Spanish soldiers to Peru, where they encountered the Inca Empire, whose society and culture were equally astonishing. The conquest of Inca territory lasted until 1581.

In the same year that Cortés conquered the Aztecs of Mexico, 1521, Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese navigator working for Spain, landed in the Philippines and claimed it for Spain. His crew founded a small port on the island of Cebu. Other Spanish expeditions followed, leading to Miguel López de Legazpi occupying Manila in 1571, thereby securing a Spanish trading outpost in Asia.

Like Cortés, Magellan and Legazpi could not have secured their results without entering into alliances with local leaders. Magellan made a blood compact (*sanduguan* in Tagalog) with Rajah Humabon of Cebu in 1521. Legazpi and Datu Sikatuna, ruler of Bohol, formed another blood compact in 1565. These compacts were an ancient ritual that sealed a friendship, agreement, or treaty. The parties would cut their hands, pour their blood into a cup filled with liquid, and drink the mixture. These treaties recognised local political leaders and their property rights within the overall aegis of the Spanish Empire.⁹ Modern historians tend to characterise Filipinos as exploited parties, but local chieftains also used their new Spanish allies to their advantage. For example, Datu Tupas of Cebu used Magellan to try to subdue Lapu-Lapu.

Because of the galleon trade, Manila became one of the world's most vibrant port cities, drawing traders from China, Spain, India, and indeed the entire world. In 1662 a Franciscan monk, Bartolomé de Letona, wrote that "the variety of nations seen in Manila and its surroundings is the greatest in the world; one finds peoples from all the kingdoms and nations, for example, Spain, France, England... from the West and East Indies, Turks, Greeks, Persians, Tartars,

Chinese, Japanese, Africans, and Asians."¹⁰ Two centuries later, in 1752, Pedro Murillo Velarde remained impressed by the Manila's diversity: "No colony which Europeans have founded in Asia and Africa equals it in greatness, wealth, abundance, and neighbourhood... The meeting of various nations – I do not think there is anything like it in the world."¹¹

Within Iberian colonialism, trade and the spread of Catholic faith shared a symbiotic relationship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Missionaries, who travelled with the merchants and soldiers, propagated their faith to the local communities. Orders including the Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits established themselves quickly in these territories. Some indigenous communities resisted conversion, and Spanish hostility towards Islam triggered hostilities with Muslims in the south of the Philippines. Nonetheless, Catholicism spread rapidly. Some missionaries allowed idiosyncratic elements in devotional practice, including local traditions and the use of amulets and spirit mediums. Christian art made in the Philippines and the Americas often incorporated elements from other cultures.

Entangled networks

This exhibition is only partly concerned with the details of shipping, politics, and religion. Rather, our focus is on the rich patterns of cultural exchange evident in the works of art carried by the galleons. Some objects seen here were made in one region to be sent across the world where they were collected and appreciated, and might influence the development of new works of art. Some objects were specifically commissioned by merchants or church officials, while others were acquired in the open emporia of Asia and in the Americas (fig. 2). Silver was the primary currency but also took on a new life as an artistic medium. Many new works of art were inspired by Asian objects but remained entirely unknown in Asia. The movement of Asian artists, their settlement in foreign lands, and collaboration with local artists further adds to the complexity in attributing works of art. These objects therefore belong to a network which lay outside a single nation or empire. It is a mistake to see this culture as part of the Spanish empire which, while dominant in some regions, played only a minor role in others. Indeed much of Asia, namely China, Japan, India, and Southeast Asia lay outside Spanish influence, although their works of art circulated in the Philippines, the Americas, and Spain. This complexity opens a new way of thinking about ownership and identity in art. The essays that follow address aspects of this global story of trade, circulation of people and works of art, and its impact across Asia and the Americas.

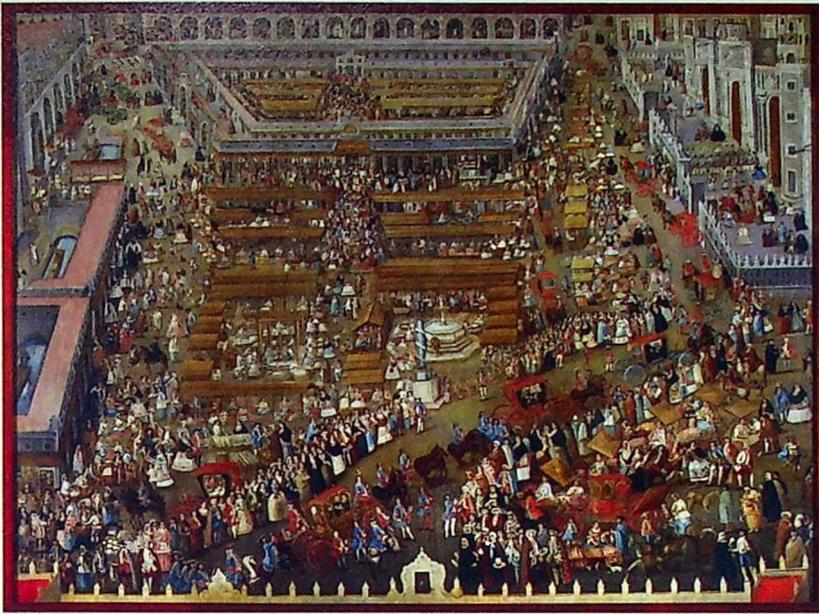


Fig. 2 View of the Plaza Mayor, Mexico City. Mexico, mid-18th century. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, Ciudad de México, Secretaría de Cultura (INAH).

The art of feathers: Adaptation and survival

Specialised forms of art developed along the trade routes, from China, which for centuries had tailored its products specifically to consumers in other cultures, to the Philippines, Mexico, and the rest of the Americas. Many of these works had multiple connection to European and indigenous artistic traditions, which altered over time. One of the most distinct and impressive art forms along the galleon route was Mexican featherwork, which was based on an Aztec practice.

Featherwork was a highly skilled, painstaking, and expensive process. It had been so highly prized by the Aztecs that special aviaries of exotic birds were maintained to supply feathers for the works. Indigenous feather artists were called *amanteca* in the Nahuatl language, after the neighbourhood of Amantla (in Tenochtitlan, now Mexico City) where most of the artists lived and worked. The most thorough source on feather mosaic work is the Florentine Codex, a collection of texts and images compiled by Bernardino de Sahagún in collaboration with Nahua intellectuals and artists in the 1560s and 1570s.¹²

A combination of techniques was created by cutting, arranging, and gluing feathers to a support, parts of which were then painted. Objects like fans, bracelets, shields, tunics, and headgears were made by tying feathers together with agave cords. *Amanteca* attached the feathers

in a mosaic so that they overlapped to produce patterns. Using an infinite number of tiny feathers, beginning with the plain ones and finishing with more brilliant colours, they produced an effect of great richness and subtlety. *Amanteca* also collaborated with goldsmiths to create works that combined feathers and gold, which compounded the glistening effects of the materials.

The Aztec used featherwork for a wide range of prestige items such as capes, headgear, fans, banners, and tapestries to hang in palaces. After the fall of Tenochtitlan in 1521, the aviaries and feather artists were hired by the missionaries to produce Christian liturgical vestments and pictures (fig. 3). New feather paintings were based on European religious prints, but given an entirely new impact with the rare natural material in brilliant colours. Some smaller paintings were pasted on to a support like wood, leather or copper. The local artists adjusted their art to survive by taking on new subjects – a transformed art that was both Aztec and Christian. Featherwork, whether old or new, astonished aristocratic collectors in Europe, like the Medici and Habsburg families who acquired



Fig. 3 Salvator Mundi. Mexico, 16th century. Feather mosaic with silver plaques. Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán.

impressive featherwork pieces that survive in the collections of Florence, Vienna, and the Escorial. By adapting to Western ideas and consumers, the art of the *amanteca* was preserved.

Around 1600, Mexican featherwork also reached Asia and was presented to China's Wanli emperor. This gift was commemorated in an immense

world map of 1602 measuring 3.6 metres wide. The *Map of the Myriad Countries of the World* 坤輿萬國全圖 was a collaboration between the Jesuit Matteo Ricci, printmaker Zhang Wentao, and engraver Li Zhizao, who was also an astronomer, mathematician, and geographer. The text placed over Mexico (fig. 4) praises the highly original art of feather painting:

The land of Mexico produces bird feathers of all colours. People gather them to make pictures of marvellous landscapes and figures.

墨是地產各色鳥羽人輯以為畫山水人物皆妙

Santos

Christian art in Asia is exceptional because it was produced by people of many faiths and communities, which was not the case in Europe and to a large extent Latin America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many Christian objects were created by local artists who might have been Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Confucian, Daoist, Animist, Shinto, or a combination of these. The artists brought their own techniques, materials, and motifs to Christian subject. For example, *santos* (saints), or religious sculptures, are important objects of devotion in Mexico and the Philippines.

The first missionaries to arrive in the Philippines were the Augustinians in 1565, followed by the Franciscans in 1578, Jesuits in 1581, and the Dominicans in 1587. The Spanish encountered local ancestor figures such as the *paganitohan* in the Visayas or *likha* in Luzon (fig. 5).¹³ These were made of clay, stone, wood, or ivory, and sometimes decorated with gold. As conversion to Christianity gained momentum, these ancestor figures were gradually replaced by Christian images, which local artists were called on to supply. *Santos* were in great demand as the wooden statues were enshrined not only in churches, but also in village chapels and household altars.

Early commissions for wooden saints seem to have been given to Chinese artists in Manila.¹⁴ Their skills in painting, sculpture, and embroidery were described by Domingo de Salazar, first bishop of Manila, who particularly praised the skills of the Chinese ivory carvers in creating Christian images (see essay by Chong). However, there is little documentary evidence that Chinese sculptors carved wooden saints. Local Filipino artists started to produce Christian images by emulating the European style of carving and assimilating local aesthetics once used in ancestor figures.¹⁵

It is only in the nineteenth century that the names of individual sculptors are recorded, mostly in the



Fig. 4 Map of the Myriad Countries of the World showing detail of Mexico, 1602. Matteo Ricci (Italian, 1552–1610), woodcut by Li Zhizao (Chinese, 1565–1630).



Fig. 5 *Likha*. Philippines, Batangas, 14th or 15th century. Limestone. Museo Enrique Zobel Collection.

Santa Cruz and Quiapo districts in Manila, or in the town of Paete, Laguna, which seems to have specialised in wood carving. Other workshops were located in Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, the Cagayan Valley, Pampanga, the Bicol Peninsula, and the Cebu-Bohol region in the Visayas.

Most seventeenth and eighteenth centuries *santos* were depicted looking directly outwards towards the viewer (fig. 6). Images in churches such as those at Baclayon (Bohol) and Pampanga have stoic postures, with minimum movement depicted. The heads and hands were often carved separately, as these required more delicate work by more experienced carvers.

The great majority of Filipino *santos* are wooden,

with many of the older and larger examples made of local hardwoods. Following Spanish and Mexican tradition, the wooden sculptures were usually coated with gesso which covered the cracks and smoothed the surface so that paint could be applied. Garments could be enriched with the application of gold leaf (cat. 10). In the nineteenth century, it became fashionable to make wooden and ivory *santos* more realistic by providing them with glass eyes, eyelashes, and wigs. *Santos* for private devotion were housed in portable altarpieces and sometimes protected under glass. This profusion of religious images in the Philippines astonished the Spanish officer Sinibaldo de Mas, who wrote in 1842:

Walls in houses are often covered with prints of saints, and on the tables are many urns and glass globes containing images of saints, the Virgin, and the Christ Child, with faces usually made of ivory, as well as the hands, together with costumes of silver or rich embroidery. In wealthy houses there are so many of them that it looks like a warehouse of saints rather than a room. For many people, this is an object of display and vanity, and they regard the saints as having the same value as if they were just chests of drawers and mirrors.¹⁶



Fig. 6 Saint Dominic (detail): cat. 7.

Furniture

Although the vast majority of surviving Mexican and Filipino colonial art is religious in nature, secular art was also an important facet of colonial society. Exhibited here is a portable fall-front cabinet decorated with bone inlay and silver mounts (cat. 79). European in form, the object closely resembles the fine inlaid furniture produced in India for the Portuguese, or even cabinets made in the Americas. However, this example

appears to have been made in the Philippines. On the table's surface, the inlay decoration shows the foundation myth of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec empire's capital city (fig. 7). The attire of the figure on the left, a nobleman, resembles that seen in an illustration of Acamapichtli, king of the Mexica of Tenochtitlan (fig. 8). It is unusual to find Aztec imagery on a European-style, fall-front cabinet made in the Philippines. The four supports are carved with lion masks over claw-and-ball feet. Such designs are commonly seen on southern Chinese furniture which raises the possibility that this might be the work of Chinese craftsmen in the Philippines, or of local Filipinos influenced by those works. There exist a handful of such chests and cabinets (cats. 79–83), which testify to the creativity of anonymous Asian furniture makers participating in the galleon trade.



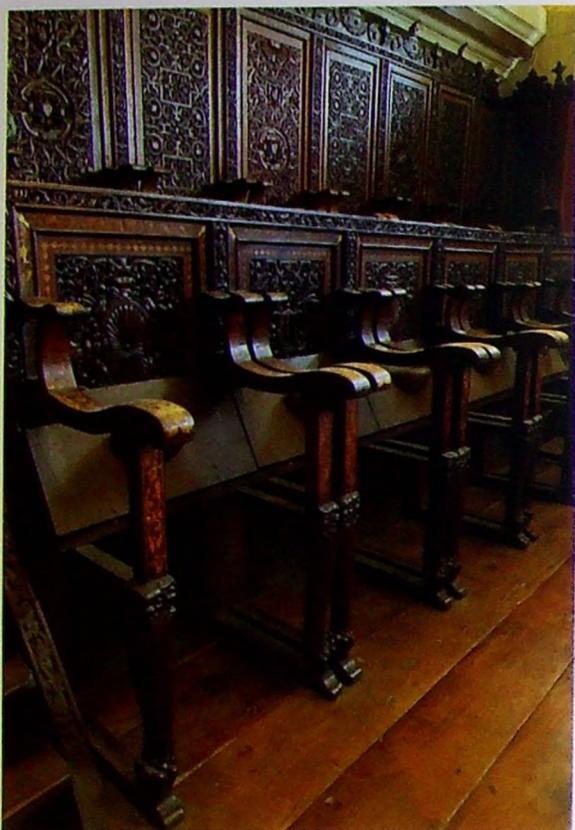
Fig. 7 Cabinet with the coat of arms of Mexico City (detail): cat. 79.



8 Acamapichtli. Codex Tovar, fol. 93. Mexico, around 1585. Library of Congress, Washington.

The large choir lectern in the choir loft of the church of San Agustín, Manila, was said to be commissioned by Félix Trillo around 1730. Another choir lectern, in Mexico City cathedral, was carved out of *tindalo*, a Filipino hardwood, and presented in 1762 by the archbishop of Manila,

Manuel Rojo del Río y Vieyra. It is likely that these examples were produced by Chinese furniture makers in Manila, who were famous for their work since the late sixteenth century, very likely in collaboration with Filipino makers.¹⁷



The church of San Agustin in Manila possesses numerous pieces of furniture adorned with certain common features, especially beast masks with paw feet. The most spectacular of these are the 68 intricately carved choirstalls commissioned by Miguel García Serrano between 1608 and 1611 (fig. 9). The strapwork motifs are related to late Renaissance design while the woods are *kamagong* with inlays of *narra*, both native to the Philippines.¹⁸ Interspersed among the decorations are the chrysanthemums common in Chinese and Japanese art. Cabriole legs emerge from beast masks and end in claw-and-ball feet, a common form in Chinese furniture which also appeared in European works in the eighteenth century. Such a combination of artistry, motifs, technical skill, and materials remained popular throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Southeast Asia, for example, in Penang, Malacca, Singapore, and parts of Indonesia. The scrolling foliage, peonies, lion masks, and claw-and-ball feet are familiar in the blackwood furniture produced for the Peranakan Chinese community (fig. 10).

Beyond colonialism

We should exercise caution in seeing the history of world trade as simply a succession of Western colonial systems: the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, and Americans. If we shift attention to the artists who created new artistic forms, then our understanding of these trading systems deepens. For example, the cotton designers in India, porcelain makers in China, lacquer artists in Japan, ivory carvers in Manila, ceramicists in Puebla, *amantecca* featherwork artists, and *enconchado* makers in Mexico City – all contributed significantly to the complex cultural network facilitated by the galleon trade.

The true importance of the galleon trade lies not just in the impressive feats of navigation, but in the new cultures that were created in the Philippines and the Americas, and the interconnections among Asia, the Americas, and Europe. This system stimulated the production of new types of art, often hybrid in nature and mingling ingredients from many different cultures. The Spanish colonial system made possible Chinese immigration to the Philippines and cultural exchange with Japan. And while Christianity can be considered a colonial tool, it had long-lasting effects in the Philippines and the Americas.

Many of these cross-cultural works of art were made by diaspora communities who moved, intermarried, and settled in foreign lands. As immigrants become localised, it becomes more difficult to attribute works to a particular ethnic group. For these reasons, we have avoided terms such as “Hispano-Filipino”, which privilege the Spanish empire and leave out the many other cultures involved in art production. Instead, we have tried to identify where objects were made



Fig. 9 Choirstalls in the church of San Agustin, Manila, around 1610.

10 Console table. Singapore, late 19th century. Blackwood, mother-of-pearl, marble. Peranakan Museum, Gift of the family of the late Mr Lee Gek Poh [F-0083].

although some may have been made in more than one region along the galleon route, and then collected and appreciated on yet another continent.

The galleon system ended in 1815 with the rise of other national shipping networks (not least direct shipping between Spain and Asia) and the disastrous Napoleonic wars in Spain. However, it is no coincidence that the end of the galleons was quickly succeeded by the establishment of a British port at Singapore in 1819. Singapore rose to become the centre of a trading network comparable to the old Manila-Acapulco galleon trade. In addition, Singapore, like much of Asia, used the Spanish-Mexican dollar as its currency. Indeed, the Singapore dollar can be regarded as a living reminder of the region's deep roots in the galleon trade. Like Manila, Singapore is a mixed culture that traded with the West but was also a hub of Asian commerce. Moreover, the rise of mixed cultures also echoed the galleon network, whose history remains essential to us.

- 1 See Broeze 1989 and Broeze 1997. On the galleon trade, see: Giráldez 2015; Tremml-Werner 2015; Gordon and Morales 2017; and Flynn and Giráldez 2010, among others.
- 2 Giráldez 2015, p. 178.
- 3 Seijas 2014.
- 4 See Giráldez 2015, pp. 138–63.
- 5 Fish 2011 p. 492; Isorean 2015.
- 6 Giráldez 2015, p. 138. In 1574, a Jesuit wrote that the Portugal to India voyage was “without any doubt the greatest and most arduous of any that are known in the world.”
- 7 Schurz 1959, p. 206; Giráldez 2015, p. 162; Gordon and Morales 2017, p. 27.
- 8 Giráldez 2015, p. 162.
- 9 Villegas 2016, p. 10.
- 10 Irving 2010, p. 32; original text: p. 245 note 29.
- 11 Murillo 1752, p. 52:
Ninguna Colonia, de quantas han fundado los Europeos en el Assia, y Africa, le iguala en grandeza, en riqueza, en abundancia, y vecindario. [...] El concurso de varias Naciones, no creo tiene semejante en el mundo.
- 12 Fane 2015, pp. 101–16; Berdan 2015, pp. 322–29.
- 13 Jose 2003, p. 33.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Gatabonton 1979, pp. 84–85, 165–66.
- 16 De Mas 1843, part 2: “Poblacion”, pp. 100–101:
Las paredes de las casas están muchas veces cubiertas de estampas de santos, y sobre las mesas muchas urnas y globos de cristal que contienen, santos, vírgenes y niños Dios con la cara por lo comun de marfil, así como las manos y los trages de plata ó bordados ricamente. En las casas acomodadas hay tantos que parecen un almacen de santos mas bien que una habitacion. En muchas este es un artículo de gala y vanidad, y tienen santos de precio como pudieran tener en otra cómodos y espejos.
- 17 Galende and Jose 2000, p. 103.
- 18 Ibid, p. 136.

Priest's robe (dalmatic)

China, assembled in Spain, 17th century

Silk, linen, cotton

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem; museum purchase made possible in part by the Asian Export Art Visiting Committee and an anonymous donor, 2001 [AE85947.3AB]

With the start of the galleon trade, imported silk from China became more accessible and affordable in the Spanish colonial settlements in the Americas, and, to a lesser extent, in Spain. In 1594, the Marquis of Cañete, viceroy of Peru, noted that in the viceroyalties, "Chinese merchandise is so cheap and Spanish goods so dear... a man can clothe his wife in Chinese silks for 200 reales, whereas he could not provide her with clothing of Spanish silks with 200 pesos [1600 reales]."¹ Antonio de Morga, a former lieutenant governor of the Philippines, described the various kinds of silk imported into Manila from China:

raw silk, in bundles, of the fineness of two strands, and other silk of inferior quality; fine untwisted silks, white and of all colours, in small skeins; quantities of smooth velvets, and velvet embroidered in all sorts of patterns, colours and fashions... woven cloths and brocades of gold and silver upon silk of various colours and patterns... damask, satins, taffetas, and gorvarans, picotes, and others cloths of all colours, some finer and better than others...²

Most of this silk remained in the Americas, but some was re-exported to Spain. The Catholic Church was a voracious consumer, often receiving silk cloth as gifts to create liturgical vestments and altar coverings. In 1616 the archbishop of Manila sent a set of Chinese silk church vestments that included dalmatics, a chasuble, and a stole to his nephew in Madrid.³ This sumptuous priest's robe (dalmatic), part of a similarly large set of vestments now in the Peabody Essex Museum's collections, may have once been used in a church in northern Spain.⁴

The Chinese weavers incorporated and adapted Chinese and European motifs into the design. Guardian lions chasing a brocaded ball are a familiar motif in Chinese art. But their wide eyes, toothy grins, and fluffy tails also recall rampant lions – a symbol of nobility in European heraldry. The pointed crown above the lions' heads is an entirely European motif.

Little is known about where these textiles were woven in China but given that this silk may have been a special commission, it could have been woven in Macao. Chinese merchants imported most of the Chinese goods in Manila, but during the union of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies between 1580 and 1640 Portuguese traders in Macao sometimes imported Chinese goods to the Philippines. Each of the pieces in this set is trimmed with Spanish cotton tape and lined with European linen, so they were probably assembled in Spain from an imported bolt of silk. During Mass, these sumptuous vestments sparkling in the candlelight would have been a potent symbol of the power of the Church – and the global trade made possible by the galleons. KHC

Prov: Acquired by a private collector in northern Spain, 1920s. Galerie Ruf, Beckenried, acquired by the museum in 2001.

Ref: Canepa 2016, pp. 103, 109.

1 Borah 1954, p. 122.

2 I have reduced this quote for brevity. De Morga 1609, translated by and quoted in full in Canepa 2016, p. 70.

3 Archivo General de Indias, Seville, *Contratación*, 1830, pp. 850–52 and 1834, pp. 1052–55, cited in Gasch-Tomás 2019, pp. 29–30.

4 The set includes two dalmatics, each with a collar, two maniples, one chasuble, one stole, one baldachin, and an unused fragment from the original bolt of cloth. A private collector acquired the set in the 1920s from a small church in northern Spain, possibly Séron de Nágima in the province of Soria. Galerie Ruf, a textile dealer in Beckenried, Switzerland purchased the set in the 1980s from the son of the collector.



John the Evangelist

Mexico, 17th century

Feather mosaic and paper on copper,

47.5 x 37 cm (with frame)

Daniel Liebsohn Collection

John the Evangelist is shown here holding a chalice. According to legend, he was given a cup of poisoned wine but was able to drink it without harm. The scene symbolises Christian faith prevailing over death.

The art of feathers was extremely prestigious in Mexico, both before and after its conquest by Spain. Images created by feather artists, called *amanteca*, endowed the subjects with a luminosity and range of colours that were impossible in European oil painting.



3

Saint Anthony of Padua

Mexico, 19th century

Feather mosaic on copper with paint, silver, 17.7 × 13 cm

Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec, Ciudad de México Secretaría de Cultura (INAH)

Saint Anthony of Padua (1195–1231) was a Portuguese priest in the Franciscan Order. Saint Anthony was canonised in 1232, less than one year after his death. He is commonly depicted embracing the Christ Child, a warm and human scene which became extremely popular in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painting. The subject is given a shimmering new dimension in this feather mosaic, while also demonstrating the popularity of the saint around the world.





Portrait of Hasekura Tsunenaga

Rome, ca.1615

Oil on canvas, 190 × 146 cm

Private collection, Italy

This striking, lifesize portrait depicts Hasekura Rokuemon Tsunenaga (1571–1622), a Christian samurai who was sent to Spain and Rome in 1613 by Date Masamune (1567–1636), daimyo of Ōshū, in the Tōhoku region of northeast Japan.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to trade with Japan, beginning in 1543, but relations between the two countries were often fraught. Christian conversion of Japanese and incidents of enslaving overseas Japanese led Japanese officials to fear Portuguese colonisation.¹ Attempts were made to limit trade with the Portuguese and bar missionary activity. Spain offered an alternative to Portugal and when the Tokugawa shogunate restarted trade links with the Spanish in 1609, Date Masamune swiftly began negotiations with Spanish traders.²

A Japanese delegation to Spain and the Vatican In October 1613, Masamune appointed Hasekura Tsunenaga to head a delegation to Spain and the Vatican. The mission became known as Keichō Embassy, after the Japanese era name. It was organised by Luis Sotelo, a Spanish Franciscan fluent in Japanese.³ The Franciscans viewed this mission as a response to the Japanese embassy to Italy that had been arranged by the Jesuits in 1585. Date Masamune understood the symbiotic relationship between faith and commerce.⁴ The main goals of the embassy were to invite Franciscan missionaries to northeastern Japan, and to conclude a treaty that would allow Japan to trade directly with Mexico. The Japanese delegation consisting of 180 men, many of them merchants, crossed the Pacific via the Manila-Acapulco route on board the *San Juan Bautista*, a galleon constructed with Spanish help at Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture. A smaller delegation of about 30 samurai and servants continued on to Havana and then to Spain. In 1615, Hasekura met Philip III of Spain and Pope Paul V, to whom he presented gifts and official letters in Latin and Japanese. Hasekura was baptised in the presence of Philip III and given the name Felipe Francisco in honour of the king and the Franciscan order.

Although the Japanese delegation was received cordially, the responses were ambiguous. The timing of the trip was unfortunate; Christianity had been banned in Japan and Christians were starting to be persecuted. Although Hasekura did not achieve a trade agreement, his visit furthered contacts between Japan, Mexico, and Europe. For example, he brought Japanese lacquer and other goods to Mexico which influenced the production of local art forms. Hasekura and his entourage retraced their route through Mexico and the Philippines before arriving back in Japan in 1620.

Hasekura returned to find a much-changed Japan. He died in 1622; Sotelo and several members of the delegation were executed as Christians. Some of Hasekura's entourage had chosen to remain in Spain and Mexico to avoid persecution in Japan. Hasekura's Christian artefacts acquired in Europe are preserved in the Sendai City Museum.

A samurai portrait painted in Rome This portrait was commissioned to commemorate the historic visit of a Japanese ambassador to the Vatican. The format and style reflect European conventions but are given special resonance for the sitter. In standard Renaissance style, Hasekura stands on a tiled floor, with his right hand resting on a table, while his other hand hovers near his weapons. The shorter sword (*wakizashi*) to the left is sheathed in luxurious ray skin. Around the larger weapon is a sword guard (*tsuba*) displaying eight circles around a larger central circle, the personal crest of Date Masamune.⁵ At the upper left is Hasekura's own coat of arms – the traditional Buddhist swastika with two crossed arrows, surmounted by a crown.

The rich embroidery of Hasekura's robe is carefully rendered. Observers in Rome recorded that Hasekura rode a white horse and wore a black hat and a white silk robe embroidered in gold

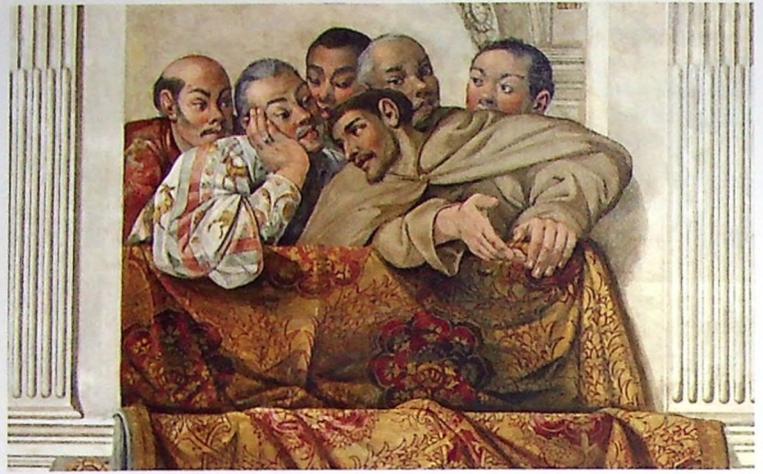
with animals and floral designs.⁶ This description accords with the portrait: a black hat with gold trim rests on the table while Hasekura's overcoat shows deer and leafy grass. He wears thin European silk lace beneath his *kosode* robe as well as lace socks decorated with gold. Given the luxurious quality of the costume and the presence of Masamune's crest, it is very likely that Hasekura's entire ensemble was provided by Date Masamune. It may have been lent to Hasekura so that he could act officially on behalf of the daimyo beyond the normal role of an ambassador. At the lower right is a dog wearing a gold collar mounted with gemstones. A common symbol of loyalty in Europe, the dog here suggests Hasekura's faithful service to Date Masamune or to the church.

The window looks out to the sea and the galleon *San Juan Bautista*, which carried Hasekura and his delegation across the Pacific. The aft of the ship displays Masamune's crest while the flag is emblazoned with Hasekura's arms. In the sky, the Holy Spirit appears in the form of a white dove, above three figures in the clouds. The woman in the middle holding a chalice and cross represents Faith, while the woman on the right with an anchor represents Hope. The friar in a brown habit is probably Saint Francis of Assisi, as Franciscans had arranged the embassy.

Several other portraits were made of Hasekura in Rome at the time of his visit. He and the delegation are depicted in a fresco (fig.) in the Quirinale Palace, the principal papal residence in Rome. Painted in 1616, shortly after the Japanese mission was in Rome, the fresco shows Hasekura in the same silk robe embroidered with deer. Surrounded by his Japanese entourage, he listens attentively to Sotelo, the translator. Another portrait depicting Hasekura in prayer was brought back to Japan (Sendai City Museum). Hasekura also appears in an engraving by Raphael Sadeler and a version of it, signed IM, that was included in Scipione Amati's book *Historia del regno di Voxu del Giappone* (*History of the kingdom of Ōshū in Japan*; Rome, 1615).⁷ The prints are dated 1615 and titled "Philippus Franciscus Faxicura", the last word a rendering of Hasekura.

Given the diplomatic importance of the exhibited portrait, it is surprising that it is not documented in the seventeenth century. As a result, no convincing attribution has been advanced, although it has been assigned to the Umbrian painter Archita Ricci (1560–1635) and less convincingly to the French artist Claude Deruet (1588–1660).⁸ The portrait was with the Borghese family in Rome, the family of Pope Paul V, who was born Camilo Borghese. CO

Prov: Borghese family, Rome. Ref: Tokyo 2014.



Hasekura Tsunenaga and Luis Sotelo with the Japanese delegation, 1616–17. Workshop of Agostino Tassi and Giovanni Lanfranco. Fresco. Salone dei Corazzieri, Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome.

- 1 Sakamoto 1993, pp. 233–41.
- 2 Okamoto 1972, p. 36. There is a report of a Spanish ship entering the port of Uruga in 1608.
- 3 On Spanish suspicions of Sotelo, see Lee 2015.
- 4 Fernández 2013, p. 84. Lee 2015, pp. 348–50.
- 5 https://datemasamune.com/history/family_crest.htm.
- 6 An account of Hasekura's visit to Rome appears in Amati 1615.
- 7 Raphael Sadeler II (Flemish, 1584–1632): Hollstein no. 58.
- 8 Tokyo 2014 attributes the portrait to Archita Ricci, who was active in Umbria 1599–1622. The style of the portrait is unlike any of Deruet's known works.

5

Relief of the Last Supper

Philippines, 19th century

Carved and painted wood, 67 × 182 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-01188]

Carved by a Filipino artist, this relief depicts Christ embracing John the Apostle as Christ announces that he will soon be betrayed by one of the twelve apostles. Other characters include the Apostle Peter, who stands to the right of Christ, and Judas Iscariot who holds a pouch that contains the silver he was paid to betray Jesus Christ. The lamb served whole, cat and dog in the foreground, and hanging lamps show that the artist must have drawn inspiration from European prints. But the features and proportions of the figures and native animals retain a local flavour.



6

Saint Augustine

Philippines, 17th century

Wood, height 140 cm

Intramuros Administration Collection, Manila

This relief carving depicts Saint Augustine (354–430), the patron of the Augustinian order. He can be identified by his attributes: a book and quill pen. Two finials at the top of the chair are carved in the form of pineapples. Like cacao, pineapples were brought to Asia from the Americas on the galleons.

The Augustinians were the first Christian missionaries to settle in the Philippines, where they established several monasteries there in the sixteenth century.



7

Saint Dominic

Philippines, 1787

Molave wood, height 145 cm

Intramuros Administration Collection, Manila

Saint Dominic (1170–1221) was born to a noble family in Caleruega, Spain. In 1215, he founded the Dominican order, which established a mission in the Philippines in 1587. Depicted in his habit and tonsure, Dominic holds a book in his left hand. His name and the date of the work are carved on the pedestal.



Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

Philippines, Polo, 18th century

Carved and painted molave wood, gold, 190 x 110 cm

Intramuros Administration Collection, Manila

The Virgin Mary is shown standing on a crescent moon with a coiled serpent. Two angels hold a crown of flowers over her head, as two cherubs hover at the top. In Roman Catholicism, the Immaculate Conception is the concept that the Virgin Mary was free of sin from the moment of her conception. In this relief, the Virgin Mary is surrounded by symbols from the Songs of Solomon.



Twenty-Six Martyrs

Japanese Christians faced intense and widespread persecution during the Edo period (1603–1868). Taikō (Regent) Toyotomi Hideyoshi prohibited Christianity in 1587. In 1596, the galleon *San Felipe* wrecked on the coast of Japan on its way from Manila to Mexico. Its crew and passengers were imprisoned and brought to Nagasaki. They were among 26 Christians who were crucified for their faith on Nishizaka Hill, the first public martyrdom in Japan.

In 1614, the Tokugawa shogunate expelled all Christian missionaries and required Japanese Christians to renounce their faith. Many Christians chose to die as martyrs. On 10 September 1622, 55 Catholics were martyred in Nagasaki, in what became known as the Great Genna Martyrdom. Others opted to hide their Christian faith under the guise of local religions. co



Martyrs of Nagasaki, 1627. Jacques Callot (French, 1592–1635). Engraving. Princeton University Art Museum, Bequest of Junius S. Morgan, Class of 1888.

Saint Philip of Jesus

Manila or Mexico, 18th century
Carved and painted wood, height 50 cm
Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-00270]

Saint Philip of Jesus (1572–1597) was a Franciscan missionary who was onboard the *San Felipe* when it sank off the coast of Japan. Along with 25 other religious men, he was executed in public by crucifixion and stabbing. Philip became the first Mexican saint in 1862 and is the patron saint of Mexico City.



10

Saint Paul Miki

Macao or the Philippines, 17th century

Carved and painted wood, gold, height 149.5 cm

Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán, Secretaría de Cultura (INAH)



Saint Paul Miki (1564–1597) was another missionary who died as one of the 26 Martyrs of Japan. He came from an affluent family near Osaka and became a Christian when his family converted. He joined the Jesuits and was said to have eloquently discussed Buddhist and Christian theology.

Many images of Saint Paul Miki were commissioned by missionaries in Asia and the Americas. Images of the 26 Martyrs typically show the attributes of the cross, palm branch, and spear. Here, the saint's hands are crossed at the front, similar to the treatment in a painting of the Great Genna Martyrdom (fig.).

Though partly illegible, a Chinese inscription on the back suggests that it may have been made by a Chinese artist in Macao or the Philippines: 年在中國尊敬之神像 (“a respected deity figure in China”).



Martyrdom of Nagasaki. Probably Macao, 1622–50. Colour on paper. Patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di Culto, amministrato dal Ministero dell'Interno, on loan to Chiesa del SS. Nome di Gesù, Rome.

11

Saint Ignatius Loyola

Perhaps Spain, second half of the 17th century

Carved and painted wood, height 78 cm

Family of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee





Saint Ignatius Loyola, 1660s. Pedro Roldán (Spanish, 1624–1699). Painted and gilded wood, 115 cm high. Museo Nacional de Escultura, Valladolid.

This wooden sculpture of Saint Ignatius Loyola combines artistic impulses from several cultures, including Spain and China, which makes its precise origins a mystery. The saint's body turns and sways energetically, while the dramatically billowing robes are elaborately decorated in a pattern of black and gold. These are features typical of Spanish and Spanish-American sculpture of the later seventeenth century. On the other hand, the spiralling cloud forms carved into the base are characteristically Chinese, as can be seen in porcelain and ivory statues. The face and hands also recall Chinese ivory carving in the Philippines. In short, this is an example of artistic exchange and reformulation along the trade routes.

Subject The figure represents Saint Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Jesuit Order. Ignatius is said to have resisted having his portrait painted, but his general appearance was well-known. He is usually depicted as a thin, balding man with a beard and goatee, as seen here. Ignatius was beatified in 1609 and canonised as a saint in 1622 – events which led to the production of many portraits for Jesuit institutions around the world.

The pose of Ignatius Loyola seen here closely resembles several works produced in Spain, for example, a painted wooden sculpture made in 1610 by Juan Martínez Montañés (Church of the Annunciation, Seville).¹ The saint gazes at a cross in his right hand, while grasping a book (usually his *Spiritual Exercises* or the *Constitutions* of the Jesuits). The cross is missing in this sculpture, but the book has been carved into the figure's robes. The Spanish sculptor Pedro Roldán represented Saint Ignatius with the same elements, also rendered in a dramatic Baroque style (fig.). Dating from the 1660s, this sculpture possesses gilded decoration similar to the exhibited work, which probably dates from the same period.

Style The shape of the eyes and structure of the face resemble the ivories carved by Chinese artists in the Philippines in the seventeenth century (cats. 55, 56). Also pointing to a Chinese source are the clouds beneath the figure which have the spiral form typical of Chinese sculpture, but not found in European works. It is therefore tempting to associate this sculpture with Manila, where Spanish and Chinese artistic traditions combined to produce cross-cultural works of art like ivories, furniture, and silver. However, there is almost no evidence of Christian wood sculpture produced by Chinese artists in the Philippines during the seventeenth century, and nothing similar to this work.

The structure of the robes intricately embellished with gold leaf on black paint suggest that the work might have been made in Seville, Spain, where Pedro Roldán was based. Moreover, Seville was the hub of Spain's economic and cultural contacts with its colonies. The Chinese elements of the cloud base and facial features may have based on the many Philippine ivories which are recorded in Seville in the seventeenth century (see essay on ivories). It is also possible that a Chinese artist in Spain contributed to the making of this work.

The sculpture is reported to have belonged to a Spanish family who had lived in Manila, the last owner being a descendant of a president of the General Tobacco Company of the Philippines.² The company was founded by Antonio López, the first marquis of Comilla (1817–1883), who supported Jesuit causes. His grandson Juan Antonio Güell (1874–1958) was a major collector of Spanish polychrome sculpture; for example, he owned the related sculpture by Roldán shown here.³ AC

Prov: Concha Barrios Gallery, Madrid [as Hispano-Philippine, 17th century].

1 Berlin 2016, no. 20.

2 Information from Concha Barrios.

3 Güell 1925. The museum acquired the work in 1985 from the Güell collection. I am grateful to Peter Lee for discussions about this work.

Silver for silk

China and the foundation of the galleon trade

Alan Chong

“The singular product most responsible for the birth of world trade was silver.”¹

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, trade between China and the West depended on silver – specifically China’s enormous need for silver as its domestic currency. The mines in Mexico and Bolivia produced vast quantities of silver, but this would have been of limited value without China’s demand for the metal. Not only was China the world’s largest economy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but its use of silver predated the galleon trade. At its peak, the price of silver in China was twice that of anywhere else in the world, and while this premium ended by 1640, the flow of silver continued. By one estimate, some 400 million silver dollars flowed from Mexico to Manila in the two and half centuries of the galleon trade, nearly all of it destined for China.²

Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, in a series of ground-breaking articles, place the beginning of world trade with the foundation of Manila as the hub of the galleon trade in 1571, which allowed direct shipping between America and Asia for the first time.³ But they warn that this trade was not the simply the product of Spanish imperialism, nor even the European desire for Asian goods. Rather, they shift the focus of early world trade to China. Without China’s use of silver currency, the galleon route would have withered. Moreover, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, China procured most of its silver from Japan.

Crazy for silver

The enormous flow of silver to China attracted the attention of observers of the period. Antonio de Morga, deputy governor of the Philippines between 1595 and 1603, was struck by the fact that the Chinese in Manila did not want to be paid in gold but only in silver. In comparison, while Japanese traders mostly accepted silver reales for their goods, “they do not care for them like the Chinese, because they have silver in Japan.”⁴ China’s unquenchable thirst for silver could even be felt in India, as noted by Filippo Sassetti, a Florentine living there. He wrote from Kuchi in 1586, “The Chinese of all the peoples of Asia are more crazy about silver [*pazzi per l’argento*] than men anywhere else are about gold.”⁵

Well before the Spanish arrived in the Philippines, trade within Asia was already well established in the hands of the Chinese, Japanese, Malays, and Indians. This older network was easily integrated into the transpacific galleon route, enhanced by the immigration of Chinese from Fujian to Manila, where a community of merchants, manufacturers, and artists in many genres facilitated the galleon trade. And by the late seventeenth century, an Asian community was active in Mexico City.⁶

Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Europe was merely an intermediary or middleman in the commercial system between China and Mexico.⁷ While the bulk of trade passing through Manila was an exchange of silver for Chinese products, our concern is not only with the value of goods, but with the rich artistic creativity that developed new genres and styles. The works of art made in the Philippines around the galleon trade, including furniture, ivory, silver vessels, and paintings, left a lasting cultural imprint, even though their monetary value might have been tiny in comparison with the Chinese silk and porcelain that passed through Manila. Manila itself became a vibrant hub of many peoples drawn initially by trade: indigenous peoples from throughout the islands, the Spanish, Chinese, and later Americans.

China is often hailed for inventing modern paper money, but Ming paper currency was a failure because excessive issuing had rendered it virtually worthless by the middle of the fifteenth century. As a result, China did not issue paper currency for another four hundred years. During this period Spanish (or more properly Mexican) dollars were China’s currency. It was more convenient than gold for most transactions and easier to assay for purity than copper.⁸ The silver trade came at great cost, since the mines in the Americas were worked by slaves and indentured indigenous workers under brutal conditions. The Spanish crown took an immediate tax of 20% on the production of silver.

However, these profits were in decline by the 1620s, and in the late eighteenth century the United States took over much of the silver exchange with China, a sign that the Manila galleon trade had become largely irrelevant before its final collapse in 1815.⁹ “The Spanish Empire would have been impossible to operate without China.”¹⁰ Indeed, China’s procurement of silver indirectly financed the Spanish empire’s brutal aggression against other religions: the defeat of the Islamic Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto of 1571, massacres of Netherlandish Protestants during the revolt of the late sixteenth century, attempts to invade England in 1588, and violence against indigenous peoples in the Americas and the Philippines.¹¹

Spanish/Mexican silver dollars in Asia

The Spanish dollar, more properly, the eight-real coin, became the standard currency in China over the course of the sixteenth century, a role it would play for nearly four centuries and in a larger sense has not relinquished. The silver coins used in China were for the most part minted in Mexico City, which gained its first mint in 1535, followed by others in Santo Domingo, Lima, and Potosí. By 1600, more Mexican silver coins circulated in China than in Mexico itself.¹²

The Spanish dollar was worth eight reales and thus called “pieces of eight.” It was popularly known in Spanish America as the peso (“weight” in Spanish) and internationally as the dollar (*dólar* in Spanish, derived from the older German term *Thaler*).¹³ So widespread was the use of the Spanish silver dollar in Asia that its weight of approximately 25 grams was taken over directly by the Philippine peso, Chinese yuan, Japanese yen, and Hong Kong and Straits dollars. Similarly, the Spanish dollar circulated to such an extent in North America that the United States dollar also duplicated its weight and name.

At first, coins were made by cutting a silver bar into pieces and then striking a design onto them with a hammer and die. These irregularly shaped cobs were susceptible to clipping, where some of the silver was shaved away while allowing the coins to circulate at face value. Machine-milled Mexican silver dollars were introduced in 1732 which had a consistent weight and size. The abundance of silver in Mexico and Bolivia, and the technological improvements of machine production and galleon shipping, meant that Mexico provided China with its domestic currency and Asia with its trade coinage.

The first series of machine-milled Spanish dollars bears the name of Philip V and the Spanish royal coat of arms (cat. 12). The 8 to the right of the arms is the coin’s denomination of eight reales while the M and F on the left are initials of the

assayers.¹⁴ The design on the reverse shows the Pillars of Hercules flanking two globes that represent the old and new worlds, accompanied by the inscription “Utraque Unum” (both are one), a reference to Spain’s claim to rule the entire globe. The M surmounted by an o identify the Mexico City mint. Mexican silver dollars were the most common coins used in China, where they were regularly tested and stamped with assay marks. This coin bears seven Chinese assay stamps.

Silver dollars like this circulated through several cultures around the globe. Based on a unit of currency established in Spain in the fourteenth century, but minted in Mexico with Mexican silver, it was shipped on a galleon to Manila, where it was likely traded for silk before being entering domestic circulation in China.

Singapore

When the British established a settlement in Singapore in 1819, several currencies were used, including the Indian rupee, the Dutch guilder, and the Spanish dollar. In 1823, Resident John Crawfurd made the Spanish/Mexican dollar legal tender in an attempt to reduce confusion.¹⁵ After Singapore, Malacca, and Penang were incorporated as the Straits Settlements in 1826, the governing East India Company made the Indian rupee its official currency. However, this was widely ignored since the region traded primarily in Mexican dollars. In 1867, when the Straits Settlements left British Indian administration, the rupee was also abandoned in favour of the Mexican dollar and equivalent currencies such as the Hong Kong and American dollars and the yen.

In 1903, the Straits Settlements finally issued its own silver dollar, again with the same weight as the Mexican dollar. The first coins bear the crowned profile of Edward VII (cat. 13), in use throughout the British empire. The engraver of the coin was George de Saulles (his initials appear just below the bust) and the coins were minted in both Bombay and London. The reverse bears the value of one dollar in English, Chinese 壹圓, and Arabic ساتو رغبية. This clever and elegant cross-cultural design had been used earlier on the British trade dollar, first minted in 1895 to replace the Mexican dollar in Asia.

The Straits dollar, which had also been used throughout Malaya, was succeeded by the Malayan dollar in 1939 and after 1967 by the Malaysian ringgit and the dollars of Singapore and Brunei. The interchangeability of the Singapore and Brunei dollars, and their approximate equivalence to the American dollar, are reminders of centuries of international trade that traversed several Western

colonial systems, and of a time when the world's currencies came close to being unified.

Silver for churches

One result of the extensive production of and trade in silver along the galleon route was the profusion of silver in churches, and later for private consumption. In Mexico and South America, altars were decorated with elaborate silver panels, chalices, monstrances, candlesticks, and lamps. Liturgical silver generally took forms that had been used in Spain, but often with the addition of original motifs and materials. The artistic flourishing of silver in viceregal America can be largely explained by the long indigenous tradition of working gold and silver.¹⁶

Churches in the Philippines were also adorned with silver objects, although less lavishly than in the Americas. While also indebted to Spanish models, Philippine silver is frequently embellished with Chinese-style decoration (cats. 16, 19). In 1590, Bishop Domingo de Salazar specifically praised Chinese silversmiths in Manila, "although they do not know how to enamel, because in China they do not use enamel, but otherwise, in both with gold and silver, they make wonderful works."¹⁷ Chinese and Filipino silversmiths established workshops in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, where they incorporated new designs into their work.

17th-century Chinese export silver

Silver was less commonly used in China for luxury objects; the large-scale production of export silver products only began in the nineteenth century. However, in the late seventeenth century a few opulent vessels were produced primarily as diplomatic gifts. A heavily-cast teapot was in Great Britain by 1682, when hallmarks were applied to it (Peabody Essex Museum, Salem).¹⁸ A coffee pot, then called a *chocolatière* or chocolate pot, passed to the court of Siam and was then presented to Louis XIV in 1686 (fig. 1).¹⁹ This finely crafted vessel was recently rediscovered and has fittingly been acquired by the palace of Versailles. Similar coffee pots of the same period and style are in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg and the Royal Collection Trust, London, and smaller tobacco boxes were also produced, likely for the Dutch market.²⁰ Made in a closely related style, an elaborate silver *kendi* is a unique example of traditional Southeast Asian drinking vessel, usually made in ceramic. The luxurious decoration and heavy casting suggests that it too was a diplomatic gift, in this case made especially for one of the courts of island Southeast Asia (fig. 2).²¹



Fig. 1 Coffee pot. China, ca. 1680. Silver, partly gilded. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.

Fig. 2 Kendi. China, ca. 1680. Silver, partly gilded. Asian Civilisations Museum [2015-00372].



- 1 Flynn and Giráldez 1995, p. 201.
- 2 García-Abásolo 2011, p. 232.
- 3 Flynn and Giráldez 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2004; collected in Flynn and Giráldez 2010. For an expansive treatment, see Giráldez 2015. The account presented here is based on these works. See also Gordon and Morales 2017 and Lin 2006.
- 4 De Morga 1609, p. 163; de Morga 1909, pp. 218–19. "el precio es, lo mas en reales, aun que no los cudician como los Chinas, por tener plata en lapon".
- 5 Sassetti 1874, p. 305; letter of 20-1-1586.
- 6 Seijas 2014, pp. 109–74; Giráldez 2015, p. 18; Petersen 2014.
- 7 Flynn and Giráldez 1995, p. 203. They write that Europeans were mere "middlemen in the vast silver trade; they were prime movers on neither the supply side (except Spain in America) nor the demand side of the worldwide silver market. Europeans were intermediaries in the trade between the New World and China."
- 8 Flynn and Giráldez 1995, pp. 207–8; Giráldez 2015, p. 49.
- 9 Irigoien 2009.
- 10 Giráldez 2015, p. 15.
- 11 Giráldez 2015, pp. 108–20.
- 12 Lopez Rosado 1975, p. 32; Flynn and Giráldez 2002a, p. 413.
- 13 Calbetó de Grau 1970.
- 14 M for Manuel de León; F for Francisco de la Peña y Flores. Reform of the Mexico mint led to the arrest of an assayer in 1730, followed by a requirement that there be two assayers for coinage. Rosenmüller 2004, pp. 213–14.
- 15 Lee 1990, pp. 7–13. The account of Singapore and Straits currencies is based on this source.
- 16 Esteras Martín 2006.
- 17 Letter dated 24-6-1590. Archivo General de Indias, Seville: FILIPINAS,74,N.38. "Los plateros avunque no saven esmaltar porque en la china no usan esmalte pero en lo demas ansy de oro como de plata hazen obras maravillosas..."
- 18 Forbes 1998.
- 19 De Rochebrune 2019; Eberhard 2022.
- 20 Hermitage; Eberhard 2022, fig. 5. Royal Collection: inv. 104100; Chong 2018, p. 250, fig. 3.
- 21 Chong 2018.

12

Spanish dollar: Philip V, with Chinese assay stamps

Mexico City, 1734

Silver, diameter 3.8 cm

National Museum of Singapore [N-3545]



12

13

14

Chest

Spain, 17th century

Iron, 51 × 99 × 49 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [01261]

It is thought that chests of this type were used by the Spanish to transport gold and silver. The iron straps on the exterior and intricate locking mechanism within prevented forced entry.



Chalice

Perhaps Colombia, 18th century

Gold, enamel, gemstones, height 28 cm

San Agustin Museum, Manila [2003.02]



A chalice holds the wine that is consecrated and consumed during the Mass in the Catholic service. The cup containing the wine once needed to be made of silver or gold, and was often made of gilded silver.

This elaborate gold vessel, which must have been a costly gift to the church of San Agustin in Manila, rests on a double base and a series of spherical knobs. It is profusely decorated with foliage and flowers, with green and blue enamel filling the surfaces between the raised decoration. It is additionally adorned with 148 gemstones, which have been individually attached onto plaques, then fastened with prongs onto the body of the chalice.

The motifs on the chalice can be found in European and Spanish American metalwork. For example, lilies emerge from the square gem settings around the base of the cup, while a serpentine column forms the stem immediately below. The main double knob is decorated with acanthus leaves and small fleurs-de-lis.

There are no directly comparable examples of enamelled gold chalices. The very high relief and the abundance of gemstones resemble the sumptuous gold liturgical objects made in Colombia in the eighteenth century, for example, the monstrance in Bogotá cathedral from around 1736–37.¹ This chalice appears to have been cast with an alloy of gold and copper, as a coppery surface is visible on the bottom.

Galende and Chua attribute the chalice to Mexico around 1600 without explanation.² Sanz Serrano believes that the chalice might have been made in the Philippines as early as the last third of the sixteenth century, with elements identified as depicting local flora and reflecting Chinese influence.³ However, all the motifs on the chalice are related to Spanish and Spanish American examples, and the date seems implausibly early, as the Spanish had only captured Manila in 1571. **AC**

Refs: Galende and Chua 2003, pp. 4–5. Sanz Serrano 2012, p. 391.

1 C. Esteras Martin in Philadelphia 2006, no. 111–18, repr.; see another monstrance made in 1707: no. III-17, repr.

2 Galende and Chua 2003, pp. 4–5.

3 Sanz Serrano 2012, p. 391.

Coffer for the Eucharist

Manila, 17th century

Silver, enamel, gemstones, 23 × 17 × 16 cm

San Agustin Museum, Manila [2003.28]

This silver casket was used to store the Eucharist, specifically the consecrated bread used in the Holy Communion. On Holy Thursday, just before Easter, containers like this were displayed to the congregation. This function is made clear on the front of the coffer, where two kneeling angels hold a chalice surmounted by the sacrament. This decoration is formed from a repoussé panel of silver attached to the main body.

The rest of the coffer is decorated with oval and rectangular silver knobs, which have blue enamel between raised patterns. Square-set gemstones (some now missing) are arranged among the enamelled plaques. The surfaces are engraved with scrolls and Chinese wave patterns along the edges. Four cast angels support the coffer.

The raised oval enamel buttons are a common feature of Spanish and Mexican silver. They can be found on a coffer of the same size and function made in Spain in the early seventeenth century (Museo nacional de artes decorativas, Madrid).¹ A salver made later in the century is similarly decorated with enamelled domed ovals, and the technique must have been employed in Manila in the same period.² AC

Ref: Galende and Chua 2003, pp. 60–61.



1 Alonso Bonito 2015, pp. 42–43, repr. [as 1600–1615].

2 In the Seville Cathedral: Philadelphia 2006, no. III-7, repr. The form also appears in Guatemala: Esteras Martín 2006, p. 187, fig. III-7.

17

Votive lamp

José Joaquín Pérez Calderón (Mexican, active 1690–1743)

Mexico City, 1729

Silver, height 137, diameter 41 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [06836]



A votive lamp holds a small container of oil with a wick that burns continuously in a private shrine or near a religious image, as an aid to devotion. The receptacle for this lamp is suspended by chains above a larger silver vessel whose undulating profile is decorated with swirling leaves. These vessels hang from a canopy topped by a silver banner. All parts of the lamp, including the decorative chains, are original. The form and decoration of this lamp can be compared to late seventeenth-century religious lamps made in Europe and Mexico.

The lamp was made by José Joaquín Pérez Calderón, who was born in Puebla and worked as a master silversmith in Mexico City.¹ His mark, PE/RES, is stamped on the lamp, which is also marked with the stamp of Mexico City (a male head above an M and between columns, with a crown above) and the tax mark of an eagle on a cactus. The name MEN/DIOLA identifies the assayer Domingo García de Mendiola, who tested the purity of the silver and ensured that the tax was paid.² AC

Ref: Esteras Martín 1992, no. 48.

1 Identified by Esteras Martín 1992, no. 48. For further information on Pérez see Pérez Morera 2012, pp. 240 note 20, 253.

2 The marks are illustrated in Esteras Martín 1992, p. 169.

Three lecterns

These lecterns were made to support missals, compilations of prayers, chants, and instructions used during Mass. The text for services would vary according to the liturgical calendar. Silver missal stands were normally made by decorating sheets of silver in repoussé and engraving, then attaching them to a wooden core for support. The two Mexican examples have plaques engraved with Biblical passages.

18

Lectern

Mexico City, early 18th century

Silver, wood, 49 × 35 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04954]

This Mexican lectern of the early eighteenth century is formed as a double-headed eagle, symbol of the Habsburg dynasty which ruled the Spanish empire between 1516 and 1700. Double-headed eagles became extremely common decorative elements around the world, and numerous lecterns were decorated with the symbol in eighteenth-century Mexico.¹ A late eighteenth-century example by Eduardo Calderón is in the Museo Arocena, Torreón.²

A large and elaborate crown rests on the two eagle heads. Finely engraved feathers fill the surface and descend below the ledge, which is supported by two claws grasping balls. At the centre of the lectern is a large heart inscribed with Psalm 25, beginning with line 6:

Lavabo inter innocētes manus meas & circúmdabo / altare tuum
Dómine Utaudiam vocem laudis & enárrem univérsa mirabilia tua [...]

(I wash my hands in innocence, and go about thy altar, O Lord singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all thy wondrous deeds.) AC

Ref: C. Estera Martín in Houston 2002, no. 92.

1 C. Estera Martín in Houston 2002, no. 92, who says the form first appeared in Mexico in 1715 when a pair of missal stands made by Manuel de la Paz was given to the church of Pilar de Zaragoza.

2 A. Gallegor Carrión in Paniagua Pérez 2012, p. 194, fig. 3.



PSALM. 29

Audite inquit natus meus & circumdabo
aure tuam Domine
Et audiam vocem quiescentem universa in tabula tua.
Domine, dilexi locum domus tue, & locum habitations
glorie tue.
Et percos cum lapsus Deus Animum meam & cum viris
Iniquum viri meam.
In quorum manibus iniquitates sunt. dextera eorum replera
est sanguine.
Et autem in peccatis meis ingressus sum & in veritate me. &
non crederem.
Et inquit scilicet in die facti celestis benedicam te Domine
Pater, & Filius, & Spiritus Sanctus.
Sicut erat, &c.

Lectern

Manila, 1772

Silver, wood, 40 × 50 cm

Paulino and Hetty Que

Decorating the centre of the lectern made in the Philippines is a winged heart with flames emerging from the top; pierced by two arrows, the heart rests on a book. This is the symbol of the Augustinian order, although the appearance of wings is slightly unusual. The Augustinians were the first Christian religious order to come to the Philippines: the navigator Andrés de Urdaneta, who accompanied Legazpi in 1565, was himself an Augustinian.

The surface around the central emblem is filled with lush flowering vines, while the background has been carefully punched to create a rich overall texture. The top surface of the ledge bears the date “1 de Julio de 1772 anos” (1st of July in the year 1772). The front of the ledge has an eight-pointed star in a circle, surrounded by vines. AC



Lectern

Mexico, around 1780s

Silver, wood, 45 × 34 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04395-02]

This missal stand from the late eighteenth century is decorated with a large shell above a square plaque, framed by elegantly curving C-shaped scrolls. Further scrolls appear below the ledge. Large flowers appear at the top of the lectern and flank the central plaque. The design is closely connected with the international Rococo, a style based on the forms and textures of seashells.

The plaque is inscribed with the text from John 1, lines 1–14, in Latin:

Initium sancti Evangelii secundum Joannem.

In principio erat Verbum, & Verbum / erat apud Deum & Deus
erat Verbum

Hoc erat in principio apud Deum [...]

(The beginning of the holy Gospel according to John.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.) AC



21

Holy water basin

Manila, 18th century
Silver, height 30 cm
Paulino and Hetty Que

This ornate vessel was used to hold holy water for use during baptisms and other ceremonies. Sometimes called an aspersion, the bucket would normally have been used with a silver sprinkler.



22

Pax

Manila, 18th century

Silver, 20 × 15 cm

Richard and Sandra Lopez

A *pax* (meaning peace in Latin) is a plaque that was kissed by the congregation during Mass, in a ceremony called the Kiss of Peace. In common with most other examples, this *pax* has a handle on the back so that it can be easily presented to worshippers.

The front of the *pax* shows the emblem of the Jesuit order: the initials IHS with a cross rising above, while below are three nails piercing a heart. Flanking the emblem are serpentine columns and angels. Above are a winged cherub and a double-headed eagle.



Two incense boats

Mexico, 17th or 18th century

Silver, length 14 and 13 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [01700, 01815]

Incense boats are used to store incense that would be burned during the Catholic Mass. They generally take the form of ships, often with a curved bow and railings, and are thus called *naviculas* – Latin for boats. Attached by a chain to the oval-shaped boat is the original spoon, used to transfer the incense from the boat to a censer.

European incense containers began to be made in the form of ships in the thirteenth century, so their origin is unrelated to the global trade launched some three centuries later. The ship form may have recalled the exotic origins of incense. In the Spanish empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, incense boats must have provided reminders of seaborne trade, with some examples made as highly detailed sailing ships.¹



1 Collins and Martin 2018.

24

Candlestick

Manila, around 1800

Silver, height 48 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-01189]

This tripod candlestick is of sober neoclassical design. It is cast with angular leaves at the base and simple repeating indentations along the edges. Leaves are engraved on the knobs. Candlesticks like this were typically made in sets of twelve to be arranged along a church altar. This example reportedly came from the Church of John the Baptist in Liliw (Laguna province), southeast of Manila.

Prov: Reportedly acquired in the 1960s and sold by the owner: León Gallery, Makati City, 4 Dec. 2021 [lot 155, as 1750–1850].



Coffer

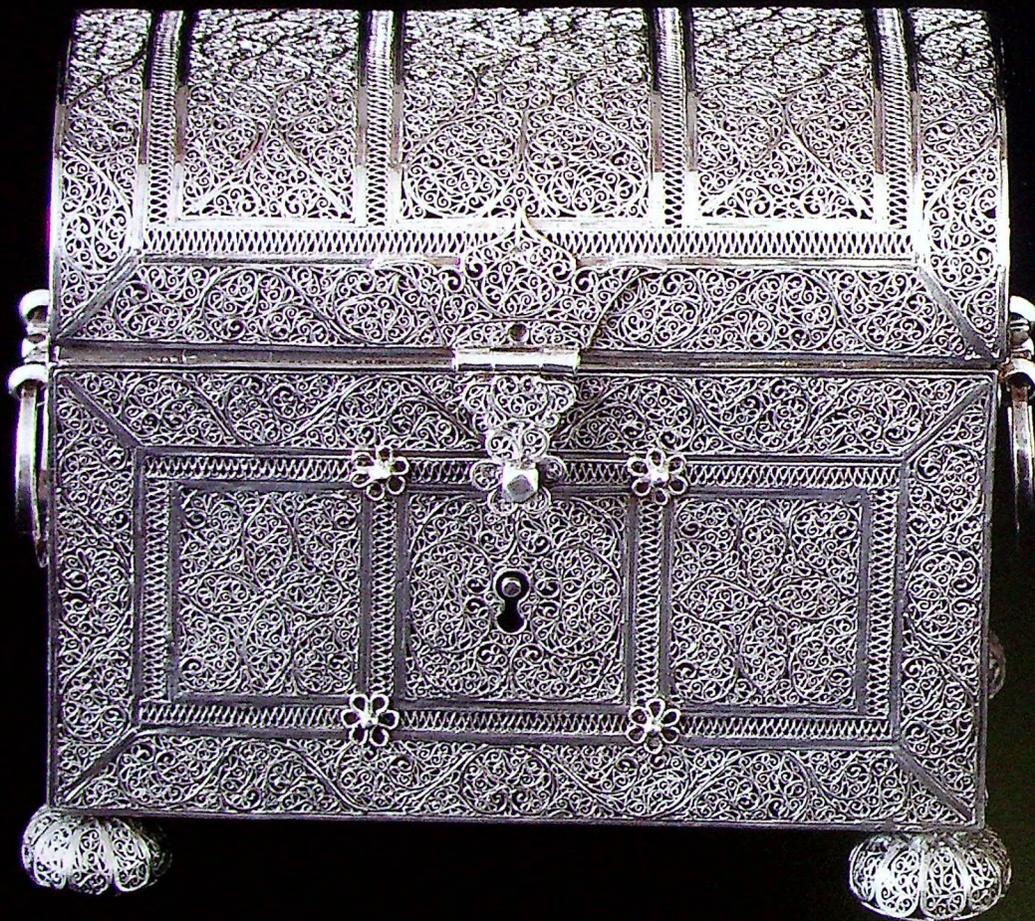
Manila or Batavia (Jakarta), 18th century

Silver, 15 × 20 cm

Paulino and Hetty Que

Silver filigree is made by bending or twisting thin wires into intricate shapes, then soldering the pieces together to form an object. Filigree has the advantage of creating light and airy patterns out of relatively little material. The filigree decoration of this casket is divided into panels surrounded by borders: three panels on the front, back, and top. Four filigree feet support the object. The latch is formed by a three-pointed crown.

Because silver filigree was employed around the world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – including in China, India, Southeast Asia, and Europe – it is often difficult to identify where objects were made, especially in the absence of specific cultural motifs.¹ The thick frames around the panels, consisting of repeating loops of silver, are often associated with works made in India and Southeast Asia.² Similarly decorated boxes have also been attributed to China or to Chinese artists working in the Philippines and Batavia (Jakarta). AC



- 1 Menshikova 2006, pp. 21–25. Veenendaal 2014, p. 127, writes that the adjective “Manila” (Manhilase) may have been used to designate filigree, citing a 1682 inventory made in the Dutch Indies of the belongings of the sultan of Ternate.
- 2 Menshikova 2006, pp. 64, 67 [India or Southeast Asia, mid-17th century], 81 [Goa, 17th century].

Coffer

Manila, late 17th or 18th century
 Tortoiseshell, silver, 17.5 × 22 cm
 Richard and Sandra Lopez

This coffer with a hinged lid is made of thin, translucent panels of tortoiseshell. The hard, mottled outer layer of the carapace of the sea turtle was transformed into plaques through a heating process, then moulded into the desired shape. Exquisite tortoiseshell caskets used to store jewellery or religious relics were made in Gujarat, India, for the Portuguese in the late sixteenth century.¹ Such examples may have inspired artists in the Philippines.

The silver fittings are characteristic of the scrolls found on inlaid furniture by Chinese artists in the Philippines (cats. 82, 83). In the escutcheon around the keyhole and the corner mounts, the curving scrolls are divided by sharp angles. AC



1 Lisbon 1996, pp. 192–97, nos. 4–9. Moura Carvalho 2008, pp. 35–37.

27

Toothpick holder (*palitera*): Pineapple
Philippines, Maragondon, around 1860s
Silver, height 50 cm
Paulino and Hetty Que

28

Toothpick holder (*palitera*): Pineapple
Manila, 19th century
Silver, height 32 cm
Richard and Sandra Lopez

29

Toothpick holder (*palitera*): Kulasisi
Manila, mid-19th century
Silver, height 26.5 cm
Richard and Sandra Lopez





Silver toothpick holders, or *paliteras*, were made to delight elite consumers in the Philippines and the parts of the Spanish world. Both functional and decorative, they were made in a wide variety of forms and shapes. The long toothpicks themselves could be made of silver, gold, ivory, or wood, with the ends shaped into flowers, butterflies, birds, or crowns.

Two of the *paliteras* are in the form of pineapples, one highly realistic with the characteristic serrated leaves of the plant, the other a more geometric example accompanied by three tiers of trays to hold small edibles. The surfaces of the pineapples are pierced to hold toothpicks. Pineapple toothpick holders were especially popular in Pampanga and Bulacan in the Philippines.

The third holder is in the shape of a *kulasisi*, a small parrot native to the Philippines. It appears perched on a tree with leaves. The toothpicks have small crowns on the ends.



30

Incense burner

Manila, 19th century

Silver, height 40 cm

Richard and Sandra Lopez

The turkey's feathers and the stand are rendered in silver filigree, giving the object a light and open appearance. The object is hinged so that it can receive incense. Incense burners in the Philippines were made in the shape of many different animals, including deer, llamas, and bulls.



31

Cigar holder

Philippines, Luzon, Batangas, mid-19th century

Silver, length 43 cm

Richard and Sandra Lopez

A practical household object has been given a surprisingly delicate and sophisticated decoration. On the side of this cigar holder is a long, winding vine laden with tropical flowers and fruit. Four delicate claw-and-ball feet support a gadrooned base.



The complexities of the Manila galleon trade

Cuauhtémoc Villamar

Current patterns of globalisation encourage us to examine historical examples of intercultural connections, for example, the Manila galleon trade, one of the longest running trading systems. New research and innovative approaches provide greater insight into the complexities of this exchange.

In 1565, the first Spanish galleon sailed from Cebu in the southern Philippines for Acapulco in Mexico. Once Manila was established in 1571, annual trade across the Pacific remained relatively constant until 1815, a span of nearly 250 years. The journey from Manila to Acapulco was in itself a considerable achievement since it spanned some 14,000 km. Because it linked possessions in Asia and the Americas, the Manila galleon system became an essential factor in the expansion of the Spanish empire. Soon after the establishment of the route, rules for maintaining the system were established to balance the powerful interests of Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines.¹

It is often noted that the Asian trade taxes collected in Mexico were sent to Manila in the form of the *situado* (annual appropriation) to pay for the administration of the Captaincy General of the Philippines, a fiscal expenditure earmarked for local administration and defence. For centuries, this tax has been erroneously interpreted as a subsidy of the Philippines. New studies, however, offer a more complex interpretation of the Spanish financial structure which allocated fiscal resources to different parts of the world according to the empire's priorities. Manila generated vast wealth but received only part of it. Instead, funds were used to sustain Spain's wider political and religious interests in Asia, such as the activities of the Dominicans, Augustinians, and Franciscans, who received support from

the Spanish Crown. This was in contrast to the Jesuits, who were active in the Portuguese sphere of influence and obtained funds from the profitable silk trade between China and Japan.² Although the Manila galleons connected the ports of the Philippines and New Spain (Mexico), both under the control of the Spanish empire, the influence of this trade extended throughout Asia and Spanish America. It was a trading system that served the interests of multiple participants, including China, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, and India – in addition to Europe and the Americas.³

In South America, particularly in Peru, Asian trade arrived steadily and in significant quantities. Although the Spanish crown forbade direct trade between the Philippines and Peru, from the early days of the Manila galleons, merchants based in Manila, Mexico City, and Lima managed to transfer silver from Peru to buy precious Asian goods, which are now part of the country's legacy of elite residences, churches, and museums. Starting in 1740, the Spanish Crown allowed trade via the Atlantic to Buenos Aires, allowing the legal trade of Asian products and their circulation to the rest of the continent.⁴ Brazil and the rest of the Spanish Americas received Asian products and enslaved people from Portuguese trade via India and Africa.⁵

It is important to highlight the unusual relationship between the Iberian monarchies of Spain and Portugal during the formation of the Manila galleon system. The crowns of the two nations were united from 1580 to 1640, when the Spanish king was also king of Portugal. However, an agreement was made to maintain separate administrations of the trading empires of the two countries. Thus, control of the Portuguese empire, the *Estado da Índia*, was kept separate of Spanish control. Goa, Malacca, and Macao were under Portuguese jurisdiction, while the Philippines were Spanish.⁶ This agreement extended to the religious missions in Asia: the Jesuits were assigned China and Japan, while the Franciscans, Augustinians, and Dominicans were active in Southeast Asia. Even the Inquisitions were kept separate, one in Goa and another in Manila, a subsidiary of Mexico City. Nonetheless, it is clear that the Spanish trading system in Asia was porous in that it allowed the activities of merchants, merchandise, and non-registered trade.

The exceptional longevity of the Manila galleon trade – over great distances and an extended period of time – indicates that it was founded on a robust commercial system. Three principles were widely debated in Spain, Mexico, and the Philippines in the early days of the transpacific trade: first, the legality of transactions; second, the predictability of transport; and third, security of shipping that was subject to natural risks and

piracy. There were periods of difficulty, such as the economic slump in the second half of the seventeenth century when trade diminished and middleman traders privileged the Indian passage, but overall, the system functioned well until 1815.⁷

A telling example of this regulatory system was determining who had the privilege of carrying merchandise in the galleons. Only professional merchants settled and registered in Mexico City and Manila were entitled to carry goods, through a mechanism that allocated the spaces and weight for each participant. Of course, there were many who preferred to sell their permits to people able to monopolise the bulk of the trade. The Spanish crown assumed the costs of shipbuilding, maintenance, and crew, ensuring that the crossings consisted of at least two ships in each direction. Moreover, the defence of the galleons was in the hands of a regular military force in the ports and aboard the ships. The insurance of the cargo was covered by the association of merchants through a common fund administered by the *Cofradía de la Misericordia*.⁸ Indeed, the galleons can be likened to factories, bringing together machinery, workers, precise routines, advanced technology (navigation, for example), and even scientific advances in meteorology and time calculation.

The Pacific route was largely based on the work of Andrés de Urdaneta (1508–1568) who probed his previous observations about a sea current from the northern Pacific Ocean to the northern Pacific coasts of the Americas. This discovery was named the *tornaviaje*, the “return trip”, even before the voyage of the first galleon in 1565, because it was the dream of all European navigators of that time. And it continued to be used for nearly the entire existence of the galleon trade.⁹

Navigation was based on the cumulative experience of sailors, mapmakers, and astronomers from across Europe. Shipbuilding was similarly shared throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Vessels of Mediterranean origin, such as *naos*, *caravelles*, and *pataches*, played a crucial part in European sea expansion. Initially constructed in the Iberian Peninsula, over time ships were adapted to the seas around Asia. For local navigation in Asia, they learned the benefits of local materials, like hardwood and fibres for cables, and the rhythm of the monsoons. The Spanish had built shipyards in Mexico and in Central America and constructed additional ones in the Philippines in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, using local timber and workers.¹⁰ In the seventeenth century the Spanish attempted to build huge ships with a weight of 2,000 tonnes. These wonderful and baroque-decorated galleons (the *Santísima Trinidad* of 1751 is an example) were difficult to manoeuvre and highly attractive for pirates.

A fundamental factor in the dynamism of trade across the Pacific was the production of silver in Peru and Mexico beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century. Silver extracted from mines in Peru and Mexico became the dominant force in the economic and cultural development of the Spanish empire, allowing it to extend its influence worldwide. The coincidence in timing between the mass mining of silver in the Americas and the development of Asian trade meant that silver rose to become an essential component of trade, especially in China.¹¹ There is debate about the actual amount of silver that was sent from the Americas, but it is essential to understand that the use of precious metals in trade, framed by the mercantilist mentality of the time, also defined the political monopoly of the Spanish crown.

Silver production in the Americas reinforced a system of forced labour and the subjugation of indigenous peoples, and fuelled the African slave trade. The economic and social landscape in the Americas, related to the transpacific trade, was based both on mining and agricultural expansion within the hacienda system, with semi-slave labour.

The Manila galleon system facilitated the movement of peoples across the world, for example, the Spanish to the Philippines, Asians to the Americas, and indigenous Americans sent as soldiers to the Philippines. Most critically perhaps, Manila developed a rich cosmopolitan culture which mingled indigenous peoples of the Philippines with the Chinese, the Spanish, and peoples from the Americas.

It has been said, somewhat mockingly, that the galleons carried “only silver and priests to Manila.” The Philippines became the platform for Catholic missionary work in Asia in the 1570s. Recent studies have considered both the efforts of missionaries trying to understand otherness in places like China and Japan and the difficulties faced by the later rejection of the Catholic religion by changing powers, such as the shogunate in Japan.¹²

Hundreds of missionaries departed Manila for points throughout Asia to enter a cultural environment dominated by Buddhism and Islam. The material results of the Roman Catholic cultural enterprise are varied but can still be seen in churches, houses, and museums in the region.¹³

One analytic approach is the so-called polycentric architecture of the Spanish empire. For example, the Manila galleon system was under the control of the Spanish empire, but the operative management was in the hands of the Manila-Acapulco Trade Council, or *Consulado*, located in Mexico City. The participation of merchants

from Spain and Mexico in the trade was a political understanding to regulate the cargo, volume, and prices in what we would now call a value chain. This arrangement demonstrates that the Spanish empire in the Americas and in Asia had a polycentric structure, one not limited to the economic centre of the empire.¹⁴

Proponents of the polycentric structure argue that the Spanish empire had multiple centres of power, and that influence was dispersed across different geographic regions. This idea suggests that Spain exerted authority over its colonies in both the Americas and Asia, allowing for a decentralised power structure. The establishment of viceroyalties and audiencias in the Americas, as well as the creation of the Manila galleon trade route, are often cited as evidence of this polycentric structure.

However, objections can be raised against this idea of decentralisation. While the Spanish empire did have a presence in both the Americas and Asia, the centres of power and decision-making were ultimately concentrated in Spain itself, and partially in Mexico City. The major political and economic decisions were made by the Spanish monarchy and carried out by officials appointed by Spain. The colonies, including those in Asia, were subordinate to the central authority in Spain, limiting their autonomy and influence.

Comparative studies and the use of connected stories open a rich dimension into the study of trade in the Pacific. The Portuguese located themselves in the existing trading ports (Malacca in 1511, Ternate in 1520) with the intention of dominating the routes of regional trade, in open competition with the Chinese, Indians, and Malays, among others. They had previous experiences controlling routes of pepper produced in India on the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese offered protection to local ships in exchange for payment of tax navigation. The Spanish instead assumed control and extracted rent from territories and peoples, repeating their recent experience of conquest of the Americas.¹⁵

In contrast, the methods employed by the Dutch and English at the end of the sixteenth century were different from both the Spanish and Portuguese. These emerging powers used a system of chartered private enterprises for discovery and control of trade. The Dutch and English preferred to use force in trying to eliminate competition from other buyers, for example, for clove and nutmeg from the Maluku Islands (the Spice Islands) in Indonesia. It was a monopoly of the demand side, now termed a monopsony. To avoid changes in prices, they sometimes destroyed entire crops to restrict the supply. We also cannot put aside the religious divide between Catholics and Protestants.¹⁶

In this perspective, the accusation of piracy against the newcomers was understood by the Dutch and English as the right of free trade on the seas. Dating from this period are the initial concepts of the Law of Sea as formulated by the Dutch lawyer Hugo Grotius (1583–1645). The Iberians labelled attacks on the sea and raids on their ports by the Dutch and English as piracy and treated them in the most severe way. In this sense, the Dutch Revolt against Spain was transferred to Asia. The attack on Manila in 1600 by the Dutchman Olivier van Noort ended with the capture of nineteen sailors. Only six were spared because they converted to Catholicism; the rest were executed as heretics.¹⁷

The independence of Mexico after the revolution of 1810 to 1821 was a major blow to the Manila galleon system. From the sailing of the galleon *San Pedro* in 1565 from Cebu to the last ship leaving Acapulco, the *Magallanes*, in 1815, we can confidently say that the Manila galleon system prevailed for 250 years. However, the system evolved and underwent difficult periods, from its heyday in its first 60 years to moments of depression in the eighteenth century – mostly because of changing tastes in the Americas and Europe, economic and political crises and, in the last period, the opening of alternative routes.¹⁸

1 Yuste 2013, Alonso Álvarez 2009, Alonso Álvarez 2013, Schurz 1939.

2 Boxer 1993, pp. 104–21; Dunne 1962.

3 Villamar 2021, Spate 2004, Boyajian 1993.

4 Ardash Bonialian 2014, pp. 128–35.

5 Seijas 2014, pp. 117–26.

6 Borschberg 2014, pp. 2–17.

7 Yun-Casalilla 2019, pp. 345–48; Gasch-Tómas 2019, pp. 75–90.

8 Yuste 2007, pp. 84–87.

9 Borao Mateo 2007.

10 Valdéz-Bubnov 2019.

11 Flynn and Giráldez 2002a; Flynn et al. 2017.

12 A. Chong in Singapore 2016, p. 12.

13 Javellana 2017, Zialcita and Akpedonu 2021.

14 Cardim et al. 2014, pp. 3–8.

15 Subrahmayam 2012.

16 Clulow and Mostert 2018, pp. 13–21.

17 Borschberg 2018, pp. 269–87.

18 The creation of the Royal Company of the Philippines in 1785 opened the route through the Cape of Good Hope, connecting Manila with Cádiz. Yuste 2007, pp. 359–81.

The three founders of the Spanish colony in the Philippines

Probably Philippines, 1700

Oil on wood, 96.3 × 76.3 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2016-00745]

The three men depicted here were critical to the establishment of the Spanish colony of the Philippines and the Manila galleon trade. From the left, they are Andrés de Urdaneta (1498–1568), Miguel López de Legazpi (1502–1572), and Ferdinand Magellan (1480–1521).

A Portuguese navigator working for Spain, Magellan led the first fleet to circumnavigate the world, but in 1521 was killed in the Philippines before he could return to Europe. In 1565, Legazpi and Urdaneta formed the first European settlement in the Philippines, in Cebu. Urdaneta's documentation of his voyage helped establish the galleon route between Manila and Acapulco. The scene in the painting is imaginary as the three men were never together in real life.

The Spanish inscription at the bottom describes Magellan's discovery of the Philippines, the celebration of the first Mass there, Legazpi's arrival in Cebu, and the establishment of Manila as a Spanish colony.

Prov: M. Batuca Guerreiro Ramalho, Lisbon.



Chest with a view of Manila

Philippines, 1650s

Wood, iron, pigments, oil, 63.4 × 127.5 × 64.2 cm

Museo José Luis Bello y González/Gobierno del Estado de
Puebla/Secretaría de Cultura/OPD "Museos Puebla"



Detail: The Parián.

This chest is decorated with what is probably the oldest view of Manila.¹ It shows a walled city surrounded on all sides by water, recognisable as Manila because of the structure of the walls and identification of places such as the Tondo and the Parián.² There are three bastions, the largest at the upper left corresponding to the bastion of San Diego. Densely clustered houses appear on the opposite banks. Several churches and domed towers topped with crosses can be seen, some labelled, such as La Compañía de Jesús (the Jesuits), San Agustín, and Santo Domingo. It is not certain whether the inscriptions were written by the artist or added later. Much of the text is now worn.

Because aspects of the Chinese community are prominently featured in this view, it is very likely that it was painted by a Chinese artist living in Manila. Chinese ships are seen in the bay and harbour. At the lower right, an area filled by thatch-roofed structures raised on stilts at the edge of the waterway is labelled "Parián de los Sangleyes" the name of the market quarter where the Chinese (called Sangleyes) were forced to live. Figures in Ming dynasty clothing stroll about a plaza in the lower right (fig.): the most important are on horseback, with attendants holding parasols. In reality, the Parián was located just outside the gate, to the lower right of the city walls and so should not appear in this view. However, the artist adjusted geography to show the base of the Chinese community. A more topographically accurate view of Manila can be seen in the map by Antonio Fernández de Roxas from 1717.³

These types of city views were painted in many of the port cities of Asia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The painting style of the architecture seen on the chest resembles the *Martyrdom of the Blessed Leonardo Kimura and his Companions in 1619* (Church of Gesù, Rome), created by a Chinese or Japanese artist living outside Japan. The exacting detail suggests it was executed by a painter who had witnessed the martyrdom first-hand. Another similar example, from the late eighteenth century, is a view of Macao in the Hong Kong Maritime Museum.⁴ CO

- 1 The oldest printed map of Manila is by Ignacio Muñoz, dated 1671: Archivo General de Indias, Seville, MP-FILIPINAS, 10.
- 2 See Díaz-Trechuelo 1998, p. 184; and Manalo 2022, pp. 49–55.
- 3 *Topographia de la ciudad de Manila, capital de las yslas Philipinas*, drawn by Antonio Fernández de Roxas and engraved by Hipólito Ximénez. A version from 1739 is in the British Library, London [Maps K.Top.116.40].
- 4 Opaque watercolour on paper. It was previously owned by a descendant of Camillo de Rossi, antiquarian and diplomat. De Rossi purchased four Chinese port views in Rio de Janeiro in 1807 or 1809.

Folding screen with a view of Mexico City

Attributed to Diego Correa (Mexican)

Mexico, 1690s

Wood, fabric, oil paint, varnish, 207 × 549 cm

Museo Nacional de Historia, Castillo de Chapultepec,
Ciudad de México, Secretaría de Cultura (INAH)

Conquest of Tenochtitlan, formerly on the reverse of cat. 34.



Created at the end of the seventeenth century, this screen features a panoramic view of Mexico City. The idealised image privileges the elite Spanish aspects of the city. A cartouche at the lower left lists 84 landmarks, starting with the city's cathedral and churches, followed by schools, hospitals, and monasteries. Indigenous dwellings appear on the outskirts of the city. This view appears to have been made from Chapultepec, a hill to the west of the city. In 1604, shortly after this view was painted, Bernardo de Balbuena in his *Grandeza mexicana* extolled the beauty of Mexico City by likening it viewing a chessboard: "From the majesty of its superb streets, so similar to the rows of a chessboard, block by block, and even piece by piece."¹

Painted folding screens originated in China and were adopted in Korea and Japan, where artists decorated them with local designs. The first folding screens to arrive in Mexico were reportedly from Japan in the early seventeenth century. They quickly became sought-after luxury items for the elite, while also inspiring Mexican artists to create their own versions. Screens made in Mexico incorporated Japanese aesthetics and techniques, such as clouds which divide the scenes and the lavish use of gold decoration. As with the Japanese examples, landscapes are the predominant subject in the Mexican screens. In addition to country views and urban vistas, important battles were often depicted, and later allegories and emblematic subjects.

This screen was originally double-sided, with scenes from the conquest of Tenochtitlan on the reverse. The two views were split and the conquest scene framed separately, shown here below. The depiction of the conquest, which took place between 1519 and 1521, is based on the narrative accounts by Hernando Cortés, the soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo, and chroniclers Antonio de Herrera and Antonio de Solís. Echoing the arrangement of Japanese screens, the conquest scene is framed by a row of arches embossed with gold. The arches punctuate the story and suggest the passage of time, from the Spanish army's entry into Mexico on 8 November 1519 to the surrender of the city of Tlatelolco on 13 August 1521. The narrative begins with the meeting of Moctezuma and Cortés at the top right and ends at the upper left with the siege and the figure of Pedro de Alvarado, who flies the royal standard from the top of Tlatelolco pyramid. Another key scene shows the death of Moctezuma, who appears on the balcony of his palace only to be repudiated by his own people.

Folding screen like this functions are simultaneously paintings of patriotic subjects, movable pieces of furniture, and impressive status symbols. Only a few individuals could afford such an object in colonial Mexico, especially one which illustrated both a historical theme and a view of the city.² Only four examples of similar ten-panel screens are known; they were probably made by the same artist or family workshop.³ CO

- 1 Balbuena 1604, fol. 70v:
De sus soberbias Calles la realeza
A las del axedrez bien comparadas
quadra à quadra, y aun quadra pieza a pieza.
- 2 Cuadriello and López Guzmán 2021, pp. 134.
- 3 The others are in the Museo Franz Mayer, the Museo Soumaya, and a private collection in Madrid (Cuadriello and Guzmán 2021, pp. 128–43).

Map of the Philippine Islands*(Carta Hydrographica y Chorographica delas Yslas Filipinas)*

Manila, 1734

Cartographer: Pedro Murillo Velarde (Spanish, 1696–1753)

Engraver: Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay (Filipino, 1701–1771)

Engravings mounted on linen, approx. 111 × 119 cm

Fernando and Catherine Zobel de Ayala Collection





TOPTO BOTTOM

- Fig. 1** Sangleys or Chinese. Engraving by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay.
- 2** Native Filipinos. Engraving by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay.
- 2** A Spaniard, a Creole, and two indigenous people. Engraving by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay.

This highly detailed map by the Spanish Jesuit Pedro Murillo Velarde appeared in 1734 and quickly became recognised as the most accurate map of the Philippines. Besides outlining the archipelago, it also indicates the principal sea routes of the galleons to Mexico and Spain. It was engraved and printed by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay, who proudly signed himself as a native Tagalog in Manila: “Indio Tagalo en Man!”. The map was commissioned by the governor-general of the Philippines, Fernándo Valdés Tamón.

In addition to its cartographic features and the traditional symbolic cartouches, the map is of great interest for its depictions of the many peoples living in the Philippines, who hailed from all over the world. The image at the upper left (fig. 1), titled “Sangleyes, ó Chinos”, shows a range of social types within the Chinese community: a Christian convert, gentleman, fisherman, and ship loader with a coil of rope. The next print depicts Africans (called “Cafres”, or kafirs, an Arabic term for east Africans), a Canarin (a Christian from Goa), and an Indian sailor (lascar). The third shows Mestizos, a freed slave with European blood (“Mardica”, from the Dutch *Mardijker* and Malay *merdeka*), and a Japanese man. The fourth shows a Spaniard, a Creole, and natives. The fifth image shows an Armenian, a Mughal, and a Malabar. The last panel (fig. 2) depicts indigenous people going to church, carrying guavas, dancing the *comintang* (*kumintang*), and a Visayan with a sword (*balarao*).¹

At the upper right, we see a local farmer ploughing a rice field with a carabao, with cacao and plantain trees in back and a crocodile in front. This is followed by maps of Guam (“Guajan”) and Manila, an orchard scene, and further maps of Zamboanga and Cavite.

The six images on each side of the map consist of two plates each. On the right side, the maps of Manila and Cavite (the lowest in their respective plates) are signed by Francisco Suarez (who called himself “Indio Tagalo”), which indicates he made all six images. On the left side, only the lower plate is signed by Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay, but he appears to have made all six of the ethnographic images on the left.² The distinction between the two artists is confirmed by the stylistic difference between the maps and landscapes on the right, and the standing figures on the left side. While it is possible that Pedro Murillo Velarde made drawings for the twelve vignettes, the signatures do not specify Suarez and Bagay solely as engravers, as does the signature on the central map (“Lo esculpío”).

The figural scenes are remarkable in the way they mix classes and ethnic groups, and disrupt the traditional hierarchy that placed European-born colonialists at the top of society. The *casta* paintings of the Portuguese and Spanish empires always ranked Europeans above mestizos, creoles, indigenous, immigrants, and so forth. On the Murillo Velarde map, indigenous Filipinos are the most numerous and appear in three different images, followed by Chinese with four figures in one print, placed at the top of the map. In contrast, there is just a single Spaniard and two mestizos. In addition, different ethnic groups appear together in the same print. The artist pokes fun at the pretentious Spaniard with his silly hairstyle and umbrella bearer (fig. 3). Next to him is a dark-skinned Creole (“Negro atezado criolle alla tierra”) and Filipinos engaged in a cock fight. On the other hand, indigenous Mexicans and South Americans are missing from the map, although the Philippines were governed by New Spain.³ The map appears to assert the cultural independence of the Philippines, as Ricardo Padrón suggests.

The map’s ethnic figures build on earlier depictions of the communities found in port cities, especially Jan Huygen van Linschoten’s illustrations of the peoples of Goa, published in 1596.⁴ The settings and figural arrangements resemble van Linschoten’s prints, but more importantly both works emphasize the variety of dress and customs of different ethnic groups. In the Philippines, a series of depictions of its various ethnic groups were

drawn by a Chinese artist around 1593 in the Boxer Codex (see p. 103), but this manuscript probably did not circulate widely.

Pedro Murillo Velarde was a historian as well as a cartographer, and in his ten-volume *Geographia historica* he evokes the same striking mix of peoples that can be seen in his map.

The meeting of various nations – I do not think there is anything like it in the world. Spending an hour on the Tuley or Manila Bridge you will see almost all the nationalities of Europe, Asia, America, and Africa pass by; one can see their costumes and hear their languages. The wonder is that all of them speak Spanish to communicate with each other; but in what way? Each nationality has created a jargon by which they understand each other. One day, I heard a big fight between a Sangley, an Armenian and, I believe, a Malabar, all speaking Spanish, and I didn't understand any of them, because I had not yet studied their vocabularies.⁵

This view is reinforced by the maritime elements of Murillo's map. Two routes from Manila to New Spain are indicated, accompanied by depictions of the galleons which made the voyage. Also shown is the new route to Spain towards the west. In the lower left, a ship is identified as Magellan's *Nao Victoria*, the first to arrive in the Philippines. At the upper left is a two-masted *patache* said to be bound for Canton or Macao; below it is a Chinese vessel. Two *cacacoa*, local outrigger boats, are also labelled. These people and ships suggest that the Philippines was not just the terminus of the galleon trade, but a vibrant hub in its own right. **AC**

Refs: Díaz-Trechuelo 1962, pp. 284–96. Quirino 2018, pp. 73–91. Padrón 2020, pp. 54–56.

- 1 "Indios bailando el comintang" (Indigenous dancing the kumintang). On the kumintang dance, here accompanied by a guitar, see Irving 2010, p. 126, who however misreads "comintang" in the print as "comintano" (also pp. 24, 127).
- 2 These attributions were first made by Díaz-Trechuelo Spínola 1962, pp. 285–86, pls. III and IV. Bagay was paid 875 pesos for engraving and printing a map "consisting of eight pieces", that is, plates. Quirino 2018, p. 79, did not notice Bagay's signature and seems to attribute all twelve of the marginal vignettes to Suarez. On the other hand, Irving 2010, p. 33, assigns all the vignettes to Bagay.
- 3 Padrón 2020, pp. 55–56. Although he suggests that New Spain is not mentioned the map, in fact it labels the two galleon routes.
- 4 Van Linschoten 1596. See van den Boogaart 2003.
- 5 Murillo 1752, p. 52:

El concurso de varias Naciones, no creo tiene semejante en el mundo. Estando una hora en el Tuley ó Puente de Manila se verán passar casi todas las Naciones de Europa, Assia, América y Africa: se verán sus trages, y se oirán sus lenguas. El prodigio es, que todos estos, para comunicarse entre sí, hablan en Español; pero cómo? Cada Nación ha formado una gerigonza, por donde se entienden. Yo oí un día un gran pleyto, entre un Sangley, un Armenio, y creo, que un Malabár, todos hablaban Español; y yo no entendí a ninguno, por no haber estudiado entonces sus vocabularios.



Andres de Ordaneta.

Ships of globalisation

Galleon construction in the Philippines and Southeast Asia from the 16th to 18th century

Iván Valdez-Bubnov

It is possible to view the exploration of the Atlantic, the colonisation of America, the quest for the Spice Islands, and the discovery of the Return Voyage – the *tornaviaje* – between the Philippines and Spanish America, as by-products of Europe's ambition to establish a direct economic connection with Asia.¹ But it is often forgotten that the maritime nature of European expansion had one fundamental precondition, so evident that even the early chroniclers of these exploits frequently failed to mention it: the capacity to build ocean-going ships. This was not trivial. The large ocean-going vessel that developed in western Europe from the fifteenth century on was the most complex artefact of its age, and it required an enormous concentration of resources, manpower, and capital to be built and outfitted. These ships also required complex infrastructures for maintenance and operation, including shipyards, dockyards, and ports, together with a concentration of markets and populations with entrepreneurial and seafaring skills. All these things were needed before a single ship could sail, in any part of the world.

The largest types of early-modern European sailing ships, the carrack, the *nao*, and the galleon, were the result of a sustained process of technological hybridisation between shipbuilding traditions of the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic, which optimised hull resistance, cargo capacity, and sail plans.² The galleon was a distinctive technological concept: a cargo ship that could also serve efficiently in war, whether as a single unit or as part of a large armada. Unlike other types of large sailing ships, the galleon was an expression of Spanish state policy, combining the resource mobilisation capacity of a modern administration with the production capacity of industrial entrepreneurs, in a heavily armed vessel designed to serve the aggressive rise of global mercantile capitalism. Although other powerful states could build their own types of large oceanic ships, particularly China, they were only produced and utilised as instruments of foreign policy for brief periods or in specific regional contexts. The sustained state-driven naval policy adopted by Portugal and Spain from the late fifteenth century gave them the lead in the construction of global capitalism, and the galleon was its most distinctive and complex technological expression.

Therefore, the development of the shipbuilding industry can be said to have preceded globalisation. More than that, it was its most fundamental precondition, the one that made European transatlantic and transpacific exploration, conquest, and trade possible in the first place. In this light, the exploration of the Atlantic by the mariners of the Spanish crown (in rivalry with the Portuguese, who had established their own route to Asia through the Cape of Good Hope and the Indian Ocean), can be understood through the gradual transfer of shipbuilding and repair capacity from Andalusia and the Basque provinces of Spain to the Canary Islands in the eastern Atlantic, and then to the Antilles in the Caribbean. Even the conquest of the Aztec empire in central Mexico can be understood from the perspective of shipbuilding, since the siege of its capital, located in the middle of a huge mountain lake, was made possible by the construction and operation of a fleet of war brigantines. But, as the conqueror Hernando de Cortés wrote to the Spanish king in 1522, the main objective had always been to reach the “Southern Sea” (*la Mar del Sur*), the enormous ocean glimpsed from Panama by Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1513, in order to sail to Asia.³

Transferring the shipbuilding industry from the Americas to the Philippines

In 1519 Ferdinand Magellan sailed from Seville to seek a passage to this “Southern Sea” to reach what was then known as the Spice Islands (the Maluku

Islands or Moluccas) directly. After a perilous journey, he reached Cebu in the Philippines, where he died in combat. His men failed to find resources to repair their ships, and only one, the *Nao Victoria*, managed to load a cargo of spice in the Maluku Islands and return to Spain through the Indian Ocean and the Cape of Good Hope (the Portuguese route), thus completing the first circumnavigation of the globe in 1522.

The difficulties of Magellan's route intensified efforts to sail to Asia from Spanish America. Cortés sent several expeditions to explore the western coast of Mexico, to seek a northern passage between the oceans, and attempting to establish permanent shipyards in different enclaves. All these suffered from a lack of essential shipbuilding manufactures, which had to be brought from Europe and then transported by river or land. In parallel, new attempts to reach the Maluku Islands from Spain were made. In 1525, García Jofre de Loaysa and his crew sailed with the objective of taking the islands by conquest, but they found themselves at war with the Portuguese. It was there that the Spanish made their first attempt to establish a shipyard. It lacked a proper connection with Asian markets and managed to launch only one ship.⁴

From then on, it became clear that to make further advances in the Pacific, the Spanish needed a functional shipbuilding and repair infrastructure, such as the Portuguese already had in India and the Malukus. This explains why the chroniclers of the later expeditions began to record the shipbuilding resources of islands bordering the Pacific. Several Spanish chroniclers noted the existence of abundant and high-quality timber resources, experienced seafaring populations, sophisticated shipbuilding practices, and, above all, active inter-Asian markets providing all sorts of high-quality manufacture. Nevertheless, the problem of finding favourable winds and currents to establish return route to America prevented the Spanish from establishing functioning shipyards in Asia for another twenty years.

The return route between the Philippines and the Mexican coast was finally discovered in 1565 by the Augustinian friar Andrés de Urdaneta, who piloted a military expedition that sailed in ships built in Barra de Navidad, Mexico, under the command of Miguel López de Legazpi. After establishing an initial settlement in Cebu, Legazpi turned to the conquest of Manila on the large island of Luzon, which was completed in 1571. This decision showed the Malukus had become less important because of Portuguese dominance there, but also due to the dwindling value of spices in Europe.⁵

The first Spanish ships built in the Philippines were galleys, employed in the exploration and

conquest of Luzon and the Visayas, although native craft were also utilised in these operations. In fact, Legazpi's correspondence revealed not only the urgency of establishing a sustainable shipbuilding industry in the Philippines, but also the positive impression that indigenous and Islamic shipbuilding technology had made on the conquistadors. Soon, shipbuilding and caulking materials were received from Acapulco and later from Spain through the Portuguese route, allowing the careening and repair of the first vessels arriving from Mexico. The transpacific route had been born.

Spanish shipbuilding in the Philippines

Two decisive factors finally allowed the establishment of a permanent shipbuilding industry in the Philippines. The first and most important was the productive capacity of the indigenous populations of Luzon and the Visayas. The nascent Spanish administration was able to obtain high-quality shipbuilding manufactures (construction timber, cotton sails, cables, ropes, and caulking materials made of coconut fibre) through a form of exploitative taxation known as *vandalas*. Equally important were the *polo y servicios*, a form of temporary forced labour used for the cutting and transport of timber and various shipyard tasks, including rowing war galleys. The second decisive factor was the growing community of Chinese (and to a lesser extent, Japanese) merchants and artisans in Manila after the Spanish conquest. They connected the new Spanish settlement with the export economies of Fujian and Guangdong in China, as well as with those of Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, Champa, Vietnam, Indonesia, and India. These markets provided the high-quality iron, copper, lead, and caulking materials needed for shipbuilding, as well as saltpeter, sulphur, prepared gunpowder, and complete weapons. These products came at much lower cost than those transported from Europe. This integration into Southeast Asian markets made the Philippine shipbuilding financially viable, and it soon outperformed the Spanish American shipyards in productivity and cost-efficiency.⁶

The historical significance of this industrial shift is difficult to exaggerate. It allowed the consolidation of the transpacific route, which from then on permitted the Mexican royal treasury to transfer annual subsidies of silver to the government in Manila, making it possible to purchase not only the Asian products needed to build ships, but also to acquire the ever-larger quantities of luxury products demanded by the growing economic and cultural elites of Mexico City, Lima, and many other cities in the Americas and Europe. It also

helped to monetarise the Chinese economy, since the Ming government required large quantities of silver, which it did not produce, to meet its fiscal requirements. The galleon trade also allowed the sustained biological and cultural exchange that defined the populations and culture of the Philippines and Spanish America, and indeed of the rest of the modern world.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Philippines served as a bridgehead for an aggressive expansionist policy into Southeast Asia. The initial Spanish ambition to conquer China was abandoned as soon as detailed intelligence about the resources and capabilities of that empire were received, but military and naval expeditions were launched against Muslim Brunei, Cambodia, and Thailand. The Spanish established military outposts in Taiwan and the Celebes, and occupied Guam in the Mariana Islands as a refitting base for the Acapulco-bound galleons. This process of territorial expansion had the single objective of attaining a deeper integration into the economic networks of Southeast Asia, and it was carried out in parallel with diplomatic efforts to establish permanent shipyards in Ayutthaya in Thailand and Guangdong in China. Trade agreements with Portuguese settlements in India and China

Fig. 1 Detail of *Portrait of Hasekura Tsunenaga* (cat. 4) showing the galleon *San Juan Bautista*, built in Japan, which carried the ambassador to Mexico in 1613.



were also sought during this period. A permanent economic connection with China was established through the constant migration of merchant communities from Fujian and Guangdong to the Philippines.⁷

Attempts were also made to establish a permanent connection with Japan. The Edo court offered to open a Japanese port for direct trade with the Philippines, with the added purpose of serving as a refitting base for the Manila galleons bound for Acapulco. Spanish shipwrights and pilots trained Japanese builders in galleon construction, and two Japanese embassies were received in Mexico and Spain. The second of these embassies sailed in 1613 in a Japanese-built galleon, the *San Juan Bautista*, constructed with the collaboration of Spanish envoy Sebastián Vizcaino (fig. 1). However, these overtures threatened the privileges enjoyed by the Manila elites over transpacific trade, and they did not prosper. Soon all collaboration with the Spanish Philippines was banned by the Japanese government, which chose to maintain direct trade only with one European nation, the Dutch.⁸

The shipbuilding industry in crisis

The territorial consolidation and mercantile expansion that took place during the first half of the seventeenth century created enormous pressure on the shipbuilding industry of the Philippines, which had to provide not only the transpacific galleons, but also various types of ships required for warfare and private trade within Asia. This imposed great strain on the human and material resources of the islands, but also encouraged the Spanish to look to building ships abroad. Many Spanish officials saw this as an urgent necessity, due to the dangerous social instability generated by practically every woodcutting and shipbuilding campaign undertaken in Luzon and the Visayas.

The exploitation of the indigenous population was a major problem that threatened the very existence of Spanish rule over the Philippines. The crown had prohibited the use of slave labour in 1574 and issued the first workforce regulations in 1576. However, the officers in charge of woodcutting and shipbuilding operations seldom honoured such obligations, and the *vandalas* and ordinary taxation imposed a permanent economic strain on the people of Luzon. By royal edict in 1609, the crown formally regulated shipbuilding practices, prohibiting unpaid labour and forced recruitment of any kind. Nevertheless, these regulations also stated that forced woodcutting and shipyard labour could be tolerated in cases of public urgency or strategic interest. Since the very existence of the Spanish settlements depended on the construction of ships for war and

trade, galleon construction fell precisely within those two exemptions.⁹ As a result, oppression continued, and violent indigenous rebellions erupted regularly. It has even been stated that the Philippines were never fully conquered by Spain.¹⁰

The pressure on the Philippine shipyards was aggravated by the permanent state of war with the Muslims of Mindanao, who frequently raided coastal towns under Spanish rule and targeted carpenters and other indigenous workers. Also, since much of the indigenous population was gifted as sailors or carpenters, the regular recruitment of galleon crews added to the strain. After 1600, attacks by the Dutch added to these problems, and there was a permanent scarcity of qualified Spanish shipwrights. The 1609 edict permitted the hiring of Chinese specialists for shipyard tasks under the supervision of Spanish officers, but this only aggravated the social tensions within the shipbuilding industry. The Chinese community was more numerous than the Spanish and better paid than the natives, with the result that the Chinese in the Philippines were periodically attacked. There were also violent Chinese mutinies, fuelling fears of an invasion from China.¹¹

By 1619, influential Spanish officers advocated the transfer of the shipbuilding industry from the Philippines to other Asian countries to prevent further mistreatment of the indigenous community. Hernando de los Ríos Coronel argued that ships built in India would be cheaper and more durable than those built in the Philippines, potentially saving large sums for the Manila treasury. He asked the Spanish king to allow the purchase of ships in Bengal and Cochin, where they were made of an “incorruptible wood” and fitted with rigging made of *kayiru* (*cayro*) a fibre he believed to be superior in quality and lower in cost to the abaca (banana fibre) used in the Philippines. He expected to sell *kayiru* in Manila to sustain the purchase of further ships abroad. These arguments give the impression that Ríos Coronel was in fact attempting to obtain royal sanction for a mercantile venture in Portuguese India under the guise of relief measures for the indigenous population of the Philippines.¹²

But Ríos Coronel was not the only high-ranking official to support the end of the shipbuilding industry in the Philippines. Also in 1619, the master shipwright of Cavite, Sebastián de Pineda, wrote to the Council of the Indies in Spain stating that building ships in India was the best remedy for the permanent state of crisis in the Philippine shipyards. By 1617, a Spanish warship built in India was stationed at Cavite, among those built in the Philippines. Indian-built galleons were used in regional armadas during the 1620s, together with other ships of unknown origin but possibly built elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The possibility

of sub-contracting galleon construction to India was mentioned by these and other officials, but the purchase of slaves and shipbuilding materials was also frequently presented as a remedy for the penuries of the industry. There were also frequent criticisms of the quality of the timber found in the Philippines, a rather surprising claim given all the evidence to the contrary, including observations made by the early chroniclers on the natural resources of the islands.

It may be possible that the real motive for transferring the shipbuilding industry abroad lay in the possibilities for an even deeper integration into the markets of Southeast Asia. This would explain the surprising yet recurrent criticisms against Philippine timber made by different Spanish officials throughout the seventeenth century. But there might have been more than that. The Spanish crown imposed strict regulations on the size of the Manila galleons with the objective of reducing what appeared to be a never-ending increase in the Asian products introduced in Spanish America. The economic elites of Spain began to fear that their supposed monopoly over Spanish American markets was threatened. Controlling the size of the galleons was the most immediate means of curtailing what was often described as contraband, but stricter controls over the volumetric units of measurement used by the Philippine shipbuilding industry (*toneladas*) were also introduced. This had no effect on the appetite of the Spanish American elites for luxury Asian products – a taste reflected in the very large size of the Philippine-built galleons. In fact, their tonnage greatly surpassed the limits authorised by the crown. This was possible because the Philippine shipyards operated at the service of the investors of the transpacific route and were almost completely independent of the interventionist policies set by Madrid.

As a result, the whole system was frequently denounced as detrimental to the interests of the crown and favourable only to the merchants of Spanish America and the Philippines.¹³ This might explain the repeated attempts made to transfer the transpacific shipbuilding industry to Cambodia and Thailand during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where it could operate outside the vigilance of the crown’s officials. Several ships built in those countries are well documented, but there might have been many more that left no trace in the archives. There is also the possibility that many galleons were purchased complete in India through Portuguese merchants, as had been suggested by Ríos Coronel and Sebastián de Pineda. This would explain the apparent secrecy of the Manila exchequer about the origin of many ships that served on the transpacific route in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Reforms in the Philippine shipbuilding industry and the end of the Manila galleon trade

In 1700, the Bourbon dynasty ascended the Spanish throne and initiated a policy of much tighter control over transpacific trade. The new monarchy soon started to build a new, centralised naval system in all its domains, with the result that shipbuilding became increasingly controlled by the state.¹⁴ In this context, old fears about Asian products saturating Spanish American markets, to the detriment of the supposed monopoly of Seville and Cádiz, were brought to the forefront. Soon new regulations aimed at limiting the size of the Manila galleons were passed and the fiscal procedures of transpacific trade were once again denounced as fraud against the crown. Despite all this, the Philippine shipbuilding industry continued to operate almost completely independently from central imperial policies: very large galleons, far surpassing the limits in tonnage imposed by Spanish legislation, were launched in the first twenty years of the eighteenth century. In parallel to this was a serious attempt to transfer the industry to Thailand and Tonkin in Vietnam.

During the 1720s and 1730s, important changes took place in Philippine shipbuilding. A major social reform was attempted by the crown through limitations on the control which private agents had over regional administration, while strict measures for the supervision and accounting of royal funds in the Philippine shipyards were also imposed. In 1723, new shipbuilding legislation, authored by the Basque shipwright Antonio de Gaztañeta e Iturrizalza, was received in Manila and proclaimed in the shipbuilding towns of Luzon and the Visayas.

For the first time in the history of the transpacific route, the crown succeeded in limiting the size of the galleons, albeit for a short period. As part of these policies, the independence of the Mexican investors on the galleon route was temporarily reduced through new limits on the volume of Asian goods imported to Mexico and the amount of private silver shipped back to the Philippines. In addition, stricter rules for contracting public works, partly aimed at the shipbuilding industry, were introduced in the 1730s. More far-reaching legislation was issued in 1736 and 1738, aimed at separating the lower levels of Spanish regional administration from woodcutting and shipbuilding operations. As a result, the religious orders were given authority over shipbuilding workers and new standards for working hours and payment of salaries were imposed.

The tighter controls on the Philippine shipbuilding industry during the 1730s might explain why plans for building ships in Thailand were relaunched in

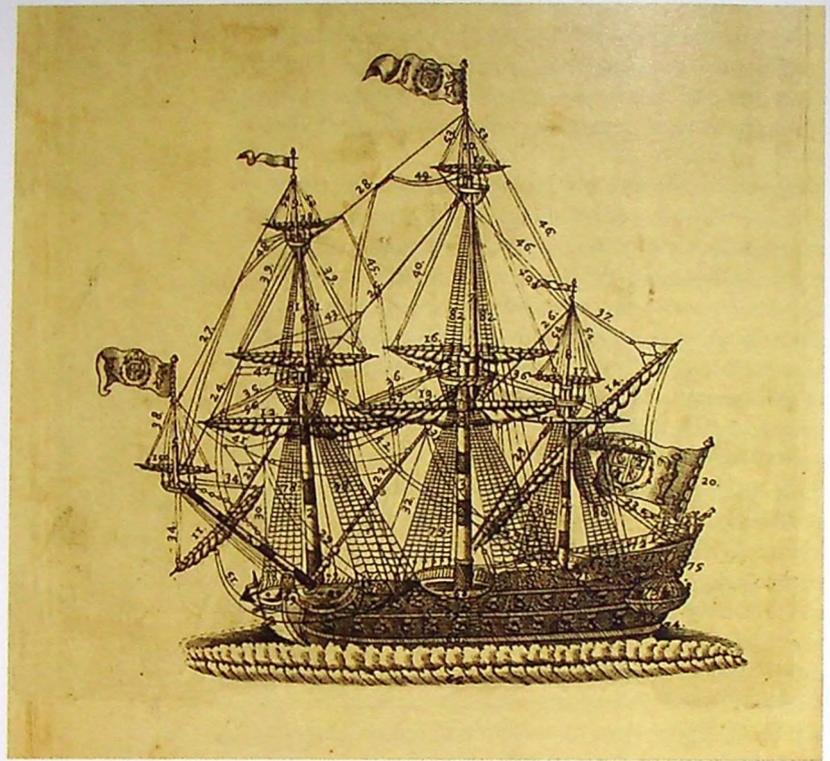


Fig. 2

Diagram of a Manila galleon. González Cabrera Bueno 1734, pl. 11.

the following decade. They might also explain the 1734 publication in Manila of Joseph González Cabrera Bueno's *Navegación especulativa, y práctica*, a highly detailed shipbuilding treatise, which, for the first time in the history of the galleon route, included specifications and scantlings for the construction of the Manila galleons.¹⁵ González Cabrera Bueno's prototype was a large 70-gun two-decker that literally doubled the limitation in tonnage set by the crown. The design of the ship was based on Gaztañeta's legislation, but the proportions and measurements were altered to suit the needs of the transpacific route, especially in giving the ship a distinctively tall configuration. One of the most original features of 1734 treatise was the detailed sail plan, which represented the patterns used by the Philippine shipwrights (fig. 2). It is worth pointing out that European shipbuilding treatises of this era did not include descriptions of the sail plan, a fact that highlights the originality and relevance of this book. Indeed, González Cabrera Bueno's 70-gun ship shows not only the technological sophistication and originality of the transpacific run, but also the high degree of independence enjoyed by its investors and shipwrights.

During the 1740s and 1750s the tendency towards building very large ships continued unabated,

despite continued complaints by royal officials.¹⁶ In 1765, however, the situation changed. The Spanish royal navy began direct trade between Spain and the Philippines by sailing through the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope. This ended the virtual monopoly held by the merchants of Mexico City and Manila. In the last years of the eighteenth century, the Spanish navy was permanently stationed in the Philippines, further increasing the crown's control over shipbuilding. By then, however, the conditions that had fostered the creation and stability of the galleon route were rapidly changing. British industrial products flowed steadily into Spanish American markets, and the restricted Chinese economy began to be trespassed by the British East India Company. In addition, the international value of silver began a steady decline, further undermining the economic foundations of the Manila galleon trade.¹⁷ Soon the whole Spanish empire was shaken by revolution and in 1815, the last Manila galleon, named *El Magallanes*, left Acapulco without a significant silver return cargo. The age of the galleon was over and a new age of globalisation was about to begin.

- 1 Flynn and Giráldez 2008, pp. 359–87.
- 2 For a detailed description of these types of ships, see Olesa Muñido 1968.
- 3 Valdez-Bubnov 2021a.
- 4 Valdez-Bubnov 2019a.
- 5 Martínez Shaw and Mola 2014.
- 6 Peterson 2014.
- 7 Sales-Colín Kortajarena 2013.
- 8 Tremml-Werner 2015.
- 9 Valdez-Bubnov 2017a.
- 10 Mawson 2023.
- 11 Valdez-Bubnov 2019b.
- 12 Valdez-Bubnov 2021b.
- 13 Valdez-Bubnov 2020.
- 14 Valdez-Bubnov 2018.
- 15 González Cabrera Bueno 1734. Valdez-Bubnov 2017b.
- 16 Valdez-Bubnov 2021c.
- 17 Mejía Cubillos 2011.

“The Spaniards buy them to bring to Mexico in New Spain” Chinese export porcelain for Mexico

William R. Sargent

Manila, with its access to markets in Java, Malaya, India, and China, offered merchants easy access to luxury goods produced throughout Asia. The Manila galleons shipped these products to Mexico, the Americas, and Spain. On the Manila-to-Acapulco journey, the ships were laden with porcelains at the bottom of the hull to stabilise them and to protect the more valuable silks, tea, spices, lacquerware, and other perishable commodities stacked above them from water damage. On the western journey, the galleons carried silver, including the annual stipend of silver for the government of the Philippines, the *situado*, along with other goods from Spain and Mexico.

Porcelains brought from China to Manila were sourced through Chinese merchants in Manila's Parián, the district where Chinese were permitted to live (fig. 1). These represented a small percentage of the commodities shipped across the Pacific, with tea and silk making up the vast majority.



Fig. 1 View of the Parián of Manila, 1792. Juan Ravenet (Italian, 1766–around 1821). Grisaille watercolour. Museo Naval, Madrid.

The Florentine merchant and traveller Francesco Carletti (1573–1636) wrote in the early seventeenth century that in the Philippines,

The Chinese who are from the province of Cineo come every year in fifty or more ships laden with raw silk, other silk decorated on pieces of velvet, satin, damasks, taffetas and many cotton cloths, musk, sugar, porcelains and various other merchandise, all of which are for trade with the Spaniards, who buy them to bring to Mexico in New Spain.¹

The first two galleons to arrive in Acapulco in 1575, the *Santiago* and the *San Juan*, carried cargoes that included twelve pieces of silk and 22,300 porcelains.² Following the California coast because of the trade winds, galleons would arrive in Acapulco on the west coast of Mexico, after a messenger who had disembarked in San Blas alerted the town to the galleon's arrival. The town bustled with activity for the two or three months between the arrival of the ships and their return to Manila. Government officials and merchants from all corners of New Spain and Peru arrived to purchase goods before the remainder was transported across land through Mexico City and Puebla to Veracruz and onward to Seville or Cádiz on the New Spain fleet.

Ships were often overloaded with goods, creating dangerous situations when rough seas were encountered.³ In 1696 the captain of the *San José* wrote, "several [jars] were cast into the sea full of pepper, porcelain, and other goods of value."⁴ Porcelain is often the only evidence of a wreck's cargo since other materials quickly disintegrate in salt water.

A shipping manifest, known as the *libro de sobordo*, would list cargos, but it could not be entirely trusted. To avoid taxes some materials were smuggled and others were listed as gifts, which were not taxable. This allowed, for example, a porcelain service of 1,242 pieces to be received as a tax-free gift to "His Excellency, Señor conde de Revillagigedo," a military officer and viceroy of New Spain from 1789 to 1794.⁵

Merchants descending on Acapulco would take the majority of goods to their buyers, from as far north as present-day New Mexico, Alabama, and Florida, and as far south as Peru.⁶ The missions established throughout the northern outposts of New Spain were long a market for Chinese goods.⁷ Still more would be sent to Puebla and Mexico City where goods were sold in the *Parián* in the southwest corner of the Plaza Mayor (fig. 2).

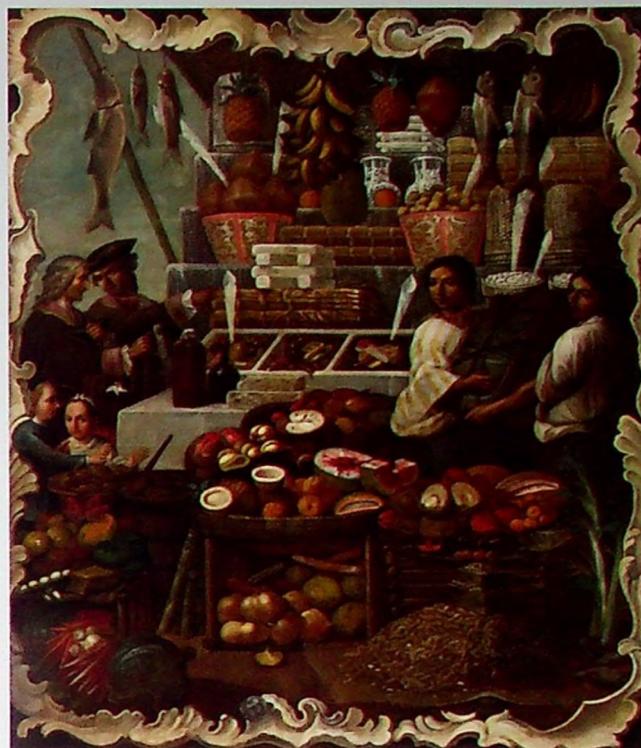


Fig. 2

Parián Market Scene. Mexico, around 1775. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional de Historia, Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City.

Archaeological finds

Only a small number of surviving porcelains of the many thousands imported to Mexico have retained any significant provenance. Instead, we must look at sherds from archaeological sites and shipwrecks, as well as inventories and archival accounts to get a better understanding of the story of Chinese porcelain in Mexico.

Archaeological recoveries from the Zócalo area of Mexico City include Chinese ceramics from 1521, the earliest era of Spanish colonial settlement, and evidently brought from Spain. Other local sites yielding Chinese ceramics include the Templo Mayor, the National Palace, the Animas Chapel of the Metropolitan Cathedral, and surrounding streets.⁸ The majority of Chinese ceramic sherds from the Convent of San Jerónimo in Mexico City, founded in 1585, were blue-and-white Wanli (1573–1620) porcelains, while 20% were from the Transitional period (1620–83, the years during and after the transition from the Ming to Qing dynasty), and 15% from the Kangxi reign (1662–1722).⁹ Of course, sherds have also been found elsewhere, including along the Camino Real from Acapulco to Mexico City and the north (see essay by Junco).

Some galleons bound for Mexico never made it across the Pacific Ocean. The wreck of the *San Diego*, sunk in an engagement with Dutch warships

in December 1600 near Fortune Island off the coast of Luzon, Philippines, yielded more than 500 Wanli blue-and-white kraakware and Zhangzhou porcelains.¹⁰ Over half the recovered porcelains from the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, which sank off the Mariana Islands near Saipan in 1638, were blue-and-white kraakware plates, bowls, bottles, jars, covered cups, and wine pots.¹¹

Ships sailing from Veracruz to Spain were also subject to the dangers of the sea. The *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* sank near Florida in 1622.¹² The *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia y Pura Concepción* sank off Santo Domingo in 1641, and the *San José y las Animas* was part of a fleet that sank in a hurricane off the Florida Keys in 1733.¹³ All carried Chinese porcelain. Seventeenth-century inventories of Mexico City's consulate merchants show that they purchased large quantities of goods from the Manila galleons, including Chinese porcelains, especially jars, bottles, vases, plates, cups, and "chocolate cups," some of which were mounted in silver in Mexico.¹⁴

Porcelain forms and decorations for New Spain

Jars and large covered vases from China were called *tibors* and range in size from large storage jars to enormous decorative vases with lids. The construction of the largest such pieces was described by the French Jesuit François Xavier d'Entrecolles who between 1712 and 1722 was stationed in Jingdezhen, China, where such pieces were made.

I have however seen Designs executed which were said to be impracticable; these were Urns above three Foot high without the Lid... these Urns were made of three Pieces, but joined together so neatly that the Place of their Union could not be discover'd; I was told at the same time that out of twenty-four eight only succeeded. These Works were bespoke by the Merchants of Canton for the European Trade.¹⁵

Monumental jars found great favour in Mexico and throughout Europe. Four large jars on stands were in the sacristy of San Francisco Xavier in Satevó, Chihuahua, Mexico, in 1749, and were recorded as costing 400 pesos even though two were damaged. Four jars were recorded as having been used in the sacristy at Cucurpe, Sonora, in 1749; two at Saguaripa in 1751; one at Bacadéhuachi in 1766; and two in Ures, Sonora, in 1766.¹⁶ One of the few visual records in Mexico of such a large jar is the portrait of 1883 by Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez of *Susana Robert de Sánchez Solís* which shows a Chinese Imari *tibor* on a shelf (fig. 3). Smaller Chinese jars with a bulbous shoulder and



Fig. 3 Susana Robert de Sánchez Solís, 1883. Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez (Mexican, 1824–1904). Oil on canvas. Museo del Retrato Felipe Santiago Gutiérrez, Toluca.

narrow body (*guan* in Chinese, *tibors medianos* in Spanish) were common storage containers often fitted with metal lids to protect everything from wine to water, and cocoa beans to spices (cats. 42, 66).¹⁷ The earliest record of a *tibor* in Mexico might be "un tibor de loza de China alto" (a tall jar of Chinese porcelain) in the 1565 inventory of the Mexico City estate of Juan de Cervantes Casaus (d. 1564).¹⁸ Seven such jars with lids were used for holy water in the mission house at Saguaripa in 1751.¹⁹ A pair of these jars belonging to the Count of San Bartolomé de Xala (1738–1800) were recorded as having locks.²⁰

Among the most consequential *tibors medianos* are those with the emblem of the order of Augustinians, of which about twelve examples are known (cat. 36). Philip II of Spain (r. 1556–1598) granted the use of the arms, a double-headed eagle astride a heart pierced with arrows and surmounted by a coronet, to the Augustinians in the Philippines. Although that history might imply they were made for the Philippines, no sherds have been found there to indicate a specific market and no historical records have yet been uncovered to support one market over another.

Only four large blue-and-white dishes with the arms of the order of Augustinians are recorded. As with the jars, they combine Western and Chinese motifs, reflecting the melding of traditional designs from each culture. The market for these wares is contested, but there is a possibility they were made for Mexico, as so many have histories in the area.²¹

Without question, the most consequential influence of Chinese porcelain on the ceramic traditions of Mexico was the production of blue-and-white earthenware in Puebla, a ceramic technique brought from Talavera, in Spain, and often referred to by that name. A range of wares was produced, but one of the most common was a *tibor medianos*, often fitted with metal lid.²² Both the Chinese originals (cat. 42) and the Puebla jars (cat. 41) fitted with metal lids were frequently called *chocolateros*.

Few Chinese porcelains are recorded in paintings from Mexico, but there is one which depicts the use of porcelain in the shape of European glass bottles (cat. 39) being used to hold flowers on an altar. The eighteenth-century painting *Christ of Chalm* by Pedro López Calderón represents an altar with a crucifix flanked by candlesticks and two blue-and-white porcelain bottles filled with flowers (fig. 4). These bottles are derived from glass examples which were originally made to contain alcoholic beverages, with their square sides facilitating compact shipment.

The inventory of Gaspar de Borja Velasco (1580–1645), archbishop of Seville, lists 47 porcelains, including six *jicaras* (small Chinese porcelain cups), a term frequently mentioned alongside chocolate and chocolate pots in inventories. The 1642 Madrid inventory of the Marquise of Hinojosa included a chocolate service with ten small chocolate trays from the Indies, along with other Asian porcelains, furniture, and screens.²³ The 1644 inventory of the Marquis of Cadereyta, viceroy of New Spain, listed a pine sideboard with “Five small porcelain cups (*pocitos*) for hot chocolate” among its many other porcelains.²⁴

A quintessential form produced in Chinese porcelain for the market in New Spain and Spain was a saucer with a short, attached cup commonly referred to as a *trembleuse* or *temblorosa* (trembling, shaking), and also as a chocolate stand (cats. 70, 71, 74).²⁵ The attached cup would hold a taller cup while allowing the saucer to be used for pastries. The later Spanish term *mancerina* is the result of an apocryphal story associated with Marquis of Mancera (1622–1715), the viceroy of New Spain who was said to have spilled chocolate because of a tremor in his hands.²⁶

Porcelains recovered from shipwrecks are typical of wares made during the early years of the Manila

galleon trade, such as those of the *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* (1638), the *Nuestra Señora de la Vida* (1620, off the Isla Verde, Mindoro Island, Philippines) and the *Nuestra Señora de la Limpia y Pura Concepción* (1641, sailing from Veracruz to Spain).²⁷ Decorations of Chinese porcelains in blue and white followed the prevailing popular patterns made for the Southeast Asian trade at the time, broadly described today as kraakware and Transitional wares. Kraakware is a term used to define wares brought to Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on carracks, three- or four-masted Portuguese ships. These wares were often decorated in lappet panels with plant, flower, and animal or bird motifs. Transitional wares, represented by more unrestrained figural decorations, are those made between the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644 and the destruction of kilns, and the rebuilding of kilns and commerce in Jingdezhen in the 1680s.

Fig. 4

Christ of Chalm, 18th century. Pedro López Calderón (Mexican). Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional de Historia, Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City.



Once the global sea trade was firmly established, commissions for special designs were requested, first in blue and white. A large number of flasks, derived from a metal or glass form from western Asia, were made around 1575–1640 and bear the arms of Castile and León quartered by a cross. The long-held assumption that they were ordered for the Spanish kings Philip II and Philip III is now in doubt. The arms were commonly used on Spanish silver and gold coins minted in Mexico or Peru between 1573 and 1619, so it is more likely the flasks were decorated after the coins and with no intentional connection to royalty.²⁸

While the majority of porcelains exported to New Spain fall within a broad category of popular patterns available throughout the world's markets, some can be identified as made specifically for the Spanish market. The use of a double-headed eagle found on a Chinese Imari plate (cat. 38) derives from the arms of the House of Habsburg and was a symbol of the Spanish monarchy. A sherd of a Chinese Imari cup with the double-headed eagle, dating to 1662–1722, was found in the Zócalo area in Mexico City, confirming that such patterns were

available to locals.²⁹ That motif is also found on many other objects in Mexico, including a silver missal stand of the early eighteenth century (cat. 18), a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century cope of Chinese export brocade silk, and many tin-glazed ceramics from Puebla.

Porcelains indisputably made for the Spanish market in the Philippines and Mexico are those with coats of arms that can be confirmed by ownership and substantiated by inventories and archival records. The earliest known armorial acquired through the galleon trade was a blue-and-white plate made for García Hurtado de Mendoza, the Marquis of Cañete (1535–1609), viceroy of Peru from 1590 to 1596 (fig. 5).³⁰ The viceroy was so keen on trade with China that he tried to send a ship laden with silver directly to China, but the venture failed.³¹ As with nobility throughout Europe, dinner sets and other porcelain bearing the family's coat of arms were fashionable. One of the earliest armorials in polychrome enamels was made for Fernando de Valdés y Tamón (1681–1741), governor-general of the Philippines from 1729 to 1739. It is highly likely that he also ordered a porcelain service that belonged to Philip V of Spain (1683–1746).³²

Fig. 5

Plate with the arms of García Hurtado de Mendoza IV, Marquis of Cañete and Teresa de Castro y de la Cueva. China, Jingdezhen, ca. 1590s. Porcelain. Tom Lurie Collection.



Another Philippine connection is a service made around 1765 to 1770 for José Raón Gutiérrez (1703–1773), who was born in Spain and died in Manila. He was governor of Panama and became governor of the Philippines in 1765. A document for the admission of his son to the Order of Santiago dated 1776 stated, “Likewise, he showed us many jewels with the Arms, among them two Services, one Silver, and the other China, and on each Piece, the Coat of Arms is engraved.”³³

Ceramic tureens in the form of animals were popular throughout Europe, and were available in earthenware and porcelain from factories on the continent, as well as in porcelain from China. Inexplicably, all Chinese export animal-form tureens with coats of arms are for the Spanish market and would have been acquired either in the Philippines or through the galleon trade. A pair of carp tureens carry arms attributed to Domingo Esteban de Olza y Domezán (1723–1816). He was born in Pamplona, Spain, and became first commissioner of the Royal Company of the Philippines in 1785 (cat. 47). A goose tureen with stand (cat. 48) was possibly ordered by Pedro Lamberto de Asteguieta (1706–1775), who settled in the Philippines around 1742, where he became consul in 1773. His nephew, Justo Pastor de Asteguieta y Díaz de Sarralde (1744–1822), moved to the Philippines in 1773 to help his uncle manage his businesses and went on to become a wealthy merchant who was known to have presented porcelains as gifts.³⁴

An example of an armorial dating from the 1770s was made for a descendant of Juan de Cervantes Casaus (1510–1564), one of the first settlers of Mexico City. The armorial, which used the motto “Ex Antiquis,” is placed over the trophies of war, a frequent motif for armorials for the Spanish market from about 1769 to 1792.³⁵ A later example, from about 1783, for José de Gálvez (1720–1787), was recorded in the 1784 shipment of the frigate *Asunción* which sailed from Manila to Cádiz, arriving 5 July 1784. The service consisted of 768 pieces, including 625 dinner pieces and a tea and coffee service of 143 pieces.³⁶ Gálvez purchased a post as governor of Zamboanga in the Philippines in 1750, but never filled the position, instead taking posts in Madrid. From 1765 to 1771 he served as inspector general of New Spain.³⁷

Another category produced specifically for Mexico is the series of commemorative pieces made after medals designed by Gerónimo Antonio Gil (1732–1798). He designed over 25 medals for municipalities, institutions, and individuals to commemorate the 1788 accession and enthronement of Charles IV.³⁸ Seven of the medals produced in 1789, 1790, and 1791 were used as sources for Chinese porcelain services.³⁹ Among the Gil medals copied by Chinese enamellers, one was for Mexico City. The city ordered six different medals of varying sizes and alloys to be given away as part of the celebration. The commission for one (cat. 49) has the arms of the city engraved on the reverse and is dated 1789. Another was for Puebla, which ordered a proclamation medal with the city arms for a celebration held in 1790 (cat. 50). The arms, granted by Charles V and issued in Valladolid in 1538, depict the mission church flanked by its guardian angels.⁴⁰

Mexico and the China trade

The introduction of porcelain to Europe was initially through the Silk Road – the Eurasian trade route which brought luxury goods from China across a four-thousand-mile land route. This slow and laborious journey was superseded by the Portuguese when they discovered a sea passage in the fifteenth century. Spain followed Portugal, establishing separate and distinct ways to obtain the luxuries desired all across Europe. The competition was on for dominance in Asian trade, as the Netherlands, England, France and others joined in efforts to acquire silk, tea, porcelain, lacquerware, and so many other unfamiliar and alluring treasures.

What was acquired from Asia for each of these countries during any given era shared similarities inherent in the technologies available. They also shared a sense of style and cross-cultural

influences. The study of Chinese export porcelain for the Spanish market has garnered serious scholarly attention in the last several decades and promises to bring to light yet more critical information on our understanding of the complexities of the Manila galleon trade and its commercial importance and artistic influences.

- 1 Rodríguez 2009, p. 46.
- 2 Schurz 1985, p. 71.
- 3 Brown 2009.
- 4 Bonta de la Pezuela 2014, p. 36.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 6 New Mexico: Pierce 2012, pp. 155–82; Shulsky 1994, pp. 13–18. Alabama: Shulsky 2004, pp. 286–88; Shulsky 1996, no. 4, pp. 10–14. Sherds representing 44 vessel types of the Kangxi period (1662–1722) have been recovered since 1989. Florida: Deagan 1987, pp. 25–116. Peru: Kuwayama 2009; Krahe 2016, pp. 77–79.
- 7 Bargellini 2009.
- 8 Kuwayama 1997, p. 22.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.
- 10 Carré et al. 1994, pp. 311–17.
- 11 Mathers et al. 1990, pp. 39–52.
- 12 Mathewson 1987, p. 58.
- 13 Marken 1994, pp. 31–32, 37–38.
- 14 Krahe 2016, p. 78 note 85.
- 15 Du Halde 1741, vol. 2, p. 349.
- 16 Bargellini 2009, pp. 191–99.
- 17 Krahe 2016, p. 78 note 85.
- 18 Fane 1996, p. 98, no. 17.
- 19 Bargellini 2009, p. 195.
- 20 Bonta de la Pezuela 2008, p. 142.
- 21 Sargent 2012, pp. 56–63.
- 22 Houston 2002, p. 230.
- 23 Krahe 2016, pp. 104, 108, 127.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 425.
- 25 Savage and Newman 1985, p. 76.
- 26 Houston 2002, p. 204.
- 27 Mathers et al. 1990, pp. 397–449.
- 28 Sargent 2012, pp. 348–50.
- 29 Rodríguez and Yajima 2007, pp. 5–8.
- 30 Collection of Tom Lurie, illustrated in Krahe 2016, p. 79, no. 22.
- 31 Krahe 2016, p. 78.
- 32 Conde y Cervantes 2014b, p. 116.
- 33 Sargent 2014, p. 126.
- 34 Sargent 2012, pp. 376–79.
- 35 Sargent 2014, p. 128.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 131–33.
- 38 Díez de Rivera 2005, p. 61.
- 39 Sargent 2014, pp. 141–61.
- 40 *Ibid.*, pp. 144–45, no. 40; pp. 154–55, no. 44.

Jar with the Augustinian emblem

China, Jingdezhen, 1590–1635

Porcelain, height 36.5 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2023-00547]

There are at least twelve known examples of this jar, with variations in form and design.¹ Philip II granted the privilege to use the heraldic device seen in the central motif to the Augustinians in the Philippines. This is the double-headed eagle surmounted by a coronet, astride a heart pierced with arrows, symbolising love and charity – the symbol of the Augustinians. There are no records to indicate the source of the order for these porcelains, and no sherds have been found in situ to indicate a specific destination. The number, variety in size and quality of these jars, and the inconsistencies of decoration between them suggest multiple orders, possibly over a wide period and for multiple markets and clients.

The architectural motif on the jars may be related to the traditional architecture of churches in Mexico: a church surrounded by a walled compound, at the corners of which are towers or chapels. At least 21 Augustinian monasteries survive in Mexico. The sixteenth-century Augustinian monastery in Cuitzeo, Mihoacán, uses both the double-headed eagle and the heart as a motif.

The property of the church in Mexico was secularised in 1834 after which many churches were stripped of most of their treasures. The churches and their treasures were sold, possibly explaining the lack of documentation for the history of these porcelains in Mexico. However, four jars with this motif may have Mexico as a provenance, while none of the others have a provenance that substantiates or refutes any theory of a possible market. An Augustinian jar in the Royal Collection Trust was listed in the 1866 Windsor Castle inventory. The short time between that date and the 1834 secularisation of church property in Mexico supports the theory that the jar may have come from Mexico. **WRS**

Prov: Diego Medrano Antiques. Álvaro Conde, Mexico City: Christie's, New York, 23 Jan. 2020 (lot 45). Jorge Welsh Works of Art, London. Ref: Sargent 2014, no. 24.

1 Sargent 2012, pp. 56–68. This entry is based on that text and Sargent 2014, no. 24.



37

Plate

China, Jingdezhen, 17th century

Porcelain, diameter 36.5 cm

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Museum purchase made possible by an anonymous donor, 2006 [AE86539]

The border of this plate incorporates the building often found on Augustinian porcelain (cat. 36), but the centre does not include the Augustinian emblem. Instead, guardian lions face each other under flowering trees, a motif also found in the jar. The border design includes a unique motif: two figures under what appears to be a merry-go-around with lion figures suspended on chains.

A number of late seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century Peruvian textiles include multifaceted designs that incorporate lions related to this plate's central motif. Confronting lions, each with one paw raised and jaws open, are found in textile panels in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Textile Museum, Washington, DC; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.¹ How Andean weavers came to incorporate such a distinctive Chinese motif into their work remains unknown. It would be simplistic to suggest that either the Augustinian jars or plates of this type provided a source. **WRS**

Prov: Sotheby's, London, 8 Nov. 2006 (lot 39).

Ref: Sargent 2012, no. 9.



1 Sargent 2012, p. 67.

Plate with a double-headed eagle

China, Jingdezhen, 1700–1725

Porcelain, diameter 21.5 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2019-00536]

Decorating the centre of this plate is a double-headed eagle, a motif foreign to the Chinese and obviously made for a Western customer, likely the Spanish or Mexican market where the symbol was associated with the Habsburg monarchy. A sherd of Imari-decorated Chinese porcelain with a double-headed eagle was found in the Zócalo, Mexico City.

The decoration is executed in Chinese Imari with an additional translucent green enamel. Chinese Imari is derived from the porcelain requested by Western traders from Japanese potters in Arita to fill orders no longer supplied by Jingdezhen after the fall of Ming dynasty. The unique palette of underglaze blue and overglaze red and gilding, now known as Imari (after the port from which they were shipped), found great favour in the absence of Chinese export porcelains. That pattern was then requested from Chinese potters once the kilns at Jingdezhen were re-established. The palette was used in armorials for the English market from about 1715 to 1720, and remained popular before being overshadowed by the use of opaque enamels in the 1730s. WRS

Prov: Christie's, New York, 21 Jan. 2003 (lot 280). Álvaro Conde, Mexico City: Christie's, New York, 10 April 2019 (lot 17).
Refs: Sargent 2014, no. 6.



39

Bottle

China, late 17th or 18th century

Porcelain, paint, height 21 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [07346-01]

Porcelain vessels of this shape were sometimes used as flower vases on altars in Mexico, as documented in eighteenth-century paintings. The bottle is decorated on four sides with landscapes or plum blossoms. The borders of each panel have been painted to imitate gilded mounts. The shape of the vessel is derived from European gin bottles, usually made in glass.

Prov: Templo de Santa Teresa, Mexico City. Ramón Alcázar, Mexico City.



40

Bottle

Mexico, Puebla, 18th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, height 14 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [07328-01]

Spanish potters introduced wheel-throwing to Mexico, as well as the technique of tin-glazing on earthenware. Initially, Mexican tin-glazed ceramics were strongly influenced by Spanish maiolica, but they soon began to imitate the appearance of blue-and-white Chinese porcelains. The name for this style of earthenware pottery, Talavera, comes from the important ceramic production centre of Talavera de la Reina in Spain.

The potters of Puebla began to make their own blue-and-white ceramics, which became extremely popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Pueblan ceramics were sold in Mexico and the Americas, but rarely imported to Europe or Asia.

The potters of Puebla added highly imaginative local themes to their vessels: native birds and animals, jaunty figures, and references to Mexican legends. CO



Mexico, Puebla, early 18th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, height 37 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05576]



Jar with metal cover

China, Jingdezhen, around 1700

Porcelain, metal, height 55 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-00272]



The decoration on the jar, or *tibor*, made in Puebla (cat. 41) consists of four medallions, which appear to be supported by white brackets. Dark blue lobes filled with vines occupy the spaces between them. The source of this distinctive design can be specifically traced to Chinese porcelain exported to Mexico, of which an example survives (cat. 42). The two vessels share several additional decorative elements such as the rich foliage rendered in dark and light blues glazes, and the forms encircling the base. The Chinese jar can be placed securely in Mexico since it was fitted with a locking metal cover so that it could be used as a chocolate jar (*chocolatero*) to store cacao beans.

The medallions on the Puebla jar depict parrots and figures carrying a stick. The costume consists of a checked shirt and trousers decorated with a floral motif. He seems to swagger jauntily through a field of vines and flowers. No similar figure appears on Chinese porcelain, making his identification as a Chinese merchant unlikely.¹ However, men in similar costumes appear in other vessels made in Puebla, for example, a man walking with a parasol (see p. 153). AC

Prov: cat. 42: James Carswell, Los Angeles.

Ref: cat. 41: M. Connors McQuade in Houston 2002, no. 70.

¹ M. Connors McQuade in Houston 2002, no. 70.

43

Jar

Mexico, Puebla, 18th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, height 28 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [06145-01]

The birds on this jar are painted in rich blue, achieved through cobalt glaze, in emulation of Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. The bird is a quetzal, a Mexican bird with long tail feathers which is much revered in Mesoamerican mythology. These are a Mexican adaptation of the pheasants or phoenixes often found on Chinese export porcelain.

An elegant earthenware vessel such as this would be called fine or white ceramic (*loza fina* or *loza blanca*) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



44

Jar

Mexico, Puebla, late 17th or early 18th century
Tin-glazed earthenware, height 55 cm
Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00080]

This thickly potted jar is decorated with lotus scrolls spiralling from the foot and shoulder, in thick, raised bands of blue. The composition shows a mix of motifs from Chinese ceramics, Indian chintz textiles, and European maiolica.

Prov: E&H Manners, London.



45

Basin

Mexico, Puebla, late 17th or early 18th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 60 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-00271]

The decoration on this Mexican basin borrows from seventeenth-century Chinese porcelains, but some aspects are specifically Mexican. The pagoda structure in the centre is Chinese in character, but next to it is a bird perched atop a cactus – a reference to the founding story of Tenochtitlan, the precursor to Mexico City.

The form of the basin, with deep, tapering sides and a wide rim, comes from Spanish pottery and ultimately from Islamic metal wares.

Prov: Dennis Lyon, Phoenix.



46

Basin

Mexico, Puebla, late 17th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 49 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05134]

This basin is one of the few surviving seventeenth-century Mexican works in multiple colours. The design depicts several types of birds, an eagle, quetzal, and turkey, all native to the Americas.

The birds and floral bouquets are painted in yellow, orange, ochre, and blue, outlined in black. Despite the popularity of blue-and-white decoration in the period from 1650 to 1750, the ceramic guild permitted this multicoloured style.

Ref: Houston 2002, no. 61.



Carp tureens

China, Jingdezhen, 1760–80

Porcelain, 33 × 47.6 cm

Gilded bronze mount: probably Spain, late 18th century

Peabody Essex Museum, Museum purchase made possible by an anonymous donor, 2006 [AE86557.1ab]

All documented examples of Chinese export carp tureens, whether armorial or not, were modelled to face in the same direction. The most closely related European fish tureens, which may have provided inspiration for this model, are those made in Chelsea about 1755. Although the Chelsea examples are modelled as plaice, not carp, their tails sweep up and their mouths are open, as in these tureens. Often, much is made of the symbolism of carp in Chinese culture, but such interpretation has little meaning in relation to these tureens, which were made for export – nothing of the carp's significance would have been known to their European owner.

The arms of the Olza family of Navarre, Spain, who ordered these remarkable tureens, are found on the cheek of each carp, below the left eye. Each tureen is attached to a gilt-bronze stand cast to resemble rock work strewn with gnarled branches, along with foliage including acanthus and a fruiting vine. The stands share many of the characteristics of eighteenth-century bronze mounts, while the style of chasing and the naturalistic treatment of the leaves and rocks suggest that these mounts may be Spanish.

Research has attributed the coat of arms to Domingo Esteban de Olza y Domezáin (1723–1816), who was born in Pamplona, Spain, and became first commissioner of the Royal Company of the Philippines in 1785, when it was established.¹ He held this post until 1797. A porcelain goose tureen and cover bears the same arms, and it is likely that the family ordered tureens in other animal forms such as boar's heads, ox heads, or cockerels. **WRS**

Prov: María Cristina de Borbón y de Muguero, duquesa de Marchena, by descent: Christie's, London, 7 Nov. 2006 (lot 277).
Refs: Díaz 2010, no. 36f. Sargent 2012, no. 205.



1 Díaz 2010, pp. 250–59.

Goose tureen and underdish

China, Jingdezhen, 1768–73

Porcelain, tureen: height 40.6 cm; underdish: width 49.5 cm

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Gift of the Copeland

Collection, 2001 [AE85909.a-c]

This tureen is from a large service that includes tureens on which the same coat of arms decorates the breasts of various animals and birds.¹ It takes the form of a long-necked goose with a white ring around its neck; the lobed and barb-edged platter is also decorated with the profile of the goose beneath another rendition of the coat of arms.

The arms are those of the Asteguieta family with the legend “Armas de Asteguieta”. This Basque family was recorded in Asteguieta in 1450, but later moved to the village of Legarda in the parish of Foronda, Alava. The coat of arms seen on this tureen was granted to the Asteguieta family in 1767.

The service may have been ordered by Pedro Lamberto de Asteguieta, who settled in the Philippines around 1742, where he became consul in 1773. His nephew, Justo Pastor de Asteguieta y Díaz de Sarralde, moved to the Philippines in 1773 to help his uncle manage his businesses and went on to become a wealthy merchant who owned many homes and is known to have presented porcelains to various people.

The Dutch East India Company ordered 25 long-necked goose tureens in 1765.² Examples for the French and Danish markets were also very popular, but they generally did not include arms in their decoration. Most animal-form tureens that bear coats of arms appear to have been made for the Portuguese and Spanish markets. WRS

Prov: Christie's, London, 16 March 1981 (lot 68). The Chinese Porcelain Company, New York (1997).

Ref: Sargent 2012, no. 206.



1 Numerous pieces from the service, including a boar's head tureen, are in the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, Madrid. For the rooster tureen, see Pinto de Matos 2011, vol. 3, no. 256.

2 Howard 1997, p. 140.

The accession of Charles IV in 1788

The accession of Charles IV in 1788 was enthusiastically celebrated throughout the Spanish empire. Several cities and institutions in New Spain commissioned medals to celebrate the event, with the new king's portrait on one side and the institutional arms on the other, usually with a celebratory inscription that called attention to their connections to the Spanish crown. Seven medals were reproduced in specially commissioned porcelain from China.

These commemorative events in a sense signalled the end of the Spanish empire, with Charles IV (1748–1819) as its last true monarch. A series of disasters culminated with his son forcing his abdication in 1808. Shortly afterwards, Napoleon took control of Spain, the galleon trade ended, and the Mexico War of Independence began.

The three medals seen on these porcelains were commissioned by Mexico City, Puebla, and the Royal Mining Tribunal, and were all designed by Gerónimo Antonio Gil, chief engraver of the Mexico City mint. The services included a range of plates, bowls, jugs, and tureens.¹ It is uncertain whether the porcelain was actually used at civic banquets to celebrate the royal accession, or whether the pieces were presented to prominent individuals.²

Mexico City celebrated the accession of Charles IV in December 1789, with six medals in differing sizes and alloys. The reverse of the medal appears on this platter (cat. 49): the coat of arms of Mexico City is surrounded by an inscription reading, "On his accession to the throne, Mexico City, on 27 December 1789."³

The city of Puebla celebrated the accession of Charles IV in January 1790 (cat. 2). Around the arms of Puebla de los Ángeles, as the town was then known, is the inscription, "On his joyous proclamation, La Ciudad de los Ángeles / 17 January 1790."⁴ Like the Mexico City service, the service consists of a range of vessels.⁵

The Royal Mining Tribunal of New Spain (Real Tribunal de Minería) was established in 1777 as a guild to support mining companies, principally through a school meant to improve mining technology. The guild was conceived by José de Gálvez (see cat. 52) who drew a generous annual pension from it.⁶ Silver mining was a critical component of Mexico's and Spain's wealth, as it provided the material used to trade with Asia. The inscription on the medal, reproduced on the plate (cat. 3), reads "The Royal Mines Tribunal of New Spain expresses its loyalty in this monument, made in Mexico, 1789."⁷ AC

Prov: cat. 50: Jorge Welsh Works of Art, London.

Refs: Díez de Rivera 2005. Cat 49: Ref: Rosa Dopazo Durán in Houston 2002, no. 58.

1 On these services, see: Díez de Rivera 2005; Díaz 2010, pp. 309–39; Sargent 2014, pp. 144–55; Conde y Cervantes 2014a.

2 Rosa Dopazo Durán in Houston 2002, no 58.

3 "EN SU EXALTACION AL TRONO LA CIUDAD DE MEXICO / EN 27 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1789". For the medal, see Díez de Rivera 2005, fig. 2. Sargent 2014, p. 144, lists the other vessels in the service.

4 "EN SU FELIZ PROCLAMACION LA CIUDAD DE LOS ANGELES / A 17 DE ENERO DE 1790". For the medal, see Díez de Rivera 2005, fig. 1.

5 Sargent 2014, p. 154.

6 Zepeda Cortés 2013, pp. 283–91.

7 "REG. FOD. TRIB. NOV. HISP. PRIM. HOC. FIDELIT. MONUM. CUDI. FECIT. MEXIC. M. D. CC. LXXXIX". For the medal, see Díez de Rivera 2005, fig. 5.

49

Serving plate with Mexico City's medal commemorating the accession of Charles IV

China, Jingdezhen, after 1789

Porcelain, 37 × 30 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [08185]



50

Bowl with Puebla's medal commemorating the accession of Charles IV

China, Jingdezhen, after 1790

Porcelain, diameter 22.5 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00044]

51

Plate with the medal of the Royal Mining Tribunal of New Spain commemorating the accession of Charles IV

China, Jingdezhen, after 1789

Porcelain, diameter 26 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [08228]



Plate with the arms of José de Gálvez

China, Jingdezhen, around 1775

Porcelain, diameter 24.5 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [08199]

This plate is from a service made for José de Gálvez (1720–1787), who served as inspector general (*visitador*) of New Spain, a powerful position second only to the viceroy, from 1765 to 1771. After he returned to Spain in 1772, he continued to play a major role in colonial administration as a member of the Council of the Indies.

José de Gálvez ordered two Chinese porcelain services, the first in 1775 and another immense set in 1783 which consisted of 768 pieces.¹ This plate belongs to the commission of 1775 of which several pieces survive, including four others in the Franz Mayer Museum.² Above the Gálvez coat of arms is a banner reading, “The arms of the most excellent Señor Gálvez”.³

José de Gálvez was known as an aggressive administrator who attempted to increase colonial revenue and improve the efficiency of New Spain, including the establishment of a mining guild (see cat. 51). However, he made enemies in Mexico and was accused of corruption.⁴ He was created marqués de la Sonora in 1785. His brother and nephew served as viceroys of New Spain (1783–84 and 1785–86). AC



1 Díaz 2010, p. 288; Sargent 2014, no. 34.

2 Díaz 2010, p. 244, nos. 35a–d; Sargent 2014, p. 131.

3 “ARMAS DEL EX-MO [excelentísimo] SENOR GALVEZ” period is in the inscription.”

4 For a study of Galv3ez’s complex role in the administration of New Spain and the Spanish empire, see Zepeda Cort3es 2013.

Plate with the arms of Solar de Tejada

China, Jingdezhen, around 1795 to 1800

Porcelain, diameter 25 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [08229]

The arms are of the Solar de Tejada family, which were first granted in 1460. The arms were used by many branches of the extended Solar de Tejada clan in both Spain and Mexico. The privilege to bear arms was renewed by Charles IV in May 1789, which may have been the occasion for commissioning porcelain from China. Two services date from around that time, with slight differences in the arms. A service from around 1790 shows multicoloured flags and an inscription below the arms.¹ This plate, from a later commission, has white flags with crescents. It may have been commissioned for the Ágrede family; Diego Ágrede y Martínez Cabezón, count of Casa de Ágrede, resided in Mexico from around 1790 and died there in 1838.²



1 Díaz 2010, pp. 304–8; Sargent 2014, p. 137.

2 Sargent 2014, p. 137; museum notes by Rosa Dopazo Durán.

Networked objects

17th-century Chinese ivory sculptures from the Philippines

Alan Chong



Fig. 1 Christ Child as Salvator Mundi. Philippines, mid-17th century. Ivory, partly painted. Asian Civilisations Museum [2015-00515].

In 1590, Domingo de Salazar (1512–1594), the first bishop of Manila, wrote to the king of Spain about the Chinese artists he encountered in the Philippines:

They have produced marvellous pieces, including some of the infant Jesus in ivory which I have seen could not be more perfect, and everyone who has seen them agrees. In supplying the churches with the images that they make, for which there had been a great need, and because of the skill they show in copying the images that came from Spain, I believe that before long we will not need those made in Flanders.¹

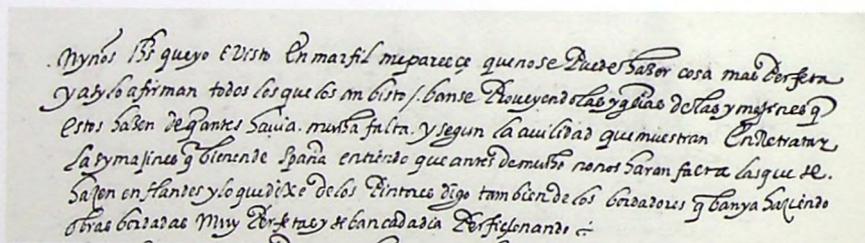


Fig. 2 Letter from Domingo de Salazar to the king of Spain, 24-6-1590. Archivo General de Indias, Seville.

While praising the ability of Chinese artists, this letter also clearly establishes a global context for ivories carved in the Philippines in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The ivories depended on trade between four continents – Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe – and brought together multiple cultures, religions, shippers, and consumers. Salazar specifically states that Chinese artists could not only imitate works brought from Spain, but could equal the production of Flemish artists, then the most celebrated ivory carvers in Europe. Nor is it a coincidence that Flanders and the Philippines are linked, for they were both possessions of Spain. Examples of the Flemish ivory art can be seen in the works of François Duquesnoy (fig. 3) and his contemporaries, which belong to the wider Baroque style in Europe.

It is telling that Salazar is primarily interested in the role of ivory sculptures in local Philippine churches as aids to devotion and conversion, rather than as works for export. Salazar's interest in Manila's Chinese community, moreover, relates to the larger goal of bringing Christianity to China itself, as he wrote in the same letter: "For a long time I have desired the conversion of that kingdom, and to link these islands with it, because one of the reasons which motivated me to accept this bishopric was the fact that these islands are very near China, and that many Chinese were living here."²

The bishop also noted that Chinese artists were talented in other media such as silver, gold, painting, embroidery, and even bookbinding.

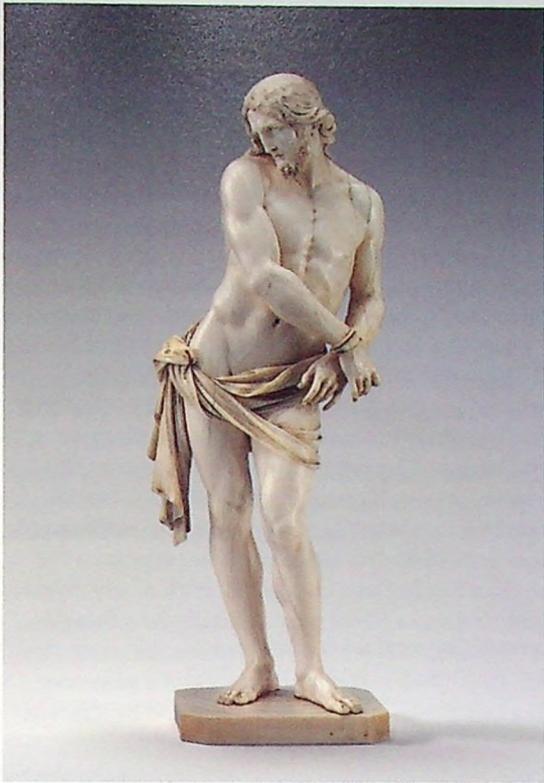


Fig. 3 *Christ Bound*, 1620s. François Duquesnoy (Flemish, 1597–1643). Ivory. National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Moreover, he suggests that they did not just copy European works carefully, but seemed to grasp the essence of their models: “they are so skilful and ingenious that after seeing some official piece made in Spain, they imitate it in very much their own way” (*la sacan muy al propio*). This phrase can be interpreted as meaning copying something very well, but it also suggests the transformation of a model into something new, with artists making it their own.

Celebration, condemnation, conversion: The Chinese in the Philippines

After Manila was established as the colonial capital of the Philippines in 1571, traders and workers soon arrived from China’s Fujian province. In 1581 a Chinese ghetto called the Parián was created outside the city walls to contain and control this growing community, which by the early 1600s numbered 30,000 – dwarfing the 2,000 Spaniards in Manila.³ The Chinese in Manila were called Sangleys, a term derived from the Hokkien *siang lai* or *siang lai* 常來, literally meaning “frequent visitor”, although it came to denote the Chinese who had settled in the Philippines whether they returned regularly to China or not. In 1590 Salazar estimated that there were between 6,000 and 7,000

Sangleys living in Manila, with more than 2,000 others going back and forth regularly to China.⁴

The origin of the term Sangley can be conclusively demonstrated by a drawing made shortly after 1591 by a Chinese artist working in Manila. A depiction of a Sangley couple, identified in both Chinese and Spanish (fig. 4), appears in the Boxer Codex, an illustrated description of the Philippines and surrounding region, probably commissioned by Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas, governor of the Philippines.⁵ In addition to descriptions of the region, often accompanied by suggestions as to conquest and occupation, the manuscript contains depictions of the peoples of Southeast Asia and China. The Sangley couple appears in a series of six Chinese types, ascending in status from merchant to general, scholarly official, prince, and emperor, accompanied by their assistants or spouses. Immediately before the Sangley figures is an uncaptioned depiction of a Chinese couple (fig. 5). The man holds a fan labelled *Guangdong* 廣東, which suggests that he is a merchant in China, in contrast to the Sangley trader living in the Philippines. Some writers have attempted to identify the uncaptioned couple as Sangley as well, but this seems implausible given the lack of



Fig. 4 A Sangley couple (“來常 Sangley”). Philippines, early 1590s. Bodycolour on paper. Boxer Codex, fol. 204r. University of Indiana Library, Bloomington.



5 A Chinese merchant couple. Philippines, early 1590s. Bodycolour on paper. Boxer Codex, fol. 202r. University of Indiana Library, Bloomington. The man holds a fan labeled 廣東 (Guangdong).

a caption and the manuscript's primary purpose of identifying a variety of people.⁶ Even more fanciful is the suggestion that the illustrations show pre-conversion Sangleys, followed by Christianised Sangleys. The faith of the figures is not mentioned anywhere in the manuscript, nor do they wear Christian symbols of any sort.⁷ The slight difference in the facial hair of the Sangley man in comparison with the Cantonese figure may be intended to show how migrants adapted to their new home.⁸

In his letters to the king, Bishop Salazar defended the Chinese and Filipino populations of the Philippines against mistreatment by the Spanish, but his view was very much the minority within Spanish officialdom, which saw the Chinese as a problem and a threat.⁹ The Spanish harboured a fear that the Chinese would attempt to take over the Philippines, a threat that seemed to be realised with the mass rebellion of 1603, which resulted in the massacre of some 23,000 people, mostly Chinese. This was followed by riots in 1639, 1682, and 1686. After the tragedy of 1603, the number of Chinese converts to Christianity increased sharply as many sought to escape injury or death.¹⁰ The Spanish also attempted to cap the number of Chinese in Manila, without success. In the course of the seventeenth century, as more Chinese converted to Christianity and intermarried with indigenous Filipinos, they settled in other districts around Manila such as Binondo.¹¹ It is within this highly conflicted society that exquisite Christian ivories were produced.

Did it matter to the owners of Christian ivories that the artists who made the works in Goa, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines were for the most part not Christian? The Christianisation of the Chinese community in the Philippines may have been a factor that made Philippine ivory sculptures more desirable than those produced in South Asia for the Portuguese. The Spanish were certainly more directly concerned with the conversion of Asian populations.

For centuries, the Roman Catholic church had been preoccupied with stories of the miraculous conversion of nonbelievers. Such narratives took hold in the Philippines as well. In 1640, a Sangley stonemason named Juan Imbin testified to his miraculous conversion after almost drowning. He claimed that the Virgin of Caysasay guided him to safety, a story which conflates aspects of the Virgin Mary with Mazu, the Chinese goddess of the sea who protects sailors.¹² Imbin proved his devotion by building a church in Taal dedicated to the Virgin. Hasekura Tsunenaga's visit to Europe in 1613 was so welcomed not just because he was Japanese but also because he had converted to Christianity (cat. 4).

Chinese ivory carving in the Philippines

The narrative of Christian conversion of the Chinese is integral to the earliest documented Sangley ivory in the Philippines. Dating from shortly after 1593, the commission encapsulates the fraught relationship between the Spanish and the Chinese. In October 1593 Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas (1519–1593) embarked on an expedition to conquer Ternate, a centre of spice production in the Maluku Islands. Shortly after the fleet set sail, the Chinese rowers mutinied and killed the governor.¹³ To memorialise the governor, his son, Luis Pérez Dasmariñas (around 1567–1603), commissioned an ivory sculpture of the Virgin. The intermediary in charge of the commission was Hernando de los Ríos Coronel, a naval captain who later became a priest. Diego Aduarte in 1640 described the ivory statue in the church of Santo Domingo as “A work of sovereign beauty (*soberana hermosura*) ... made by a Sangley, or a Chinese.”¹⁴ It is remarkable that the work was made by a Chinese artist in honour of a governor killed by Chinese sailors, compounded by the fact that his son would also be killed in the Chinese riots of 1603. Of course, there may have been few alternatives in the 1590s, given the dominance of the Chinese artists in ivory production.

Aduarte stresses the faith of both the artist and the commissioner. The unnamed Chinese ivory sculptor had long refused to be baptised despite his profession: “he was an infidel for many years, and although his job was always making things for the church, and the priests wanted him to become a Christian, he had always resisted, saying that he would not be baptised except before this Virgin whose image he had made.”¹⁵ He then travelled from Ilocos to Manila in order to be baptised in the presence of his statue. Here we learn not only of the artistic value of the ivory, but also its power in converting a Chinese artist. In subsequent years, other miracles were ascribed to the ivory, which was later named La Naval for its role in repelling a Dutch invasion by sea. The story of a Christian Chinese ivory artist is directly connected with that of Juan Imbin, the stonemason rescued by a vision of the Virgin.

These narratives from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries show that the conversion of Chinese artists was desired by some Spanish officials, although this does not mean that most Chinese artists converted. Aduarte estimated 4,700 Chinese had converted up to 1633,¹⁶ out of a total population of more than 30,000. The recent attempt to identify the artist of the Boxer Codex as a Christianised Sangley is completely unsupported.¹⁷ Given the importance of conversion narratives, especially in the circle of the two governors Pérez, who commissioned

the La Naval ivory and the Boxer Codex from Chinese artists, it is unlikely that the faith of the painter would have gone unnoticed.

Remarkably, the ivory Virgin from around 1593 survives, at least in part. The work was originally placed in the church of Santo Domingo in Manila and is now in the church of the same name in Quezon City. The ivory face, hands, and child of the sculpture are mounted on a wooden frame that was dressed for display (fig. 6). The work was extensively restored and remade after the British conquest of Manila in 1762, so we are left with only an approximation of its original appearance.¹⁸ Another ivory which originated in the church of Santo Domingo is a large Christ on the Cross (now in the University of Santo Tomas Museum, Manila).¹⁹

Fig. 6 Virgin and Child (La Naval). Philippines, Virgin: documented shortly after 1593; Child: around 1764. Ivory on wood frame, with silver and textiles. Church of Santo Domingo, Quezon City.



Ivory carving was a highly praised art in China and there is some evidence it was a specialty of Fujian province, where most of the Chinese in the Philippines originated.²⁰ It is sometimes thought that the earliest Chinese ivories traded through Manila were actually made in Fujian, although evidence for this is lacking.²¹ In 1573, three Chinese ships arrived in Manila laden with trade goods like silk, cotton, and more than 22,000 pieces of fine porcelain. In an early response to the demand for Christian images, the cargo also included “images of crucifixes”, but ivory is not specified as the material.²²

A significant proportion of ivories carved in the Philippines were exported to Mexico and then to Spain – artistic productions that need to be seen in the context of global consumption. Ivory had been a highly desirable medium for Christian sculpture in Europe since the Middle Ages and was also prized as a material in Ming China (1368–1644). The ivory itself came from the eastern coast of Africa, with the Arab traders carrying the shipments. By the sixteenth century, ivory figures of Christian subjects were produced in many parts of Europe, including Flanders, southern Germany, Italy, and Spain. Asian ivories were added to this network in the sixteenth century, at first commissioned and shipped by the Portuguese from Goa, Sri Lanka, and Macao, and later by the Spanish from the Philippines. All these artists enthusiastically embraced the commissions and refined their work for the Western market.

Modern art history attempts to distinguish between these national schools. We can discern the stylistic differences between a sixteenth-century Virgin carved with characteristic Sri Lankan drapery folds (fig. 7) and the more severely calm figures reminiscent of Chinese deities (figs. 1, 9). But did the specific cultural origin of these works matter to the seventeenth-century viewer? Indeed, we must wonder whether these ivories were recognisably Asian. The shapes of the eyes or their similarity to Chinese deities or to Japanese netsuke have been deduced as essential features. But was this the case for seventeenth-century viewers, and were they even aware of where these sculptures were made? As Asian ivory artists emulated European models, as noted by Bishop Salazar in 1590, an artistic vocabulary shared between East and West developed. It is possible that Christian ivories from around the world were perceived as a single category of art.

It is remarkable that Portugal and Spain, sharing the same European peninsula and in fact the same monarch from between 1580 and 1640, should occupy such radically different artistic and trading



Fig. 7 Virgin and Child. Sri Lanka, mid-16th century. Ivory. Asian Civilisations Museum, [2011-01506].

circles. The Spanish periodically tried to ban Portuguese traders from the Philippines and were themselves prevented from traversing Portuguese routes. Portugal shipped their products, including carved ivories, through the Indian Ocean and around Africa to Lisbon. An ivory carved in the Philippines, on the other hand, was commissioned from a Chinese workshop in Manila and then shipped the other way around the world – across the vast and dangerous Pacific to Acapulco on Mexico’s west coast, where it was then transported overland to Mexico City and the port of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico, before commencing a second treacherous ocean journey to Spain.

Margarita Estella’s pioneering studies elucidate the taste for global ivories in Spanish ecclesiastical institutions.²³ Even after allowing for the possibility of loss and more recent additions, a clear pattern emerges of the seventeenth-century taste for Asian ivory. Of the approximately 900 ivories recorded in Spanish institutions, the vast majority, some 60%, were made in the Philippines; 20% are European, 15% are Indian, 3% Hispanic (all plaques), 1.5% Chinese, and 0.5% African. Thus, in Spain there were four times more ivories from the Philippines than from the Indian Subcontinent. It is very likely that the percentages would be reversed in Portugal. Simply put, the Philippines provided Spanish

churches with the vast majority of their ivory statues. Bishop Salazar’s prediction in 1590 that Sangley artists would surpass Flemish ivory carving came to pass within a few decades.

Mexico

Shipwrecks have provided enticing clues to the trade in Christian ivories. The galleon *Santa Margarita*, which sank in 1601 in the Mariana Islands on its voyage from Manila to Acapulco, contained more than 300 identifiable ivory carvings. The majority appear to be Christian figures of the Virgin and Child, the Christ Child, and plaques showing the Virgin, Saint Francis, and Saint Jerome.²⁴ No depictions of Christ on the Cross were found, although this is the most common subject of Philippine ivory carving.

A further glimpse into this trade is provided by a list of ivory sculptures from the Philippines that were sold in Acapulco by a silk merchant named Francisco Vello in 1655. Vello lost the proceeds from the sale in a shipwreck off the Philippines.

First, a box with four figures of Crucifixions in ivory

the largest cost 37 pesos,
the next one cost 35 pesos,
the third cost 32 pesos,
the fourth and smallest cost 18 pesos

A figure of the Virgin that cost 44 pesos

A figure of St Michael costing 45 pesos

Three figures of Saint Joseph

one costing 33 pesos

another costing 27 pesos

another costing 25 pesos

A figure of St Diego that cost 20 pesos

A figure of St Peter costing 21 pesos.²⁵

This important archival discovery, made by Stephanie Porras, suggests the substantial trade in ivory carvings, which in this list range widely in subject and size. We do not know what the objects actually looked like, but it is notable that the sculpture of the Archangel Michael was the most expensive item in the group, undoubtedly because it had a second figure of Satan being vanquished.²⁶ The works seem to have been priced according to size rather than subject or degree of finish. It is also significant that these Christian ivories belonged to a private merchant, not a religious order, although Vella may have been acting as a middleman. Otherwise, there is no mention of ivories in galleon cargos, probably because the religious orders were exempt from reporting their shipments.²⁷

We have no detailed knowledge about how ivory sculptures were commissioned, but the procuring of textiles provides a useful parallel. Antonio de

Morga, who lived in Manila between 1595 and 1603, wrote that the Sangleys preferred to be paid in silver, not gold, and that production had to be completed by May, not only because some of the makers returned to China but also because the Spanish galleons needed to depart for Mexico by the end of June.²⁸ Morga characterised the Sangleys as generally practical and trustworthy, characteristics which ensured an efficient export system.

Japan

A number of ivory sculptures circulated within Asia, which reveals complex exchange patterns within the religious orders, in large part because of their expulsion from Japan. Two heads of Jesuit saints, now in Tepotzotlán, were sent from Japan to a Jesuit convent in Mexico in the early seventeenth century. The works had been made in the Philippines and needed to be returned to Manila to cross the Pacific.²⁹ A seated Christ Child (fig. 8) is documented as having been sent from Japan to Manila together with the relics of Saint Peter Baptist, who was martyred at Nagasaki in 1597. The delicate, soft folds of the carving have proven difficult to attribute securely. Estella called it Hispano-Filipino with some characteristics of Chinese or Sino-Portuguese art, presumably meaning Macao.³⁰ However, the style of the figure suggests that it was probably carved in Japan. After departing Japan, it was sent from Manila to Spain and is now in Paracuellos de la Ribera.

The Virgin in the Asian Civilisations Museum is a striking example of an ivory carved in the Philippines in the early seventeenth century and then decorated in Mexico (cat. 56). The robe tucked-in at the back is typical of ivories carved in the Philippines, but not encountered elsewhere. The large floral and leaf pattern closely resembles seventeenth-century Mexican decoration and is distinct from the fine vines painted in red which are sometimes seen on Philippine ivories, which on occasion echo the patterns of Indian export cotton textiles.³¹

Spain

A larger number of ivories can be documented in Spain in the seventeenth century. A severe image of the Virgin and Child (fig. 9) was sent from Mexico to Spain in 1617 by Juan Pacheco Maldonado, an official who served in the Philippines.³² We should be careful about over-attributing cultural qualities in works of art, but the style of the figure seems characteristically Chinese, not only because of the strict, immutable gaze of the Virgin, but also because of the evenly repeated folds of the drapery. This “valuable

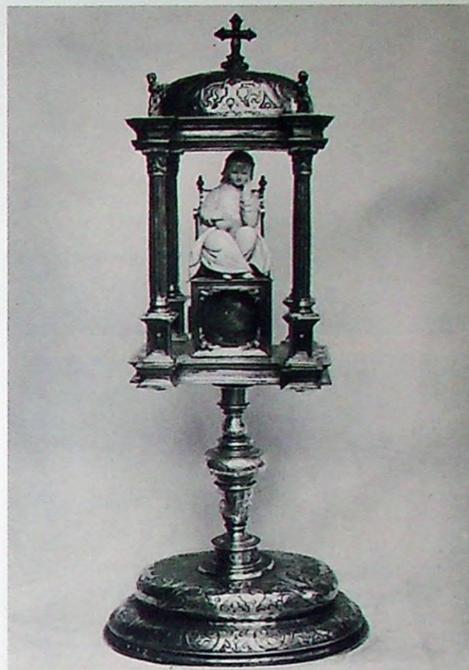


Fig. 8

Seated Christ Child. Perhaps Japan, around 1600. Ivory. Iglesia Parroquial, Paracuellos de Ribera.

9

Virgin and Child. Philippines, documented 1617. Ivory. Hospital of the Passion in Ciudad Rodrigo, near Salamanca.



Fig. 10 Saint Ignatius of Antioch. Philippines, mid-17th century. Ivory. Museo de Santa María de Mediavilla, Medina de Rioseco.

11 Saint Sebastian. Philippines, mid-17th century. Ivory. Museo de Santa María de Mediavilla, Medina de Rioseco.



A global subject: The Christ Child as Navigator

A finely carved ivory plaque of the Christ Child as the navigator of the ship of salvation (cat. 54) is a rare subject in art which quickly spread around the world in the first years of the seventeenth century. This is testimony to the invention and diligence of Christian missionaries in Asia, but also to the receptivity and adaptability of different cultures, and indeed of the Catholic orders.

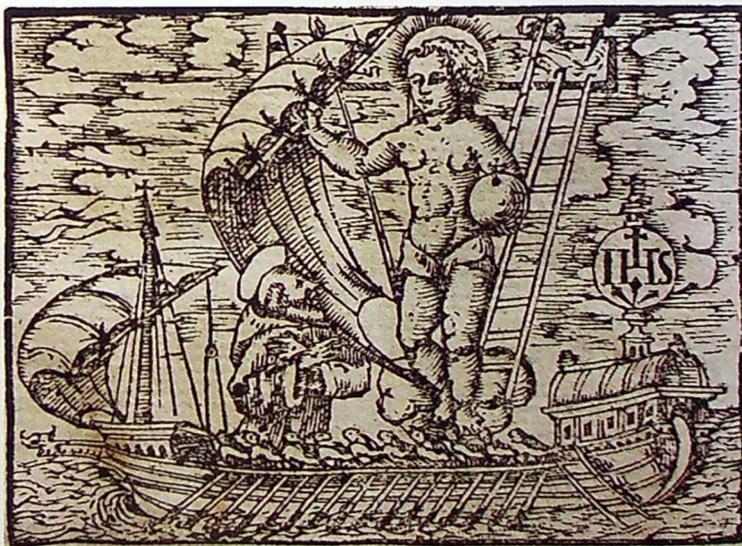
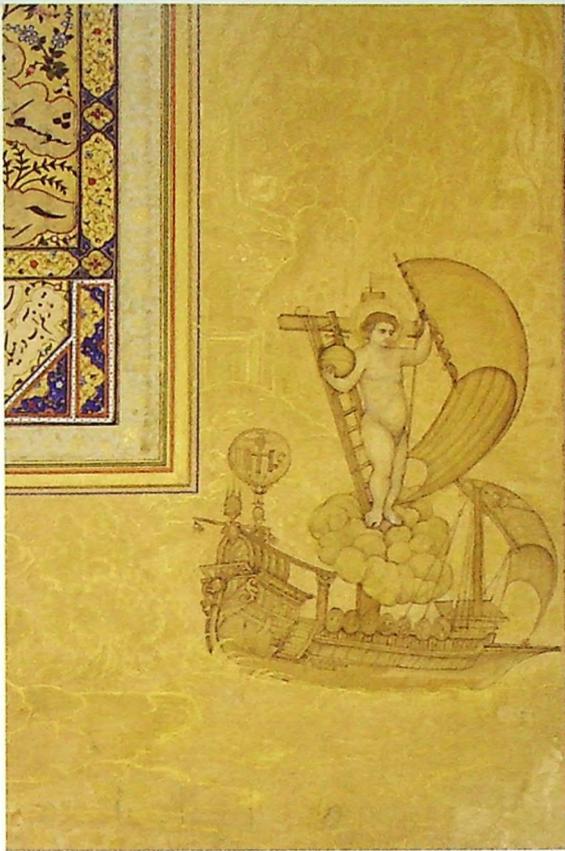
With one hand the Christ Child holds the sail, while with the other he supports an orb with a cross, representing Christianity's dominance over the world. The mast consists of the cross of the Crucifixion, with other symbols nearby such as the ladder and spear. The seven discs on the side of the ship show emblems of Christ's suffering. The delicately incised clouds and waves leave no doubt that the object was made by a Chinese artist working in the Philippines. A nearly identical plaque is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and there are a few more distant examples also apparently made in the Philippines.³⁴

This subject also appears in a highly finished marginal illustration in the *Gulshan Album*, a sophisticated cross-cultural collection compiled for the Mughal emperor Jahangir (1569–1627), who was greatly fascinated by Christian images. He and his father Akbar frequently hosted Jesuits and other Europeans. The image (fig. 12) is faintly labelled “1580” and “rome” in a European hand in black chalk, not by a Mughal calligrapher. Although this is clearly a later annotation, some writers have speculated that the image is based on an Italian print made in 1580, although no such print has been discovered.³⁵ The date may instead record the first visit of Jesuit missionaries to the Mughal court, which took place that year.³⁶ In the album illustration, the stern of the ship bears a roundel with the Jesuit emblem: IHS with a cross and three nails below. This image of Christ as Navigator appears to have been invented by the Jesuits to use on their missions to Asia.

and estimable” (*de valor y estima*) ivory was shipped to Seville and then to Maldonado's hometown of Ciudad Rodrigo, near Salamanca.

Perhaps the most remarkable group of ivories from the Philippines are eight highly innovative and delicately carved works bequeathed by Antonio Paino (1602–1666), bishop of Seville, to his hometown of Medina de Rioseco near Valladolid. The works include a Christ on the Cross, a Virgin (with an unusual form of the robe tuck), the Christ Child as Salvator Mundi, and several saints, including an unusual Saint Ignatius of Antioch being devoured by a lion and an elegant representation of Saint Sebastian (figs. 10, 11).³³

In 1595 the head of the Jesuit mission reported that Jahangir saw an “embossed” image of the Christ Child in the Jesuits' chapel and ordered his own craftsmen to carve a similar one in ivory for himself.³⁷ We cannot know whether this so-called embossed image (*une image en bosse*) was a relief or a print, or whether it specifically depicted the Christ Child as Navigator, however, it is tempting to believe that Jahangir was drawn to an unusual subject, which must have been relatively easy to copy in ivory. It is one of the rare Christian ivories recorded at the Mughal court. An ivory plaque in the British Museum (fig. 13), probably made in India or Sri Lanka, is closer to



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

- Fig. 12 Christ Child as Navigator. Marginal illustration from the Gulshan Album (detail). India, Mughal period, around 1600. Opaque watercolour, ink, and gold on paper. Freer Gallery of Art, Washington.
- 13 Christ Child as Navigator. South Asia, early 17th century. Ivory. British Museum, London.
- 14 Christ Child as Navigator, with Saint Francis of Assisi. Title plate: Segorbe 1611.

the Mughal illustration than any other version, as the inscription on the cross (INRI) and the Jesuit emblem are clearly visible – elements missing from the plaques in Singapore (cat. 54) and London.³⁸

A Franciscan guide to salvation published in Valencia, Spain in 1611 uses the Christ Child as Navigator in its title plate (fig. 14).³⁹ This print cannot be the source of the Mughal illustration, which dates from 1600, nor is it the source for the Philippine ivories, since an image of Saint Francis with stigmata has been added to the ship and the discs along the side have been replaced with rowers. Although the author, Jerónimo de Segorbe, was a Franciscan Capuchin monk, the Jesuit symbol is retained on the aft of the ship, which indicates that the print was adapted from an image produced by the Jesuit order. The book provides a context for the iconography of the Christ Child as navigator of a ship laden with symbols of his Passion, as suggested by the title: *Secure navigation to heaven, where safe harbours as well as pitfalls and dangers of this journey are taught and described*.⁴⁰ A later seventeenth-century Spanish oil painting of the subject was once in the Colegio del Patriarca in Valencia.⁴¹ Although similar to the Mughal drawing, the painting varies the subject further, for example, by leaving out the Jesuit emblem on the stern of the ship altogether.

The patron of the navigator ivories made in the Philippines is unknown, although the roundel on the two ivories (cat. 54 and the Victoria and Albert Museum) lacks the H, leaving the Jesuit emblem incomplete. This appears to have been deliberate, suggesting that they were commissioned by another order such as the Augustinians or Franciscans who were active in the Philippines. Taken together, these images of Christ as Navigator show how a rare subject quickly mutated across the globe, probably carried in the form of drawings. The image in the Mughal court album (fig. 12) was closely followed by the Indian ivory plaque (fig. 13). The subject was then diluted in the Chinese ivories which lack the Jesuit emblem and the inscription atop the cross. Most distant is the title plate of 1611, which incorporates an entirely new element, Saint Francis, in order to enhance its Franciscan text.

Modern preoccupations of classification

The most common terms encountered for ivories produced in the Philippines by Chinese artists are Hispano-Filipino or Sino-Hispanic, just as works made in India and Sri Lanka for the Portuguese employ similar conventions like Indo-Portuguese or Luso-Indian. Such categories are highly problematic not only because they perpetuate the old colonial empires of Portugal and Spain, but because they ignore the cultural identity of the artists themselves: the Chinese in the Philippines.

This can be likened to such misleading terms as Coromandel lacquer screens, Martaban jars, and Manila shawls – all made in China but assigned to other regions.

Margarita Estella uses the term Sino-Hispanic for the makers of the ivories, which acknowledges the role of the Chinese; Jessie Park called the works Southeast Asian, which has the advantage of being neutral, although China is not generally considered part of Southeast Asia.⁴² Stephanie Porras elucidates the multiculturalism of these ivories, but in the end resorts to the term Hispano-Philippine.⁴³ More concerning is the recent use of “Christianised Sangley” to denote works made by Chinese artists in the Philippines, even when there is no evidence of conversion.⁴⁴

We should be especially wary of attempts to reduce the role of the Chinese ivory artists, whether in privileging colonial patrons and consumers, or even suggesting that the ivories are the product of undocumented indigenous collaboration.⁴⁵ Efforts to trace visual sources in European prints can also have the effect of diminishing the artistic independence of the Sangley ivory artists.⁴⁶ It is clear that in the early seventeenth century, the Chinese community was considered a separate culture within the Philippines, whether by the Spanish, the Filipino population, or by themselves: they lived in a ghetto and were subject to frequent violence. Like many Southeast Asian Chinese communities, they spoke Hokkien and practised their own religions, with some occasionally returning to China. Only slowly over the course of the seventeenth century did this begin to change through conversion and intermarriage.

Networks and art

All of these terms fail to describe the rich multicultural networks that produced these ivories and traded them between Asia, the Americas, and Europe. Here we have objects produced by artists from one culture but living in another land and using a precious material from another continent. Moreover, the works of art they made were destined for a faraway, colonising culture and its colonial possessions in between. These ivories are the product of a true network of artistic exchange.

Asian port cities like Manila quickly created their own unique cultures and artforms.⁴⁷ Although usually conceived as colonial possessions, these entrepôts were shifting mixtures of European rulers, regional populations, migrants, and communities of mixed ethnicity that combined all of these. In these messy cultures, strict classifications like Hispano-Filipino or Sino-Hispanic mean that something important is left

out. It is probably best to avoid stringing together too many adjectives and therefore we use the geographical term Philippines, which is undeniably where the ivories were carved.

We might compare these ivories with other types of networked objects, namely cultural productions designated “Peranakan”, a Malay word that denotes people born in a place different from where their ancestors came from, but often used to describe the hybrid Chinese cultures stretching through the port cities of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. That this community functioned over a trading network and responded keenly to European empires makes the parallel with the Sangleys especially strong. It suggests a distinct culture interacting with the greater world in striking and unexpected ways.⁴⁸

Christian ivory carving in the Philippines touches on multiple artistic traditions, languages, and religions. Moreover, the Sangley community itself occupied a complex position in the seventeenth century: ghettoised, under attack, and frequently in mortal danger, this immigrant population gradually became localised and Christian. Moreover, the Chinese ivory sculptors served multiple clientele (ecclesiastical, official, private) in the Philippines, Japan, Mexico, and Spain. These factors sometimes led to the Sangleys being accused of deception and collaboration. In spite of these contradictions, or perhaps because of these very difficult circumstances, they were able to create works of surpassing beauty and great social resonance.

- 1 Letter dated 24-6-1590. Archivo General de Indias, Seville: FILIPINAS,74,N.38. The text is given here it has not been fully transcribed.
Los plateros aunque no saben esmaltar porque en la china no usan esmalte pero en lo demas ansy de oro como de plata hazen obras maravillosas y son tan aviles e yngeniosos que en biendo alguna pieça hecha de official de Spaña la sacan muy alproprío, y lo que mas me a admirado es que con no haver quando yo aqui llegue hombre de ellos que supiese pintar cosa que algo fuese se an perfeccionado tanto en este arte, que ansy en lo de pinzel como de bulto an sacado maravillosas pieças y algunos nyños lhs que yo e visto en marfil me parece que no se puede hazer cosa mas perfeta y ansy lo afirman todos los que los an bisto. Banse proveyendo las yglesias de las ymagines que estos hazen de que antes havia mucha falta, y segun la avilidad que muestran en retratar las ymagines que bienen de Spaña entiendo que antes de mucho no nos haran falta las que se hazen en flandes y lo que dixen de los pintores digo tambien de los bordadores que ban ya haziendo obras bordadas muy perfetas y se ban cada dia perfeccionando.
Standard abbreviations have been expanded (*que, ansy*). The complete letter appears in Retana 1897, pp. 49–80, with added punctuation and modernised spelling.
- 2 *Ibid.*
y como yo de muchos años atras e tenido gran desseo de la combersion de aquel reyno y con el bine a estas yslas porque una de las Razones que me mobieron a acetar este obispado fue saver que estavan estas yslas muy cerca de la China y que havia en ellas muchos naturales de aquel Reyno que a ellas se havian benydo a bivar...
On Salazar and the Chinese, see Lee 2020.
- 3 This history is treated by Gil 2011, García-Abásolo 2011, Lee 2016, among others. For population estimates, see García-Abásolo 2011, p. 236.
- 4 Retana 1897, p. 70 (letter of 24-6-1590).
- 5 Crossley 2014 discussed the dating of the Boxer Codex. For transcriptions and translations of the codex, see Souza and Turley 2016; and Donoso 2016. An excellent discussion of the codex can be found in Hsieh 2017. The original manuscript is online at the Indiana University Digital Library.
- 6 Donosa 2016, fig. 43. Souza and Turley 2016, p. 552, identified the uncaptioned couple (fig. 5 in this essay) as Sangley, although it appears earlier in the volume, which means that the 來常 Sangley caption on fig. 4 cannot apply to it.
- 7 Nelson 2022, pp. 33–34. The author makes several unsupported assertions about the Boxer Codex, including that the artist is Cantonese and Christian, and that Sangley means “diaspora Chinese,” which is incorrect. The author does not acknowledge that the term Sangley is Hokkien in origin and privileges a passing comment in the Boxer Codex that migrants came from Canton (fol. 274r), rather than considerable evidence that the majority of migrants to the Philippines were from Fujian.
- 8 Nelson 2022, p. 33, contends that the facial hair is Spanish in style and therefore a sign of conversion.
- 9 Lee 2020.
- 10 Gil 2011, p. 323–23. Lee 2016, p. 11.
- 11 Martínez 2020, pp. 74, 78, 80.
- 12 Lee 2016, pp. 12–25.
- 13 Crossley 2011, pp. 37–39. Crossley 2016.
- 14 Aduarte 1640, p. 36 (chapter 12):
Es esta Señora de cinco tercias de alto, rostro, y manos, y niño de marfil, y de soberana hermosura: hizo lahazer, y diola al convento Don Luis Perez Das Mariñas governador que fue destas yslas, varon de mucha perfeccion, y muy aficionado a la orden: hizola un sangley, o Chinio, assiendiendo a la obra el capitan Hernando de los Rios Coronel, que despues fue muy devoto sacerdote.
- 15 Aduarte 1640, pp. 36–37:
elera ynfiel, y lo fue despues muchos años, y por el oficio que tenia, anda va siempre trabajando en cosas de yglesias, y los religiosos desseavan que sehiziese Christiano, y el siempre restitiendo dezia, que no se avia de baptizar, sino ante esta Señora, cuya imagen el avia hecho.
- 16 Gil 2011, pp. 174–76. See also: Lee 2016; Martínez 2018.
- 17 Nelson 2022, p. 35, et al. The writer seems unaware of the conversion of the ivory artist who worked for Luis Pérez Dasmariñas.
- 18 Estella 1997, p. 26; Jose 2007; Estella 2011, p. 112.
- 19 Estella 1984, no. 310, fig. 191 [1st half of the 17th century]. Singapore 2016, no. 94, repr. For other early examples of ivories documented in the Philippines, see Estella 1984, nos. 467, 468, 469; Jose 2024.
- 20 The playwright and connoisseur Gao Lian wrote in *Eight Treatises on the Nurturing of Life* (遺生八箋) of 1591, “In central Fujian, craftsmen carve ivory into figures which are fine and artistic.”
- 21 Gillman 1984, pp. 39–40; Bailey 2013, p. 246. But see Estella 1984, especially pp. 59–74; Jose 1990, p. 17; Chong 2016a, p. 206. In 1561, a Portuguese traveller reported that Christian images were being produced in China, including the Crucifixion, but ivory is not mentioned; Ruiz de Medina 1995, pp. 476–77; Chong 2016, pp. 205, 207 note 8. Bailey 2013, p. 235, thought that these crucifixes were made of ivory.
- 22 Text by Hernando Riquel, dated Mexico, 11-1-1574. Blair and Robertson 1903, vol. 3, pp. 244–46: “Moreover, they brought images of crucifixes and very curious seals made in our manner” (asi mismo traxeron ymagenes de crucificos

- y sellos muy Curiosos en que se asentar a nro modo).
A slightly different text, without the cargo list, is dated Seville, 1574:
<https://arxiu-web.upf.edu/asia/projectes/che/s16/riquel.htm>. "Asimismo traxeron Imagenes de Crucifixos, Sillas muy curiosas á nuestro modo."
- 23 Estella 1984.
- 24 Trusted 2013b. These examples help assign the following to Chinese artists working in Philippines for the galleon trade: Singapore 2016, nos. 88–90. The Saint Jerome in Penitence (Singapore 2016, no. 89) can be compared to Trusted 2013b, fig. 14; and Estella 1984, nos. 764, 765.
- 25 Vello claimed to have lost the proceeds from the sales when the galleon *San Francisco Javier* sank off Samar in the Philippines in October 1655. Porras 2020, pp. 256, 282 note 1:
Primeramente un caxonçillos donde van quarto figuras de Crucifixos de marfil
el maior costo treinta y siete pessos
el que le sigue costo treinta y cinco pessos
el terzero costo treinta y dos pessos
el quarto y mas pequeno costo dies y ocho pessos
Item una figura de Nuestra señora q costo quarenta y quarto pessos
Item una figura de Sn. Miguel costo quarenta y cinco pessos
Item tres figuras de Sanct Josseph
El uno costo treinta y tres pessos
El otro costo veinte y siete pessos
El otro costo veinte y cinco pessos
Item una figura de So. Diego que costso veinte ps.
Item una figura de So. Pedro costo veinte y cinco ps.
[Source: Archivo General de Indias, Seville: Escribania 404a, Legajo 2, Numero 10, 1 quaderno 1655, fol. 147r.]
- 26 For example, see Estella 1984, figs. 258–63.
- 27 Rodríguez 2009, pp. 42–43.
- 28 García-Abásolo 2011, pp. 232–33.
- 29 Estella 1984, p. 63, no. 650, fig. 277.
- 30 Ibid, no. 533, fig. 244; Estella 2011, p. 112, fig. 2.
- 31 Park 2020, pp. 82–83. For other examples, see Estella 1984, pls. 5, 8, figs. 207, 214, 216, 253. Estella 2011, p. 128, thought that the surface decoration might be the result of later restoration.
- 32 Estella 2011, p. 112, fig. 1. In 1984, Estella had called the work Sino-Portuguese, that is, from Macao: Estella 1984, no. 862, fig. 360.
- 33 Estella 2011, p. 114, figs. 5–9; Estella 1984, pp. 65–67, figs. 188, 193, 208–10, 254, 255, 264, 265, 276, 278, 282, 283, 384, 387.
For other documented works, see Estella 1884, nos. 597, 632, 632 (from 1686); Estella 1997, pp. 26–31; Estella 2011, pp. 112–20; Porras 2020, note 3, fig. 1.
- 34 Estella 1984, no. 774, fig. 337 [Hispano-filipino, 17th century]; Trusted 2013a, no. 348, repr. [Hispano-filipino or Chinese, around 1600–1650]. The work is slightly smaller at 11 × 6.5 cm. Inv. 267-1879. It was acquired in Spain in 1879.
Other Philippine plaques with the subject include:
–Estella 1984, no. 775; Estella 1970, p. 177, pl. IX-D. Apparently a weaker version.
Estella 1997, no. 59; a distant variant, lacking the I and S of the aft roundel and having only six discs.
–Bonhams, London, 13-12-2012 (lot 17); incorrectly called Indo-Portuguese or Sri Lankan, but a more distant variant of the Philippine model.
–Sánchez Navarro de Pintado 1985, p. 110, fig. 87; Trusted 2013a, p. 354.
- 35 Atli 1978, no. 64; Washington 2007, vol. 2, nos. I-10, I-11; Bailey 2013, p. 248.
- 36 Chong 2016b, p. 79. "Rome" is used in the album rather than the Italian "Roma." On the Gulshan Album, see: Beach 2012, no. 20; Beach 2013; Beach 2016.
- 37 Du Jarric 1610, p. 473: "une Image en bosse du petit enfant IESUS, & un'autre d'un Crucifix, il commanda à ses ouvriers de luy en tailler de semblables d'yvoire." Beach 2013, p. 447.
- 38 Chong 2016b, p. 79, fig. 9, as perhaps from Sri Lanka. Bailey 2013, p. 248, suggests that it was made by a Chinese artist in Macao.
- 39 Noted by Estella 1984, p. 337.
- 40 Segorbe 1611.
- 41 Estella 1970, p. 178, pl. X-A. The painting has not been traced. The Colegio del Patriarca is now the Museo del Patriarca.
- 42 Park 2020, p. 67. The writer asserts that Southeast Asia could include "the sea-border regions of southeast China" but this is not a widely accepted concept. In any case, Fujian, the homeland of most Chinese immigrants to the Philippines, is on China's east coast.
- 43 Porras 2020.
- 44 Nelson 2022.
- 45 Gatbonton 2020, pp. 216–17; Putney 2022, pp. 39–41.
- 46 Estella 1997, pp. 40–41; Porras 2020.
- 47 Chong and Lee 2016; Tremmi-Werner 2015, pp. 268–72; Hsieh 2017, pp. 34–61.
- 48 See Lee 2014, especially pp. 29–32, on the complexity and independence of hybrid art. Also Chong and Lee 2016.

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Christ Child as Navigator

Philippines, early 17th century

Ivory, 12 × 8 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2015-00220]

Prov: Francisco Marcos Manzano, Lisbon; acquired in 2015.

Ref: W. Sargent in Singapore 2016, no. 87.





Christ on the Cross

Philippines, 17th century

Figure: ivory, 58 × 53 cm. Cross: wood inlaid with ivory,
120 × 64 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2016-0012]

Crucifixions were by far the most common subject produced by Chinese ivory artists in the Philippines during the seventeenth century, with some two hundred surviving examples.¹ Some works show Christ deceased, while here he is shown still alive on the cross. European art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows the Crucifixion with either three or four nails, but nearly all ivories made in the Philippines show three nails, a reference to the Trinity.²

The wooden cross, which is original, is decorated with lozenges, circles, and lines in a manner close to furniture also produced by Chinese artists in the Philippines (cats. 79, 80). At the top is a cartouche with the initials INRI, standing for Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews.

Prov: Francisco Marcos Manzano, Lisbon, acquired in 2014.

Refs: Estella 2011, p. 187. Singapore 2016, no. 93.

1 Estella 1984, nos. 191–399, 402–9. The next most popular subject is the Immaculate Conception, with some 60 examples recorded.
2 An example with four nails appears in the Crucifixion scene in the San Agustin Museum, Manila. Estella 1984, no. 360, fig. 197, as around 1700.

Virgin of the Immaculate Conception

Philippines, gilding added in Mexico, early 17th century

Ivory, gilded, height 59.5 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2013-00750]



Reverse of cat. 56.

Carved by a Chinese artist in the Philippines in the early seventeenth century, this sculpture shows the youthful Virgin Mary in prayer. The subject is the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, although the normal attribute of the crescent moon, on which the figure stood, is now missing. The moon was probably part of a wooden base, as is typical of these works; it has been replaced by a modern base.

The Immaculate Conception holds that the Virgin was born free from original sin, a principle that became enormously popular throughout the Spanish world.¹ For example, the celebrated Virgin of Guadalupe (Guadalupe Basilica, Mexico City) is a depiction of the Immaculate Conception (see cats 57, 59). Nearly 60 ivories of the Immaculate Conception carved in the Philippines in the seventeenth century survive. The images vary considerably, with some figures wearing a veil or billowing robes.

In this sculpture, the carving of the face and body follows the stylistic conventions of Chinese art made in the Philippines in the seventeenth century, giving a European subject Asian expression, especially in the eyes and nose. The tucked-in robe on the back is a characteristic feature of figures of the Virgin made in the Philippines. The robe falls simply, without the exuberant billowing drapery typical of the later seventeenth century.² This example is especially close to works in the González-Sada collection and the Museo Oriental de Valladolid.³

Art along the galleon route The decoration in gold that enriches the Virgin's cloak appears to have been applied in Mexico rather than in the Philippines where the ivory was carved. Philippine ivories were typically painted with delicate red vines and simple outlines. On occasion, these designs are rendered in coppery gold.⁴ The large, bold leaves found on this figure are very different in style. The background is formed by a pattern of dots while wide applications of gilding accentuate the folds of the robe and the hair.

Decorative patterns of this type can be found in Mexican sculpture beginning in the late sixteenth century, for example, in the work of Pedro de Requena, whose painted and gilded wooden sculptures in the church of San Miguel, Huejotzingo, Puebla, can be documented to the 1580s.⁵ Similar examples can be found in early seventeenth-century Mexican sculpture, although the paint and gilding technique used on wood (called *estofado*, where paint was scratched to reveal gold leaf) differs from the gilding applied to this ivory. **AC**

Prov: Coll and Cortés, Madrid; acquired in 2013.

Refs: Estella 2011, p. 128. A. Chong in Singapore 2016, no. 95.

- 1 See Stratton 1994.
- 2 Estella 1984, nos. 419–503 [including figures of the Virgin and Child].
- 3 González-Sada: Estella 1984, figs. 214, 216. Valladolid: Estella 1984, fig. 225. Estella 2011, p. 128, fig. 37, compares the present work to one in the Lozoya collection: Estella 1984, fig. 213 [1st half 17th century].
- 4 Estella 1984, no. 673, fig. 293 [2nd half of the 17th century]. For typical red polychromy, see Estella 1984, pl. VIII, figs. 176, 207, 214, 222, 297. Also: Estella 1997, pp. 35, 37; Park 2020.
- 5 Cuesta 2010, fig. 8. Juana Gutiérrez in Gutiérrez 1995, p. 208.



The paths of Asian lacquer in New Spain

Sonia Ocaña-Ruiz

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the success of Asian art around the world led to the development of Asian-inspired works overseas, such as European japanning and chinoiserie. While japanning (the use of tinted varnish in imitation of Asian urushi lacquer) and chinoiserie (decoration in Chinese style) are perhaps the best known Western phenomena, they were neither the only nor the earliest examples. Moreover, Asian art widely circulated in Spanish America, thanks to the direct trade via the Manila galleons. From the early sixteenth century on, art in Mexico (New Spain) tended to develop cross-cultural forms, such as featherwork (*plumaria*) and corn stalk cane sculpturing. From the 1600s on, the availability of Chinese and Japanese works inspired a wide variety of productions, which circulated widely in Mexico and also to a lesser extent in Spain. These new products differed both from the Asian originals and European Asian-inspired works, and contributed significantly to the expansion of artistic horizons at the time.

Documentary evidence demonstrates that the elite of Mexican cities were familiar with Asian silk, lacquer, folding screens, and fans since the late sixteenth century. Most of these items were Chinese, although numerous Japanese and some Philippine and Indian objects circulated as well. The taste for Asian objects spread so quickly that in Santa Fe, 2200 km north of Mexico City, Chinese porcelain from the periods of Jiajing (1521–67) and Wanli (1573–1620) was already in use in the seventeenth century.¹

The circulation of Asian objects in Spanish America shares many features with their reception in Europe, but it also has its own peculiarities. While some Asian items circulating in Spanish America were of high quality and expensive, cheaper objects of apparently lesser quality could also be found in the region beginning in the early 1600s. This is true for many types of objects, including Japanese and Chinese lacquer.

Spanish American audiences became as fond of locally made objects inspired by Asian art as they were of the Asian originals themselves. Mexican works inspired by Asian lacquer include, among others, *enconchados* (paintings inlaid with mother-of-pearl) and lacquer folding screens. Both types were highly diverse, ranging from inexpensive pieces to objects commissioned by the elite, including the viceroys, who would collect them for themselves or present them to the king and other prominent individuals. Surviving *enconchados* are generally luxurious objects, which has led some researchers to believe that they were primarily oriented to an elite market, although documentary information suggests that this was not always the case.

Enconchados and Mexican lacquer pieces parallel European japanning and chinoiserie, but they developed separately and provide evidence of different aspects of the success of Asian lacquer worldwide. The aim of this essay is to demonstrate that, to better understand the true scope of globalisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is necessary consider the circulation of Asian lacquer in Spanish America, as well as local works of art inspired by it.

Japanese lacquer

Japan and New Spain were among the first ambits of artistic globalisation. By the end of the sixteenth century, these cultures were making works that, while technically rooted in local traditions, were adapted to Western demands. A good example of this is Japanese lacquer made to meet the Iberian and Spanish American taste, known as *nanban* 南蛮, a term originally meaning “southern foreigners” but that later came to denote Westerners. In common with domestic lacquer of the Momoyama period (1573–1603), *nanban* lacquer had black backgrounds and varied designs consisting of foliage and flowers, such as maple, chrysanthemums, and cherry blossoms outlined with powdered gold, called *maki-e*. It was made through polishing layers of urushi lacquer. *Nanban* lacquer is distinguished by mother-of-pearl inlaid figures and the use of Western forms, often religious, such as lecterns, boxes, cabinets, and chests.

Few *nanban* objects survive in modern-day Mexico, unlike in Portugal and Spain. However, inventories demonstrate that they were not only present in Mexico City, but also in cities like Puebla, and in small towns near Acapulco such as Colima.² Japanese lacquer circulated in Mexico from the opening of the Manila-Acapulco trade route in 1565, but its presence must have grown significantly in 1610, when a group of twenty-three Japanese came to Mexico to accompany Rodrigo de Vivero, former governor of the Philippines, who had been helped to return by the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu after having been shipwrecked in Japan. Soon after, members of the Keichō embassy also passed through Mexico in 1614 and 1618 on their way to and back from Europe to meet Phillip III and Pope Paul V. Little is known about these embassies, but since Western taste for Japanese lacquer was then at its peak, they undoubtedly brought lacquer pieces to New Spain.³

Many *nanban* lacquer objects have survived in ecclesiastical collections in Portugal and Spain since the early 1600s.⁴ There were undoubtedly some pieces in Spanish American churches and convents as well. The Jesuits in Japan, and to a lesser extent, the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustinians, ordered lacquer to be sent overseas. These religious orders were also active in the Philippines and Mexico. Some of their members travelled through these regions and were active agents in the worldwide spread of technically novel works, such as Japanese lacquer and Spanish American *plumaria*, as can be seen in this volume (cats. 2, 3, 57, 58).

Most ecclesiastical collections in Mexico have lost a large part of their portable possessions and therefore evidence of Japanese lacquer is scarce. A noteworthy exception is an altar with images of the Virgin of Guadalupe which was sent to Spain by 1786 (cat. 57).⁵ Otherwise, the circulation of *nanban* lacquer in Mexico was largely connected to private individuals and institutions.⁶ Perhaps for these reasons, Japanese lacquer could be as cheap as 5 pesos, while the most elaborate pieces could command as much as 800 pesos.⁷ Although Japanese lacquer has the reputation of being of the highest quality, João Rodrigues wrote in 1622 (after long years in Japan when he learned to speak the language fluently), that Japanese lacquer was splendid but very costly, and that there was a second class which looked similar but was of lower workmanship, gloss, and price. Rodrigues also reports that there were “fakes, which can easily deceive someone who does not know much about it.”⁸ Because the taste for Asian objects quickly disseminated in Mexico, it is possible that inexpensive Japanese lacquer objects recorded in documents correspond to the fakes mentioned by Rodrigues.

Chinese lacquer

Chinese lacquer widely circulated in Mexico from the 1650s through the early 1800s. Unlike Japanese lacquer, Chinese lacquer objects were almost exclusively meant for non-religious use, for example, folding screens. Background colours include black, like Japanese lacquer, but also red. In the 1700s red lacquer was very popular both in Spain and New Spain; Chinese pieces undoubtedly played a role in creating the taste for red lacquer, but red English japanning pieces were also highly regarded in Spain and must have contributed to the development of the Spanish American taste for Chinese-style red lacquerware.⁹

Because Chinese lacquer objects hardly survive in present-day Mexico, their features are hard to identify. Nonetheless, documentary information and Chinese-inspired objects suggest that Chinese lacquer pieces were different from objects circulating in Europe. For example, so-called Coromandel screens (made in China but named for the coast in India through which they were shipped to Europe) were highly esteemed in Europe. In Mexico, there were numerous Chinese lacquer folding screens, but contemporary documents rarely mention the type of relief work present on Coromandel screens. Some Chinese lacquer screens are referred to as *rodastrados*, that is, low folding screens placed on a raised platform for women, which indicates that the works were adapted to the Spanish American market. Chinese lacquer folding screens commonly have twelve or twenty-four leaves, but the Chinese folding screens mentioned in Spanish American inventories were sometimes said to have 15, 18, 20, or 22 leaves. Some Chinese folding screens mentioned in these inventories were red, and they sometimes had crests on top. This suggests that some Chinese lacquer screens were produced specifically for Spanish American taste.¹⁰

Aside from folding screens, Chinese lacquer also included cabinets, boxes, and chests, either in black or red. Descriptions and prices suggest that they often were of high quality, but there was a range of values. Prices could vary between 25 pesos for a pair of Chinese lacquer and gold cabinets (1737) and 200 pesos for two cabinets in black and gold lacquer with metal hasps and plates (1751).¹¹ These differences suggest that appraisers were aware of quality variations in Chinese lacquer pieces.

Japanese lacquer features in Spanish American painting

Although Asian works were a source of inspiration for Spanish American works since the early 1600s, they were seldom copied exactly. Spanish

American artists usually selected some motifs (for example, the mythological *fenghuang*, or phoenix), ground colour (the red of lacquer folding screens), effects (the shiny surfaces of lacquer), or materials (mother-of-pearl from *nanban* lacquer) to use in works that were otherwise much closer to objects from Western traditions.

Enconchados may be the works where the resemblance to Asian lacquer, especially Japanese *nanban*, is most easily seen. *Enconchado* frames usually have black backgrounds against a display of unnaturalistic yet very detailed flowers, leaves, and grape clusters. Figures are usually outlined in black and painted in gold; mother-of-pearl inlays (cut from the shiny inner surfaces of molluscs) tend to be irregularly shaped. Frames and scenes were made with the same technique; in the scenes, fragments of mother-of-pearl are inlaid in the areas corresponding to the characters' clothing, as well as portions of the architecture and landscape. The coating over the mother-of-pearl consists of a mixture of oil, varnish, and possibly tempera, adapted to enhance the natural sheen of the mother-of-pearl. In the best works, painting is applied in translucent layers, so that the shiny surface can be easily seen at a short distance. High-quality *enconchados* were prized for their luminosity.¹²

We do not know how and when *enconchados* were first made. The González family specialised in this kind of painting in the late seventeenth century. A document of 1689 calls Tomás González a “master of lacquer painting” and his son Miguel González, a “journeyman of that art”.¹³ No work signed by Tomás González is known. He had several children, but only the eldest, Miguel, born in 1666, and Juan, born in 1675, became *enconchado* painters. Both worked in the 1690s and the early 1700s. Between the 1690s and the 1730s other painters also made *enconchados*, but the Gonzálezes appear to be the only ones who worked solely with this technique, which may have first developed in the workshop of Tomás.

The technique used by the González family may have been slightly different to that used by other painters, but more technical studies are required to understand these differences. *Enconchados* were often made for the open market, although the best-known works are series of high-quality depictions of historical or religious scenes. One of Miguel González' most outstanding signed works is a series depicting the Allegories on the Christian Creed (figs. 1, 2). This is the only series to have remained in Mexico since its production.¹⁴ A few other *enconchados* may have survived in Mexican churches, although documentation is not precise.¹⁵ At this stage of research, we do not know if *enconchados* were commonly found in ecclesiastic



Fig. 1 *James the Greater – The Annunciation*. Miguel González (Mexican), late 17th or early 18th century. Oil and mother-of-pearl on wood; frame of wood with mother-of-pearl. Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán.

2 *Saint Matthew – The Last Judgement*. Miguel González (Mexican), late 17th-early 18th century. Oil and mother-of-pearl on wood; frame of wood with mother-of-pearl. Museo Nacional del Virreinato, Tepotzotlán.

collections. Their visual features are more easily appreciated up close, which suggests that it was private consumption that primarily encouraged their production.

The Allegories on the Christian Creed consists of twelve panel paintings with beautiful *enconchado* frames. They depict scenes from the lives of the Virgin and Christ. Unusually, the paintings are each captioned with an apostle's name, for example, James the Greater for the Annunciation and Matthew for the Last Judgement. The latter image is based on a design by Maerten de Vos, which was engraved by Adriaen Collaert around 1600 (fig. 3).¹⁶ The palette is relatively restricted; red and green are used liberally, but blue is avoided, probably to avoid obscuring the luminosity of the mother-of-pearl. Pieces of mother-of-pearl are



Fig. 3 The Last Judgement. Maerten de Vos (Flemish, 1532–1603), engraved by Adriaen Collaert.

inlaid in small, irregular, but shiny fragments, both in the scenes and the frames. While technically unrelated, *plumaria* and *enconchados* attest to the same taste for luminosity and an ability to take non-Western works and materials as a starting point for something new. The fact that both genres circulated not only in Mexico but also in Spain suggests that Mexicans were aware and proud of their contributions to the world of painting.

In the work of Miguel González, drawing is important, with figures carefully sketched not only in the scenes, but in the frames. Although González worked only on *enconchados*, he took the ordinances of the painters guild very seriously; according to these rules, decency was a priority in painting. The artist followed the De Vos-Collaert model closely but introduced significant changes in the lower part of his work to avoid the depiction of nude figures.¹⁷

But the originality of González' work is more clearly seen on the frames, which show an intricate design of flowers, birds, and leaves, painted in gold, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and with touches of red against the black background. While most *enconchado* frames share similar features, they were conceived individually, and show deliberate variations. In this series' frames, designs are particularly appealing, as the birds' positions change significantly in each panel and the asymmetrical design helps keep the viewers' attention.

The fact that *enconchado* frames are present in most high-end works lets us affirm that the taste for these paintings largely related to frames, which in turn suggests that the taste for *nanban* lacquer in New Spain was key in the development of *enconchados*. The ordinances of the painters guild

do not mention frames, but the close attention paid to them by the Gonzálezes ultimately reveals that audiences had a strong taste for *enconchado* frames.

The taste for *enconchados* extended into the 1730s and works occasionally appear in inventories from the 1740s and beyond. However, the latest information about the González family of painters dates from 1704,¹⁸ which suggests that later *enconchados* were probably made by different painters. Like other Mexican paintings of this period, *enconchados* were usually unsigned. A few works exist that are signed by Nicolás Correa, Agustín del Pino, Pedro López Calderón, and a certain Rodulpho. We have little information on these artists, but some of them were skilled painters, as can be seen in a Virgin of Guadalupe by Agustín del Pino (cat. 59). Pino was probably active between the 1690s and 1710s.¹⁹ Interestingly, this work avoids the colour blue, although it is the colour of Virgin's mantle. Mother-of-pearl is inlaid in irregular shapes of around 3 cm, which tend to form most of Virgin's clothes. The frame is small, but it displays a black background covered by gold and shell inlaid flowers, birds, and grape clusters, which demonstrates that Pino was familiar with the main features of *enconchado*. In other words, once the González workshop established the genre's main features, other painters were able to follow them to meet customers' expectations.

Mexican lacquerware

After the Spanish arrived in the Americas, most Pre-Columbian artistic practices ended abruptly, since they were closely attached to religious beliefs which the Spaniards considered idolatrous. Of the few exceptions were calabashes coated with a soft paste made with the fat of the female of the *aje* insect, chia seed, or *chicalote* oil, combined with powdered dolomite or other mineral clays. The mixture also included organic and mineral colorants.²⁰ This paste was used as a protective coating for the calabashes and produced beautiful optical effects that were admired by the Spanish in the sixteenth century. At some point between the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, the paste also began to be used to cover small wooden objects and furniture. This pre-Columbian technique had been used in large parts of Mesoamerica, but in Mexico it survived only in the modern states of Michoacán and Guerrero, near the Pacific coast, and Chiapas, in the southeast of Mexico.²¹

Interestingly, from the second half of the seventeenth century on these works were sometimes called *maque* after the Japanese term *maki-e* — even though this kind of Mexican lacquer was not directly inspired by, and is technically

different from, true Asian urushi lacquer, which is the resin from the lacquer tree. It was once thought that *maque* was used solely to refer to Mexican lacquerware, but documentary evidence now shows that the term was used liberally to refer to different kinds of lacquer from Asia, Mexico, and Europe, which were different techniques but had similar bright effects.

Pátzcuaro in Michoacán became an important production centre of Chinese-style lacquer in the eighteenth century. An artist in this genre, José Manuel de la Cerda, signed a few works and had important patrons, like the vicereine Marquesa de Cruillas. Most Chinese-style works from Pátzcuaro resemble both Asian lacquer as well as European chinoiserie (fig. 4). For example, the architecture motifs seem closer to Robert Sayer's *The Ladies Amusement* of around 1760 than they are to Chinese originals. Most works from Pátzcuaro have black backgrounds, but a few are red and even white and blue. These ground colours were first developed in Europe and their use in Pátzcuaro in the 1750s indicates that de la Cerda was familiar with European chinoiserie.²²

The differences between lacquer from Pátzcuaro and *enconchados* allow us to see the evolution of the Mexican taste for lacquer and lacquer-like objects. This is also seen in works from Uruapan and Olinalá (cat. 63), whose techniques, palette, and designs were very different from those from Pátzcuaro and much closer to indigenous aesthetics. While related to Asian and European phenomena, lacquer-inspired objects from New Spain were diverse and followed their own path. Far from being just a stop on the route to Asia, Mexico was a major centre of consumption and production, whose many contributions to the world of lacquer and painting in the 1600s and 1700s are deserving of wider critical attention.



Fig. 4 Detail of the inner drawer of bureau-cabinet from Pátzcuaro, 18th century. Mexican *maque*. Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City.

- 1 Pierce 2016, p. 78.
- 2 Machuca 2012.
- 3 Adapted from Ocaña-Ruiz and Arimura 2022, pp. 328–29.
- 4 Kawamura 2009 and Mendes Pinto 1990.
- 5 Carr 2015, p. 27.
- 6 Ocaña-Ruiz and Arimura 2022, pp. 333–36.
- 7 "Un escritorio grande de maque colorado del Japón, perfilado de oro, embutido en concha y hueso, con 27 gavetas, con secretos, y su bufete torneado y dorado en 800" [A large red lacquer writing cabinet from Japan, edged in gold, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and bone, with 27 drawers, some secret, and its wood-turned and gilded stand, 800 pesos]. Del Hoyo 1986, p. 121.
- 8 Cooper 1995, p. 258.
- 9 Ordóñez Gaded 2011.
- 10 Ocaña-Ruiz 2023.
- 11 Archivo General de la Nación de México. For 1737: Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 11, exp. 3, 1737: Embargo de los bienes de la testamentaria de José del Barrio del Orden de Santiago. For 1751: Vínculos y Mayorazgos, vol. 48, exp. 7, 1751: Autos e inventarios por el Marqués de Guardiola.
- 12 Ocaña-Ruiz 2024.
- 13 Tovar de Teresa 1986, p. 101.
- 14 In 1931 it was in the church of Santa Isabel Tola, near the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Romero de Terreros 1931.
- 15 See a case study in García Lascrain Vargas 2010.
- 16 Ocaña-Ruiz 2013, pp. 148–49.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ocaña-Ruiz 2024.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Coddington 2015, p. 82.
- 21 Pérez Carrillo 1990.
- 22 Ocaña-Ruiz 2019.

Portable shrine with the Jesuit emblem

Japan, around 1600

Lacquer, gold, and mother-of-pearl on wood, 44 × 59 cm

The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Visions of Saint Juan Diego

Oil on copper

Mexico, 18th century

Daniel Liebsohn Collection

The doors of this lacquer shrine are intricately decorated with birds and wisteria blossoms. The Jesuit emblem appears in the pediment above.

The original paintings on the interior have been replaced with five 18th-century paintings showing the Virgin of Guadalupe and the visions of Juan Diego, the first indigenous saint in the Americas. The Virgin miraculously appeared to him on four occasions in 1531. The painting at the lower right shows the Virgin miraculously imprinted on his cloak, which is preserved in the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is the most important Christian image in Mexico. A painting of the Virgin in the basilica has inspired paintings and prints for centuries. A label on the back dated 1786 states that the shrine was owned by the Bishop of Calahorra in Spain.



Portable shrine with the Jesuit emblem

Japan, around 1600

Lacquer, gold, and mother-of-pearl on wood, 49 × 33 cm

The Crucifixion

Joseph Almorin (Mexican)

Mexico, 1778

Oil on wood

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00369]

The frame of this shrine was very likely made in the lacquer workshops of Kyoto before Japan banned Christianity in 1614. The Jesuit emblem appears at the top in the pediment, indicating that it was commissioned by the order. It was probably shipped from Japan to Manila and then to Mexico.

Both Japan and the West produced portable shrines, which housed religious images for private worship and could be easily carried. In the sixteenth century, Japan produced many different types of lacquered objects for European buyers, usually in European form. Boxes, chests, lecterns, and shrines were intricately decorated with flowers and birds, then enhanced with gold and mother-of-pearl. Jesuit missionaries commissioned numerous such objects and set up schools to train local artists. The devotional practices of Catholicism may explain the hold it had in Japan in the late sixteenth century. Many Japanese objects made their way to Mexico and Spain via the Manila galleons.

The now-lost original painting may have been made in Japan in Western style at one of the Jesuit schools, or the frame may have been left empty so that a Western painting could be inserted into it. A new painting was added in Mexico in the eighteenth century, which depicts Christ on the Cross with the Apostle John and the Virgin Mary. This portable shrine is the only known *nanban* work whose inscriptions record both an artist and a patron in colonial Mexico.

At the base of the cross is the signature “Joseph Almorin, pinx”. Another inscription reads “A devotion del Teniente Coronel Don Manuel Muñoz. Año de 1778.” (For the devotion of Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Muñoz, year 1778). Although we know next to nothing of the artist José Almorin, the patron played an important role in northern New Spain, now part of the United States. In 1778, Manuel Muñoz (ca 1730–1799) was the governor of the Mexican province of Texas. Born in Spain, he arrived in Mexico in 1759, and was promoted to lieutenant colonel in 1777.¹ He became the governor of Texas in 1790 and died in San Antonio in 1799.² This beautiful frame was among other Asian luxury object which made its way to Texas and other remote areas of New Spain, proof that exotic objects were not reserved for the capital city.³ CO

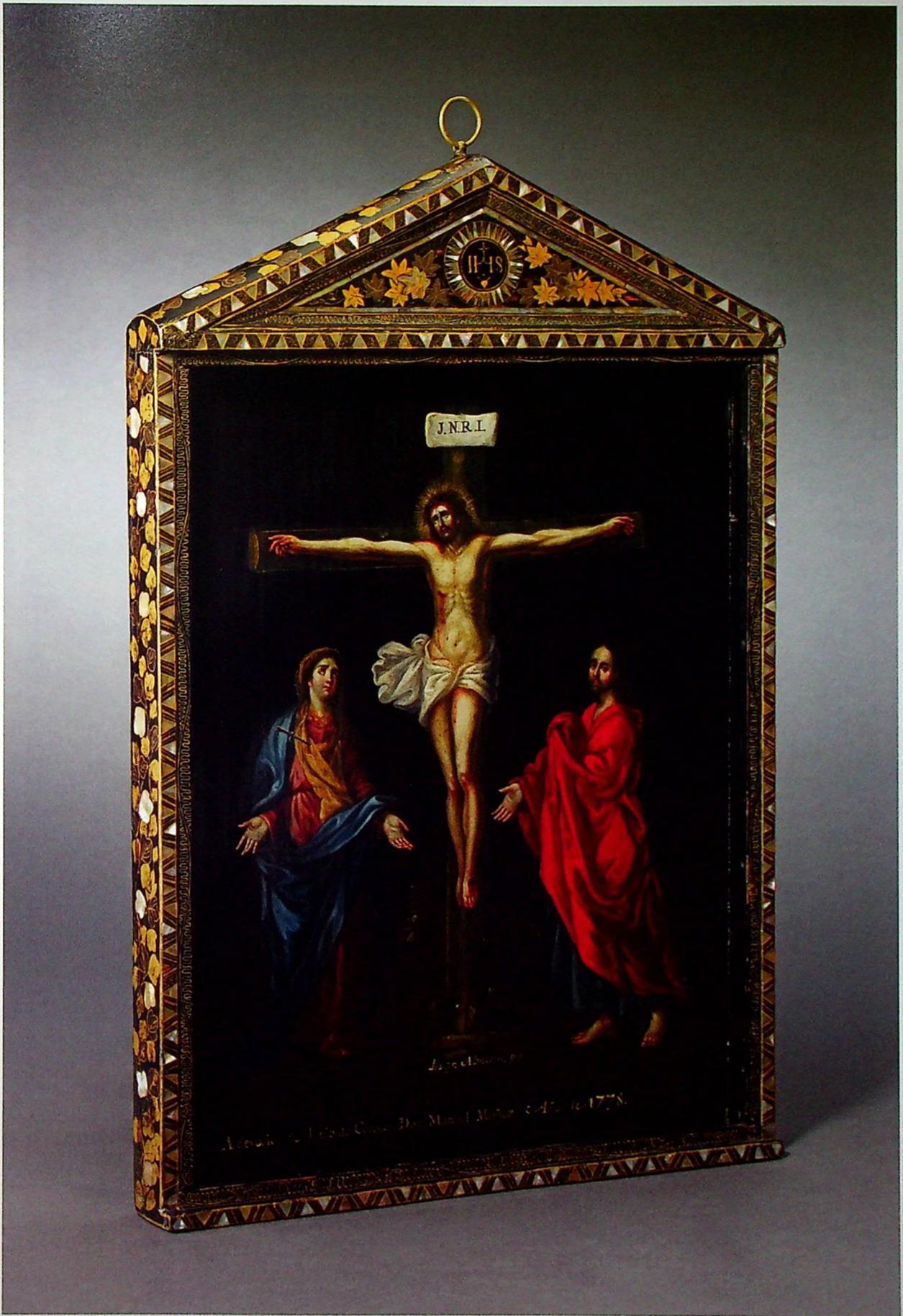
Prov: Jorge Welsh Works of Art, London.

Ref: Welsh 2017, no. 67.

1 I am grateful to Samuel Luterbacher for bringing this to my attention.

2 Luterbacher 2019, pp. 188–89.

3 Pierce 2016.





Virgin of Guadalupe

Agustín del Pino (Mexican, active late 17th–early 18th century)

Mexico, early 18th century

Oil and mother-of-pearl on wood;

frame of wood with mother-of-pearl, 74 × 54 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05005]

This is an *enconchado*, made by veneering thin pieces of iridescent mother-of-pearl onto a mixed painting technique base imitating lacquered effects. The technique enhances the sacred subject of the painting. The Virgin's costume is rendered in shimmering pieces of shell. The roses and birds painted in oil are echoed in mother-of-pearl on the frame. In Del Pino's frame, as in most original *enconchado* frames, birds, leaves, flowers, and grape clusters on a black background recall Japanese *nanban* lacquer.

The technique emerged in Mexico in the seventeenth century. Besides Japanese *nanban* lacquer, it was influenced by European oil painting, both of which were ingeniously melded together by local artists, originally the González family. Agustín del Pino signed the work at the lower right. Little is known about him, but he seems to have worked primarily with *enconchados*. His works emphasise the brightness of the shell and gold paint, in a distinctive style that departs from that of the better-known Gonzálezes.

The skin of the Virgin of Guadalupe here is slightly dark, like that of an indigenous or mestiza woman. As the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, she stands on a crescent moon. Distinct to the Guadalupe is a small angel that supports the moon at the edge of her cloak. **SOR**

Ref: T. Castelló Yturbide in Houston 2002, no. 5.

60

Cabinet

Mexico, 18th century
Cedar and pine, mother-of-pearl, 34 × 45 × 30 cm
Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04542]

Meant to hold documents and writing materials, this cabinet is small and could be securely closed to allow for easy transport. The basic form is European but it has been embellished with mother-of-pearl inlay, a technique found across Asia as well as in Aztec Mexico.



61

Box

Peru, Lima, 18th century

Wood, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, silver, 17 × 36 × 45 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [07846]

The cover is decorated with double-headed eagles amid swirling leaves and seated animals, while horses appear on the sides. Double-headed eagles were a device of the Habsburg dynasty, which died out in the Spanish empire in 1700. Here the device might be a long-familiar decorative motif or a reminder of a previous era.



Missal stand with emblem of the Franciscan Order

Probably Peru, Lima, 18th century

Wood, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, 42 × 33 × 23 cm

Daniel Liebsohn Collection

This stand was used to hold a missal – a book of instructions used to celebrate Mass. The centre is decorated with the Franciscan emblem of a cross, with two crossed arms.

The intricate, symmetrical design, which fills nearly all surfaces, is typical of Peruvian furniture of the eighteenth century. Furniture from the Americas often merged Asian, Islamic, and European traditions of inlay and marquetry to create distinctive designs using materials like tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl. This style of furniture found its way to Ecuador and other locations along the Pacific coast.



63

Box

Mexico, Guerrero, Olinalá, 1779

Wood, coloured varnish, gold, metal, 20.2 × 40 × 40 cm

Inscribed: Sirve para los Elecciones, La dio la M. Secretaria

So Maria Ana de S.S. José Ruiz de la Mota de 1779

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05146]

The exterior of this box is elaborately decorated with figures, flowers, and a variety of animals. The technique is known as *rayado*, which involves coating a surface with two layers of pigmented varnish, then scratching away the upper layer to reveal a design. Skilled artists were able to create pieces with three or more colours. The technique developed in Olinalá, an important centre of Mexican lacquer production, where the box was made.

Most Olinalá lacquer pieces that have been preserved date from the second half of the eighteenth century. They are easily distinguished by their brilliant palette, often of orange, deep red, blue, and white.

The painting on the inside cover is a mystery. It does not employ the *rayado* technique, but instead has a single layer of pigmented varnish. Most Mexican lacquer pieces with elaborate outer designs are not decorated on the interior, so this work must have been particularly valuable. Seated around a table are a monk and two other men, who seem to be writing in account books. Two Franciscan monks appear above, with a dog carrying two lanterns. The inscription states that the box was to be used for elections, probably for leaders of a monastery, and was presented by Sister María Ana of José Ruiz de la Mota in 1779. Only the people using this box to vote would have been able to see the painting. **SOR**

Ref: P. Kornegay in Philadelphia 2006, no. I-26.



Chocolate

A gift from Quetzalcoatl

William R. Sargent

Chocolate is ubiquitous today, from solid bars and baked goods to warm drinks and martinis, but it started as a royal drink about four thousand years ago in Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America). That remarkable drink spread quickly to Europe and to English colonies in North America after the establishment of global sea routes in the sixteenth century. Literature on the subject is extensive and information from archival and archaeological evidence grows every year. For our purposes we are focusing on Europe, Mexico, the Philippines, and the United States.

What we now know as a chocolate drink is made from the fruit of the *Theobroma cacao* tree, which is native to Mesoamerica, and where the pods were first fermented and served, possibly as early as 1900 BCE.¹ The origin of the word “chocolate” is contested, its antecedents too complex and ambiguous to unravel here.² The Latin name for the tree, *Theobroma cacao*, was given by Carl Linnaeus in 1753, with *Theobroma* coming from the Greek words *theo* (God) and *broma* (food), meaning “food of the gods.”

While cacao was found throughout the Americas, using it as a drink may have started in Mesoamerica, where its early consumption is documented through archaeological finds of residue in pots, including one vessel inscribed with a Maya glyph which translates to *kaka* (cacao), from the Maya of the Yucatán Tabasco and from them to the Spanish.³ There was no single recipe for chocolate, but the ground beans could be mixed with any combination of chilli peppers, honey, water, maize (corn), and other flavourings. It could be served cold or hot by pouring the liquid from one vessel to another to create a foam, an act illustrated in the 1563 Codex Tudela⁴ (fig. 1) and in the Florentine Codex of 1577.⁵



Fig. 1 Woman pouring chocolate. Mexico, 16th century. Amate bark. Codex Tudela. Museo de América, Madrid.

Olmec and Maya Origins

The Olmec culture arose around 1500 BCE and dwindled around 400 BCE, leaving no decipherable language, so their discovery of cacao is associated with residue testing in a few archaeological finds. Centuries passed before the Maya culture of the Yucatán flourished from about 250 CE until 900. When the Maya learned to cultivate the abundant cacao trees, they exported the beans to the Aztecs. Archival records show how important cacao was to the Maya, as they used it in civil and religious ceremonies, during festivals and funerals, as medicine and currency, and to give thanks once a year to Ek Chuah, the cacao god.

Aztecs

By 1400, when the Aztec empires conquered a large part of Mesoamerica, subjects were made to pay cacao balls as a tax, as it was also used as currency in a system of barter. The early sixteenth-century chronicler Francisco Oviedo y Valdés recorded that a turkey hen cost one hundred cacao beans, a rabbit was worth ten, a slave about a hundred.⁶ The Italian writer Peter Martyr d’Anghiera, who coined the term the New World in his *De Orbe Novo*

(published between 1511 and 1530), discussed the use of cacao beans as money and said, “For this grows upon trees,”⁷ possibly setting the stage for the future sarcastic use of the phrase “Money doesn’t grow on trees.”

The Aztecs believed that cacao was a gift from Quetzalcoatl (“feathered serpent”), the god of wisdom, from whom almost all Mesoamerican peoples claim descent – and who was condemned by the other gods for sharing chocolate with humans. The Dresden Codex, the oldest Mayan codex known, tells us cacao was the food of the rain deity Chaac, while the Madrid Codex, made before 1521, says gods shed their blood on the cacao pods as part of its production. It was then a drink for elites; the last ruler of the Aztec empire, Motecuhzoma Xocoyotzin ((around 1466–1520), known as Montezuma, was observed drinking it by the Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas. The friar said the cups for drinking it were gourds from the calabash tree, painted inside and out but that “any lord would drink of them as if they were gold and silver.”⁸ Such cups were the forerunners of the carved coconut shells, often mounted in silver, used for the same purpose by the Spanish.

Spain

Recent research reveals that the introduction of chocolate to Spain was complex and fragmented.⁹ Christopher Columbus brought beans back to Spain in 1501 but did not know how to use them. His son Ferdinand recorded that the beans were so highly valued that “when any of the almonds [cacao beans] fell, they all stooped to pick it up, as if an eye had fallen.”¹⁰ Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who led an expedition that caused the fall of the Aztec empire, also observed Motecuhzoma consuming chocolate in 1519.

The most likely scenario for the introduction of chocolate to Spain is in 1544 when a group of Kekchi Maya of Guatemala were brought by Dominican friars to visit Prince Philip of Spain and gave him quetzal feathers, clay vessels, lacquered gourds, plants, and beaten chocolate. However it started, it was a luxury Spain began importing in 1585 with a shipment from Veracruz to Seville. It quickly became a much-loved indulgence by the Spanish court, indispensable in high society and too expensive for others. The importance of chocolate in seventeenth-century Spain can be seen in the number of books published on the subject.¹¹ In 1701 Ellis Varyard claimed in *An Account of Divers Choice Remarks* that the Spanish were “the only People in Europe, that have the Reputation of making *Chocolate* to perfection...”¹²

The European embrace of chocolate

Exactly how chocolate spread to Portugal, Italy, France, and beyond is muddled in multiple conflicting theories.¹³ As other European countries such as Italy and France visited parts of Central America themselves, they also brought chocolate back. Anne of Austria, the daughter of Philip III of Spain, is said to have introduced chocolate to the French court in 1615 when she married Louis XIII. Over two hundred years later, Maria Josefa Carmela, daughter of Charles III of Spain, was portrayed in 1758–59 with her two favorite things: her puppy and a cup of hot chocolate.¹⁴

Constantine Phaulcon, a Greek adventurer and chief minister to King Narai of Siam, sent an embassy to Versailles in 1686 which brought gifts of gold, silver and lacquered chocolate pots, even though the Tai cultures never embraced chocolate. Several vessels described as *chocolatières* were recorded in the 1687 inventory of those gifts written by the chevalier de Chaumont.¹⁵ The only surviving example, described as from Japan, is actually a Chinese silver wine ewer (p. 40, fig. 1). It is not known if any of the other chocolatiers listed were actual chocolate pots, but one illustrated as a *chocolatière* in a print, *The Reception of Ambassadors from the King of Siam by His Majesty at Versailles on 1 September 1686, 1687* (Louvre, Paris), depicts what might be a perfume bottle. The confusion of source and purpose is indicative of the newness of these forms and the beverage itself.

The importance of chocolate in the lives of upper-class French can be seen in the painting *The Penthièvre Family or The Cup of Chocolate* (1768) by Jean-Baptiste Charpentier the Elder, which depicts the Duke of Penthièvre and his family, each dressed in the latest fashion and holding a Chinese export porcelain cup filled with chocolate (fig. 2).¹⁶



Fig. 2 *The Penthièvre Family or The Cup of Chocolate*, 1768. Jean-Baptiste Charpentier the Elder (French, 1728–1806). Oil on canvas. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon.

Preparing and serving chocolate in 17th- and 18th-century New Spain

As kraakware was a leitmotif in Dutch still-life paintings and tea in English conversation pieces, so too was chocolate a frequent subject in Spanish still-life paintings, especially depictions of everyday pantry items, the *bodegón*.

Cacao beans were stored in some Chinese porcelain jars of the *guan* type fixed with metal lids to preserve the beans (cats. 42, 66), which were quickly copied in local Talavera tin-glazed earthenwares based on the Chinese examples.¹⁷ The metal-lidded jars were known in Mexico as *chocolateros* but were also used for storing a wide range of other delicacies such as vanilla and spices. Any comprehensive collection of Pueblo pottery would be incomplete without jars of this shape and style.¹⁸

Preparing the beans required them to be ground on a *metate*, a stone widely used for grinding corn and chocolate, using a *mano*, a stone utensil that looked like a rolling pin. These were both introduced to Spain from the Mesoamerica. A painting of around 1700 depicts a Black man, possibly a slave, grinding chocolate with these implements (fig. 3). The same technique is illustrated in Nicolas de Blegny's *Du Bon usage du thé, du café et du chocolat pour la preservation & pour la guérison des maladies* of 1686 in which the author discusses the perceived health benefits of newly introduced tea, coffee, and chocolate.

The definition of a chocolate pot is not easy to pin down. It is often described as a covered pot with the handle placed at a right angle to the spout. The most certain indication of a pot's function for chocolate is the presence of a cover with a hole in the centre for the purpose of stirring the contents with a wooden frother (*molinillo* in Spanish).¹⁹ The word *molinillo* is from the Nahuatl noun *molinia*, "to shake, waggle or move".²⁰ The long-handled, lathe-turned, wooden frother twirled between the hand produced the foam once created by pouring the liquid from one bowl to another.

The French are credited with inventing the *chocolatière*, the distinctive chocolate pot, almost always in silver, with a pistol handle set at right angle to the spout and a lid with a central hole through which the tall post of a *molinillo* (*moussoir*, froth-maker in French) was placed. A detail from a 1710 garden party scene in a tile work *La Xocolatada* (Museu del Disseny de Barcelona) depicts chocolate on a large platter near a brazier. One man stirs the heated chocolate in the brass *chocolatière* sitting on a brazier, another, kneeling to the side, pours heated chocolate into cups on saucers.

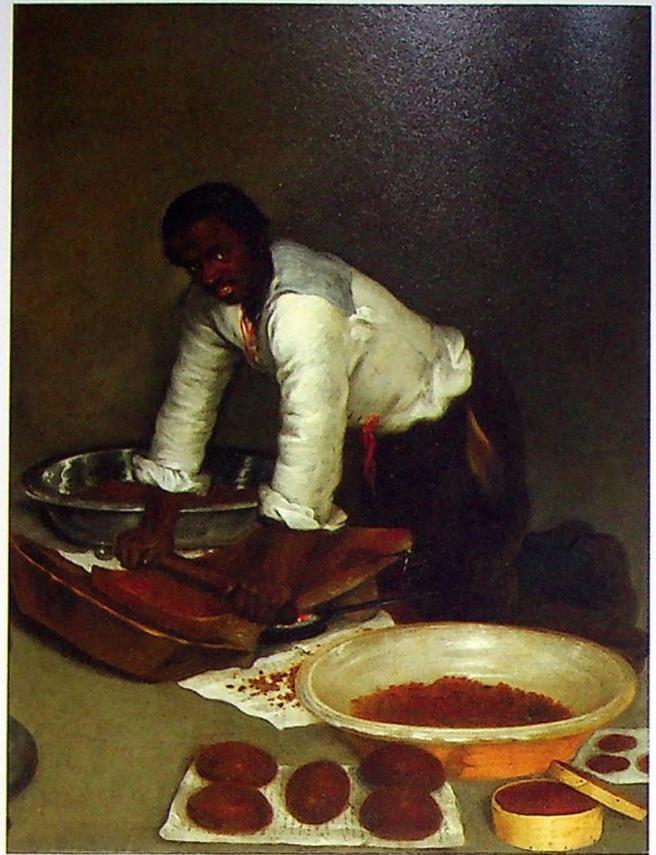


Fig. 3 A Man Scraping Chocolate. Spanish, around 1700. Oil on canvas. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, Gift of Mr and Mrs Benjamin Cone.

Seventeenth-century inventories of Mexico City's consulate merchants show they purchased a large quantity of goods from the Manila galleons, including Asian porcelains, jars, bottles, vases, plates, cups and especially "chocolate cups", some of which were mounted in silver in Mexico.²¹ Most ceramic sherds found in archaeological sites come from rice bowls and cups for tea or wine. Tea was never popular in Mexico, so teacups may have been used instead for drinking hot chocolate.²²

Chocolate cups, called *jicaras*, were generally slender, slightly bell-shaped tall cups, but could have referred to any cup used for chocolate.²³ The word for *jicara* is from the Nahuatl word *xicalli* for the gourd drinking bowl. Marie-Louise of Orléans, consort of Charles II of Spain, had in her 1689 inventory, among many other Asian treasures, "Forty white *jicaras* from China without mounts.... Twelve *jicaras* from China with two handles and gilded silver lids..."²⁴ It is this type of cup that appears in a painting of about 1640 by Juan de Zurbarán (fig. 4). In a

still life of 1652 by Antonio de Pereda (State Hermitage), two blue-and-white cups with different patterns are depicted, suggesting this was before “sets” were developed. Also on the table are a *molinillo* and a *jicara* of a mounted coconut shell. Gourds for hot chocolate and tea are listed among the porcelains in noble households.

The *mancerina*, a saucer fitted with an attached container, usually pierced, for holding a cup and pastries, was another accoutrement used in serving chocolate and other hot beverages (cats. 70–74). In 1691 the writer Madame d’Aulnoy described a party held by a princess in Spain: “We had tea in the house of the princess where eighteen maids appeared carrying silver trays full of dry sweets wrapped in paper... Chocolate was served afterwards, each porcelain cup held on an agate plate mounted in gold....”²⁵ Specialised spoons are not often mentioned, but the 1687 inventory of Gaspar Méndez de Hara, the Marqués del Carpio, listed “fifteen reed spoons from India, painted red and gold, used for hot chocolate.”²⁶



Fig. 4 Still Life with Bowl of Chocolate, around 1640. Juan de Zurbaran (Spanish, 1620–1649). Oil on canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie, Besançon.

The Philippines

The first appearance of the cacao bean in the Philippines is said to have been around 1670 and with that early introduction, the Philippines became the first Asian country to grow the crop. As with unsubstantiated theories of chocolate introduction to Spain, there are various accounts of its introduction to the Philippines, though it seems that cacao was first planted in Luzon or Visayas.²⁷ By 1810 chocolate was widely available, and in the independent Islamic state of Sulu “sultans and nobles, breakfast with chocolate and gilded template tumblers, in which they dipped macaroons obtained from Manila.”²⁸

The Caracas Company lost its monopoly in 1781 and was dissolved in 1784, but its Basque promoters formed the Real Compañía de Filipinas, a “multi-colonial” commercial enterprise with interests around the world, including continuing to import and distribute cocoa in Cádiz, Madrid, and northern Spain.²⁹

In Tagalog, chocolate and hot chocolate are called *tsokolate*, cacao molded into tablets *tablea*, and the *molinillo* is called a *batirol* or *batidor*. The thick, creamy, hot chocolate drink is called *tsokolate de batirol*, and is referred to as *sikawate* in the Visayas region.

England

Chocolate was known in England as early as 1579, but the drink did not reach the country until the 1650s, and that was primarily because Cromwell’s forces took Jamaica from Spain in 1655. By 1657 chocolate was advertised in an English newspapers and in the 1659 *Mercurius Politicus* it was stated, “Chocolate, an excellent West India drink, is sold in Queen’s Head alley, in Bishopgate street, by a Frenchman... being the first man who did sell it in England; and its virtues are highly extolled.”³⁰ By the 1660s it had become a common drink, as is often reported by the diarist Samuel Pepys (1633–1703). While consumed at home, it was also a focal point of men’s clubs and so-called coffee houses, where tea, chocolate, and alcoholic beverages were consumed and politics discussed. In the late 1700s, the noted collector and president of the Royal College of Physicians, Hans Sloane (1660–1753), brought a recipe from Jamaica for mixing chocolate with milk, which made the drink more palatable, in his opinion.³¹

United States

New Spain included parts of what are now California, New Mexico, and Florida, among other locations, in what is now the United States.³² There is archaeological evidence of the use of Chinese porcelains in these areas, but documentary evidence survives as well. In the early 1660s, Bernardo de Mendizábal, governor of New Mexico, and his wife Teresa de Aguilera de Roche, took chocolate every afternoon at three o’clock. Her chocolate chest included coconut cups, at least one Chinese porcelain cup, and lacquered gourds, all for drinking chocolate.³³ The 1721 dowry of Luisa Gómes del Castillo (Lujan) (1706–1785) of Santa Cruz de la Canada, New Mexico, included a coconut cup “from Amula” (Jalisco) mounted in silver, three chocolate cups of Chinese porcelain, six of majolica, and one *jicara*.

The custom of drinking chocolate among the British colonists came from England. The first American chocolate house may have opened in Boston in 1682. Samuel Sewall, a judge in the Salem witch trials of 1692, recorded that he had breakfast with friends in 1697 consisting of “Venison and Chockalatte; I said Massachusetts and Mexico met at his Honor’s Table.”³⁴

By the eighteenth century America was well acquainted with chocolate. In 1757, George Washington ordered twenty pounds of chocolate from the British merchant Thomas Knox. He bought quantities as small as one pound and as large as fifty pounds. From Washington’s home of Mount Vernon, Virginia, Clement Biddle, who served under Washington, ordered chocolate along with slippers for his wife: “She will likewise thank you to get 20 lb. of the shells of Cocoa nuts, if they can be had of the Chocolate makers.”³⁵ As late as 1794, his niece’s husband, Burges Ball, asked his uncle for “2 or 3 bushels of chocolate shells such as we’ve frequently drank Chocolate at Mt. Vernon.”³⁶

Aaron Lopez (1731–1782) a merchant slave trader in Newport, Rhode Island, employed people to grind chocolate for him, one of whom was a Black labourer or slave named Prince Updike (1711–1781), a master chocolate grinder.³⁷ This calls to mind the portrait of the Black servant grinding chocolate (fig. 3). Lopez’s ledgers contain entries detailing Updike’s ground output. From 1766 to 1767, Updike produced 2,000 pounds of chocolate from 2,500 pounds of cocoa. The large quantities of chocolate produced by Updike coincided with the passing of the Revenue Act of 1767, which imposed a tax on tea imported into the North American colonies. One result of this was that colonists switched to drinking chocolate or coffee as an alternative to tea.

Punch, tea, coffee, and chocolate were stimulating drinks made available to worldwide customers with the establishment of global trade after the opening of sea routes beginning in the sixteenth century. From a royal drink in Mesoamerica to the ubiquitous product of today, chocolate has traversed four millennia in its journey, through passionate consumption spanning the world, influencing social customs, politics, decorative arts, and inspiring artists, authors, and poets wherever it was prepared and appreciated.

- 1 Residues of chocolate have been found in ceramic vessels discovered in archaeological sites dating to the Early Formative Period (1900–900 BCE). Henderson and Joyce 2006.
- 2 In the 1570s the royal physician Francisco Hernández wrote that the drink was made with *cacahuatl* (Nahuatl for “cacao water”). William Bright suggests that the word *chocolatl* does not occur in Mexican colonial sources, but was referred to as *cacauatl*, meaning “a drink made from cacao,” in Campbell 1977, p. 104.
- 3 Coe and Coe 2003, p. 49, with an illustration of the jar from a tomb at Río Azul, Guatemala.
- 4 The codex is a document illustrated by Mesoamerican scribes around 1540 with explanatory writings by Spanish missionaries. It contains information on local religious practices, rituals related to disease and death, and calendars.
- 5 Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de nueva España* (General History of the Things of New Spain), 1577. Ms. in Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.
- 6 However, Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566), a contemporary chronicler of the Spanish colonisation of the Caribbean, denounced Oviedo as “one of the greatest tyrants, thieves, and destroyers of the Indies, whose *Historia* contains almost as many lies as pages.”
- 7 Peter Maryr D’Anghera, *De Orbe Novo* (1534), vol. 1.
- 8 Coe and Coe 2003, pp. 94–95.
- 9 See Torras and Yun 1999 and Cruz 1996.
- 10 Coe and Coe 2003, p. 107.
- 11 For example: Marradón 1685, pp. 423–45; Valverde Turices 1624; and Colmenero de Ledesma 1631, p. 14. See Fattacciu 2012.
- 12 Veryard 1701, p. 273.
- 13 Coe and Coe 2003, pp. 125–78.
- 14 *Infanta Maria Josefa Carmela of Spain*, by Giuseppe Bonito. Galleria Caylus, Madrid.
- 15 Eberhard 2022.
- 16 See Mild 2017.
- 17 Krahe 2016, p. 78 note 85.
- 18 Houston 2002, pp. 231–32.
- 19 Savage and Newman 1985, pp. 75–76.
- 20 Coe and Coe 2003, p. 120.
- 21 Krahe 2016, p. 78 note 85.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 80, citing Kuwayama 1997, p. 16, and López Cervantes 1976–77.
- 23 The term refers to a bell-shaped cup made of tin-glazed pottery (*loza*), mainly used for chocolate and probably from Mexico. See Krahe 2016, p. 540.
- 24 Krahe 2016, p. 397.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 182.
- 27 Lyon 1902, p. 11.
- 28 Clarence-Smith 2000, p. 13.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 30 Bugbee 1886, pp. 39–40.
- 31 Delbourgo 2011.
- 32 Graham and Skowroneck 2016.
- 33 Pierce 2012, p. 165.
- 34 Coe and Coe 2003, p. 125.
- 35 Fitzpatrick 1939, p. 198.
- 36 Clark 1996, pp. 273–74.
- 37 Grivetti and Shapiro 2009.

64

Chocolate pot

China, Jingdezhen, late 18th century

Porcelain, wood, rattan, height 21 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00862]

This Chinese porcelain pot was probably originally made for pouring coffee, then repurposed in Mexico as a chocolate pot. The metal handle, wrapped with rattan for insulation, replaced the original porcelain one. The hole in the lid was also added later to allow a stirring rod to be inserted. When twirled rapidly between one's palms, the rod mixes the chocolate and raises the desired froth.



65

Portable box (petaca)

Mexico, 17th or 18th century

Bamboo, leather, pita or agave fibre, linen, iron fittings, 31 × 47 × 37 cm
Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05518]

Petacas are containers that held vessels and utensils used to serve chocolate. The interior is divided into compartments to hold the items securely. Elites in Mexico and Europe enjoyed cups of hot, frothy chocolate in the afternoon. *Petacas* carried the equipment used to prepare and serve chocolate when travelling.



Jar with metal cover

China, Jingdezhen, late 17th century

Porcelain, metal, height 33 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [07392]



Coconut-shell cup

Mexico, 17th or 18th century

Coconut, silver, pearls, height 12 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00865]

This cup was used by European to drink hot chocolate. The Spanish were introduced to chocolate by the peoples they encountered when colonising Mexico in the early sixteenth century. By 1585, chocolate was imported from Veracruz to Seville, and it quickly became a much-loved indulgence at the Spanish court, indispensable in high society but too expensive for others.

Made from the shell of a coconut, the cup is fitted with silver mounts to add elegance and richness. The surface is entirely carved with floral patterns. The patterns continue under the silver mounts, demonstrating the separate processes involved in creating each component.

Coconuts were rare and exotic items when they were first brought to Europe from India and the Middle East in the thirteenth century. Some believed that they acted as a defence against poison. They became more commonplace after trade was established with the Americas in the sixteenth century, but retained their allure as drinking vessels that were highly desirable in both Spain and its colonies. CO



68

Coconut-shell cup

Mexico, 18th or 19th century

Coconut, gold, height 14.6 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00863]

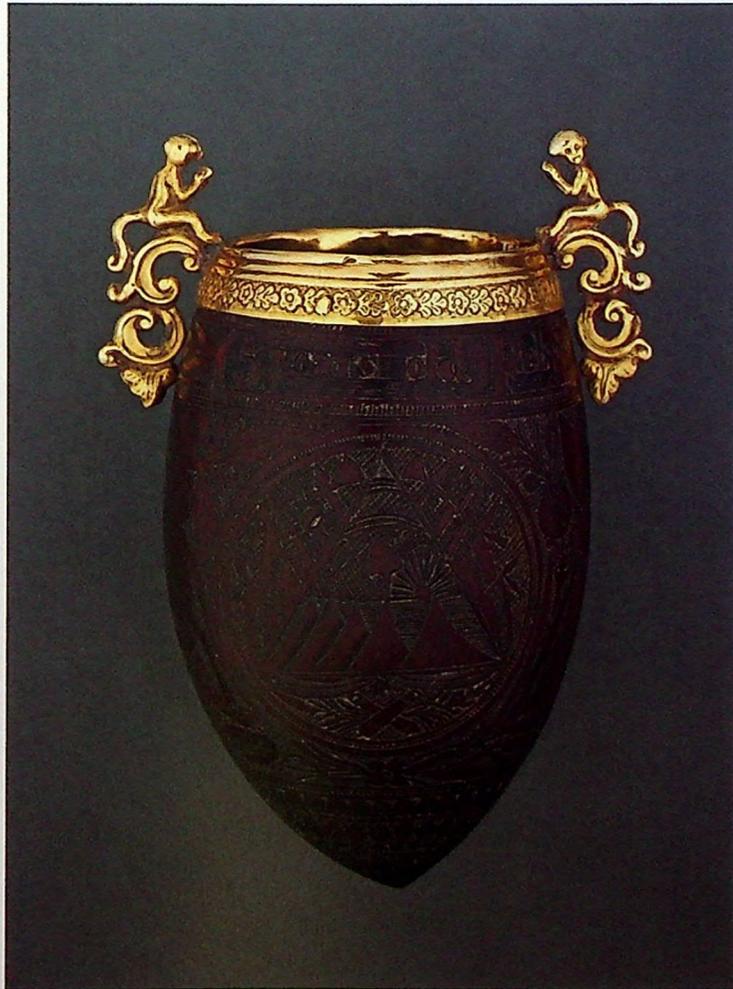
69

Coconut-shell cup

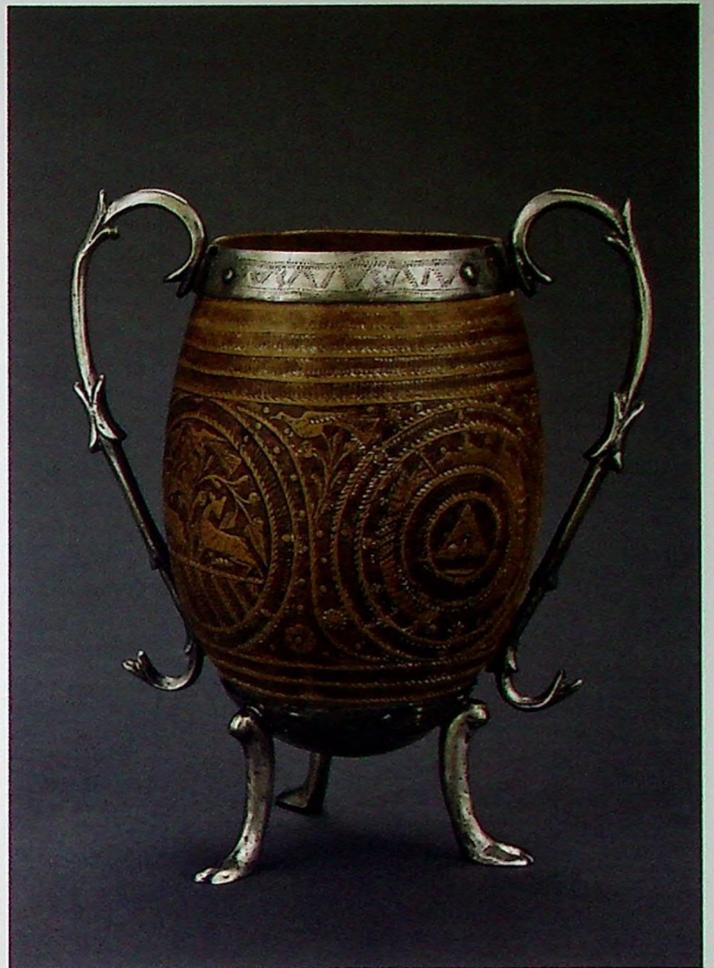
Mexico, 17th or 18th century

Coconut, silver, height 14 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2022-00864]



67



68

Chocolate stand (*mancerina*)

China, 18th century

Porcelain, diameter 23 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum, Gift of Kennie Ting [2022-00043]



These large saucers with cupholders in the centre were made for serving chocolate. The form was designed to catch spilled liquid and to avoid burning fingers on the hot cups. The tray could be used to hold pastries.

The term *mancerina* is said to have come from the 2nd Marquis of Mancera, viceroy of New Spain from 1664 to 1673, who is recorded as having first served chocolate in 1640. *Mancerinas* were probably first made in silver, then copied in ceramics.



71

Chocolate stand (*mancerina*)

China, 18th century

Porcelain, diameter 21.6 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2021-00538]

72

Chocolate stand (*mancerina*)

Mexico, Puebla, late 18th century

Tin-glazed earthenware, diameter 23 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [05080]



73

Chocolate stand (*mancerina*)

Mexico, 18th century

Silver, diameter 23 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [5171]

74

Chocolate stand (*mancerina*)

China, 18th century

Copper, enamels, diameter 22 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [01220-02]



Japanese seminary paintings in Nagasaki, Macao, and Manila

Yoshie Kojima

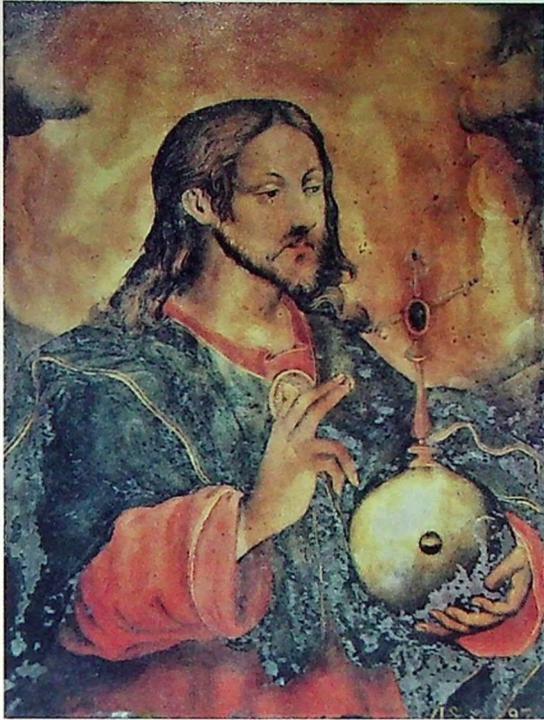
In Nagasaki around 1590, the Italian Jesuit painter Giovanni Cola (1558–1626) founded a “seminário dos pintores”, literally a seminary of painters.¹ The disciples of this school produced numerous paintings, including secular ones, that demonstrate an acquaintance with Western art. Because of the persecution of Christians in Japan, in 1614 Cola and some of his students were forced to flee to Macao, where he died twelve years later. The works of art produced by this school very likely survive not only in Japan but also in Macao and Manila. We will focus on the oil paintings *Archangel Michael Holding a Monstrance*, owned by the Diocese of Macao, and the *Madonna of the Rosary* in the church of San Agustin, Manila.

None of Giovanni Cola's works has been identified, except for a small drawing of the *Salvator Mundi* which I found in his signed letter written in Macao in 1582, before he left on his mission to Nagasaki.² Perhaps the best-known of Cola's disciples was the Chinese-Japanese painter Jacob Niwa, called Ni Yichen 倪一誠 in Chinese. Niwa's only signed and dated work depicts a subject also frequently treated by Cola, the *Salvator Mundi* (fig. 1). On copper and dated 1597, this painting is now in the Tokyo University Library. It demonstrates that Niwa had thoroughly absorbed Cola's Western style of painting, despite some awkwardness in the representation of the hands.

Although many of Cola's disciples remain anonymous, the characteristics of individual artists can be identified. For example, the *Madonna of the Snow* (fig. 2), a delicate image in watercolour on traditional Japanese paper, differs substantially from Niwa's *Salvator Mundi* in that the facial features are more clearly defined and the eyes are larger.³ Similar features are found in *Western Kings on Horseback* (Suntory Museum, Tokyo). Two works, *Western Monk and Two Children* and *Western Genre Scene* (figs. 3, 4), share other stylistic similarities, with some of the faces being delicate and upturned, with a particular expression and small pupils. Despite the variations within Cola's school, it is possible to recognise certain common denominators, such as thin, arched eyebrows, subtle and small folds, and delicate tonalities.

These characteristics must have been derived from Cola's own work, not only because he was the founder of the school, but also because he was the first Western painter to arrive in Japan. Scholars have investigated Cola's career exclusively through Jesuit documents. We know that he was born around 1558 in Nola, near Naples. In December 1577, he entered the Jesuit novitiate, and after only four years was sent to Japan. By way of Goa, Malacca, and Macao, he arrived in Nagasaki in July 1582. After spending some time there, he began to teach painting, and he soon had enough students to constitute a veritable art school. The seminary became very active after 1590, even though civil wars forced it to relocate several times around Nagasaki. The Japanese disciples of the school did not create original works of art, but rather faithfully copied Western art, mainly creating engravings analogous to Spanish colonial art, and in many cases the images were a patchwork of multiple prints. Cola apparently proved to be an effective teacher. In 1594 the Jesuit Pedro Gómez reported on the students' paintings: “with most perfections in colour and likeness, so afterwards, among fathers and brothers, many could not distinguish which were the ones they made and which had been made in Rome.”⁴

Cola was approximately nineteen years old when he entered the Society of Jesus. In Renaissance Italy, it was common to begin an art apprenticeship around the age of twelve or thirteen, so by the time he entered the Society he may already have received artistic training. I believe he was trained in the workshop of Giovan Bernardo Lama (1508–1579).⁵ Like Cola, Lama was from Nola, and he is known to have had a large workshop in Naples with numerous assistants and disciples. Intriguingly, Giordano Bruno, a famous theorist executed by fire for heresy, was a friend of Lama. Bruno represented Lama in the comedy *Candelaio* as a rich and pompous gentleman, suggesting that Lama's numerous



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

- Fig.1 *Salvator Mundi* (detail), dated 1597. Jacob Niwa. Oil on copper. Tokyo University Library.
- 2 *Madonna of the Snow* (detail). Jacob Niwa (Ni Yichén), early 17th century. Ink on paper, hanging scroll. Twenty-Six Martyrs Museum, Nagasaki.
- 3 *Western monk and two children* (detail). Disciple of Giovanni Cola, late 16th or early 17th century. Ink on paper, hanging scroll. Kobe City Museum.
- 4 *Western genre scene* (detail). Disciple of Giovanni Cola, late 16th or early 17th century. Ink on paper, hanging scroll. Tokyo National Museum.

commissions earned him a very good living. The characteristics of Lama's work and his workshop align with those of Cola's school, not only in terms of the subtle brushwork and the soft tonality of colours, but also in regard to a certain weakness in the drawing and modelling of figures (fig. 5).

The Archangel Michael Holding a Monstrance somewhat resembles the works of Lama, as seen in the delicate folds of clothing and decorative motifs in gold (fig. 6). These rather archaic decorations in gold were common in Habsburg-controlled domains, including Naples. The warm tonality and the delicate, graceful expression of faces and gestures are characteristic of Lama and his workshop, distinct from the muscular expression of the human body and the strong tonality of the Tuscan painters Giorgio Vasari and Marco Pino, who also worked in Naples around the same time. It is possible that this Neapolitan style found a ready reception in East Asia, as its soft colours and delicate brushwork has a similar feeling to the ink wash and watercolour painting that was prevalent in Japan and China. Works by Cola's school exhibit parallels to Asian art, for example, in the blank backgrounds. Some figures convey an artificial

Fig. 5 *Calling of the Apostles Peter and Andrew* (detail), 1570s. Giovan Bernardo Lama (Italian, 1508–1579). Oil on canvas. Chiesa di Gesù e Maria, Naples.

6 *Archangel Michael holding a monstrance*, ca. 1600–1607. Probably by Jacob Niwa (Chinese-Japanese). Oil on wood. Diocese de Macau.



expression – likely a result of the fact that Cola's disciples never saw Westerners in everyday clothes or scenery, not to mention Western women or classical statues in Roman armour. Cola's disciples had no choice but to stretch their imaginations as they consulted Western paintings and prints.⁶

Archival records indicate that the *Archangel Michael* was executed for the Jesuit Church of Saint Paul in Macao, constructed in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The annual letter from the Macao college in 1608 states that a gilded altar panel bearing the image of Saint Michael had been placed in the church the previous year. However, Cola and his disciples did not arrive in Macao until 1614. Based on an analysis of dates, César Guillen Nuñez suggests that Cola's disciple Jacob Niwa painted this work.⁷ Niwa's painting skill had become known among Jesuits in China, including Matteo Ricci. Niwa was called to Macao to work for the Church of Saint Paul around 1600 and returned again in 1606. The attribution of the painting to Niwa becomes all the more likely when we compare *Archangel Michael* with Niwa's signed *Salvator Mundi* (fig. 1). Both show the same characteristic shape of the ears and eyelid lines, as well as the same awkward design of the hands.

The iconography of the *Archangel Michael Holding a Monstrance* is very unusual. Michael is rarely shown holding a monstrance, while behind the oval crystal is a representation of the Crucifixion. As has been argued quite extensively, the iconography of Saint Michael has strong Counter-Reformation connections, since the militant archangel represented the battle against Protestant heretics in Europe and pagans in Asia and the New World. The subject of Michael displaying the body of Christ can be linked to the doctrine of transubstantiation, which was confirmed by the Council of Trent in 1551.

While images of Saint Michael were frequently produced, an image of the saint with the Eucharist is extremely unusual. I have found only two other paintings depicting this specific subject, both made in Mexico in the eighteenth century.⁸ One, by the Mexican painter Pedro Gomes Gusiunum (fig. 7), was created well after Niwa's painting in Macao, but may have been based on the same source.

In contrast to these Mexican versions, in *Archangel Michael* in Macao, the chain hanging from the monstrance is not attached to the dragon but falls on a square object that likely represents a seal of the abyss. According to the *Book of Revelation*, an angel with a key and a great chain put the devil in bonds in the abyss for a thousand years.

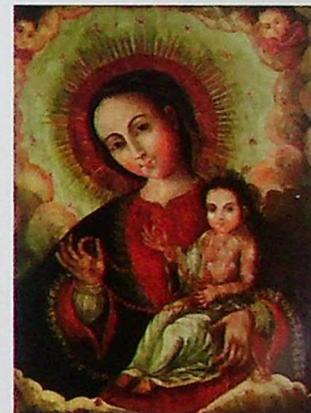
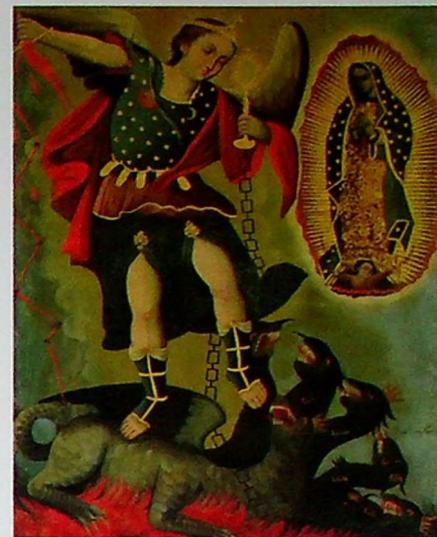
The presence of the painting *Archangel Michael Holding a Monstrance* in Macao has significance

because the city served as the centre of exchange in a trading network that extended to Nagasaki and Manila. Moreover, a very similar representation of *Archangel Michael Holding a Monstrance* can be found in Mexico. The Spanish mendicant orders began to establish themselves in Spanish America and subsequently in the Philippines, while the Jesuits, backed by the Portuguese monarchy, promoted missionary work in China and Japan. However, the Spanish mendicant orders also penetrated Japan from the end of the sixteenth century onward, in part thanks to the Treaty of Zaragoza of 1529. Under this treaty, Portugal and Spain divided the eastern Pacific vertically, with the territorial line passing through Japan.

In this historical and religious context, it is reasonable to believe that a disciple of Giovanni Cola executed the *Madonna of the Rosary* in the treasury of San Agustin in Manila (fig. 8). At present the painting is attributed to a Mexican-influenced artist from Bohol (an island off of Cebu), made in the eighteenth century, since another work by a Bohol artist is nearly identical in composition (fig. 9).⁹ However, the two works do not resemble each other in terms of brushwork or style. I argue that the work in figure 9 is a Filipino copy of the *Madonna of the Rosary* in San Agustin (fig. 8). On the other hand, the execution of the San Agustin painting is consistent with that of *Archangel Michael* in Macao and the signed *Salvator Mundi* by Jacob Niwa, particularly in the characteristic shape of the ears, eyebrows, and lips, as well as the decorative motifs in gold, especially on the edges of fabrics. In addition, the gestures and upward glances recall many figures produced by Cola's school (figs. 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10).

It should be noted that the subject of this painting is the *Madonna of the Rosary*, originally an important image for the Dominican Order, based on the story of Saint Dominic being given the rosary by the Virgin and the infant Christ. However, after the victory of the Catholic League over the Ottoman Turks at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 was attributed to the miracle of the *Madonna of the Rosary*, the subject became a symbol of the victory of the Catholic Church over paganism and an important icon for both the Spanish mendicant orders and the Portuguese Jesuits.¹⁰

It remains unknown where the *Madonna of the Rosary* of San Agustin was painted. One might assume it was executed in Japan or Macao by a Japanese disciple from Cola's *seminário* and then sent to Manila. On the other hand, it is possible that it was painted in Manila itself since many Japanese Christians, including Takayama Ukon, as well as Christian feudal lords, fled to Manila in 1614. Interestingly, the painting's connection to three other works in the Philippines has never



FROM TOP

- Fig. 7 *Archangel Michael holding the monstrance, and the Virgin of Guadalupe*, second half of the 18th century. Pedro Gomes Gusiunum (Mexican). Oil on canvas. Private collection.
- 8 *Madonna of the Rosary*, around 1600. Disciple of Giovanni Cola. Oil on wood. Treasury of San Agustin, Manila.
- 9 *Madonna of the Rosary*, second half of the 18th century. Philippines, Bohol. Oil on wood. Private collection.
- 10 Detail of fig. 8.



Fig. 11 Three paintings representing the *Madonna of the Rosary* by a disciple of Giovanni Cola (fig. 8). Collection of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, on display at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Manila. From left: Bohol artist, early 19th century; Antonio Malantico (Filipino, 1820–1885), 1860; Mariano Asuncion (Filipino, 1802–1885), mid-19th century.

been discussed. These other paintings, currently assigned to the nineteenth century, display compositions very similar to the San Agustin *Madonna of the Rosary* (fig. 11). One can imagine that the exquisite *Madonna of the Rosary* of San Agustin was so highly revered that versions of it were produced in the Philippines.

It is significant that the art of Cola's school spread to Macao and the Philippines. This is not surprising, as Western missionaries and merchants in the early seventeenth century moved frequently between the three Asian ports of Macao, Manila, and Nagasaki. The trade between these centres began to flourish from the late sixteenth century.¹¹ It was not Europeans but Asians who played a substantial role in the trade of gold, silver, silk, ceramics, and other commodities in the region. European missionaries took advantage of this trade to earn money for their missions, proselytise, and spread holy images. It is thought that the art of Cola's school in Nagasaki was transmitted to Macao and the Philippines through this pre-existing Asian network of exchange, which in turn found connection with Mexico via the Pacific Ocean through Spanish mendicant orders and merchants.

- 1 For Cola's school of painting and missionary art in Japan, see: d'Elia 1942; Vlam 1976; Sakamoto et al. 1997; Bailey 1999, pp. 52–81; Curvelo 2007; Kojima 2021.
- 2 Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu (ARSI), Goa 47, fol. 226v.
- 3 Kojima 2014.
- 4 "Lettera Annua del Giappone dal Marzo del 1593 fino al Marzo 1594", Roma 1597. Rome, Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Jap-Sin 52, fol. 20r.
- 5 De Maio 1983, Zezza 1991, Leone de Castris 1996, Cueto and Zezza 2018.
- 6 On the role of Flemish prints on the migration of Catholic devotional images, see Melion 2009.
- 7 Guillen Nuñez 2009, pp. 106–16.
- 8 Mexico City 2001, pp. 215, 232, 257.
- 9 Pasadena 1984, p. 1.
- 10 Camara 2003.
- 11 Nakajima 2013.



The legacy of the Manila galleons in the arts of Mexico

Porcelain and lacquer

Abraham Villavicencio¹

The Manila galleon trade was a cultural bridge between Asia and the Americas for two and a half centuries, from its establishment in 1565 until 1815. The artistic works from regions as remote as India, China, Japan, and the Philippines which reached the Spanish vicerealties in the Americas left an indelible trace both on the taste of society and on a multitude of local artistic expressions, including ceramics, furniture, painting, and textiles. The people of Mexico (New Spain) had no clear understanding of the Asian cultures which produced the products carried by the galleons. The vast, distant, and enigmatic territories on the other side of the South Sea – the Pacific Ocean – were identified generally as China, and it was even believed that nearly all the goods that arrived on the galleons were Chinese.²

Every year, the arrival of the Manila galleon on the western coast of Mexico was cause for great celebration. The goods were unloaded in Acapulco and then transported to several other destinations. A portion was acquired by merchants from Mexico City, who took them to the capital of the vicerealty; others were distributed to cities such as Puebla, Valladolid (today Morelia), Guadalajara, and Durango, either legally or by smuggling, while an important share of the cargo continued to Veracruz to be shipped across the Atlantic to Spain. The objects that remained in Mexico decorated the households of the economic and political elites, while also enriching the altars of chapels and oratories. Silk textiles were incorporated into the gala attire of various social groups and castes, just as Asian spices and fruits were added to the daily diet of Mexico.

Since the first arrival of Asian goods in Mexico, various objects were adapted according to taste and the needs of daily life. Chinese porcelain objects were fitted with metal mounts, sometimes silver, to enhance their beauty or to adapt them to new functions, for example, by turning a vase into a candlestick holder or a ewer. The great admiration for Chinese objects resulted in the local production of luxury goods which imitated the shapes and ornamental motifs of Chinese objects. These new works of art represent a complex process of selection, transformation, and adaptation of foreign artistic languages to the cultural identity and aesthetic values of another society. Many artistic and cultural expressions that passed from Asia to Mexico survive in the traditional arts of Michoacán, Guerrero, Puebla, Oaxaca, and Chiapas.

From phoenix to quetzal: The white pottery of Puebla

Among the Asian treasures most appreciated in Mexico was Chinese porcelain. Bowls, plates, vases, and tableware arrived in the first decades of transpacific galleon trade. For centuries, China had produced porcelain in a wide range of qualities, from court objects to simple domestic vessels, to porcelain made specifically for export. During the second half of the sixteenth century, porcelain of high quality arrived in Mexico, where it was valued as a luxury item by an elite market. However, a century later it was possible to purchase Chinese porcelain of various qualities and prices, which allowed practically all households to have some porcelain objects in their houses, oratories, corridors, or rooftops.

The first recorded pieces of Chinese porcelain in Mexico were blue and white. This became a definitive influence on the pottery workshops in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region, where blue-glazed ceramics have been produced since around 1550 or 1570, and continue to be made. The pottery makers of Puebla moulded their pieces with local clay. In order to emulate the white colour of Chinese porcelain (which is made with kaolin and petuntse), they employed a white glaze made with lead and tin oxides. In the first ordinances of the potters of Puebla from 1653, the basic recipe was established that for each arroba (kilogram) of lead, six pounds of tin had to be added.³ The blue glaze used to paint on the white background is composed of cobalt and manganese oxides, a formula very similar to the one used by Chinese ceramists. Unlike the Chinese artists, their counterparts from Puebla took advantage of the density of this blue glaze to create decorations in low relief (cats. 44, 45). Although they mastered the polychrome glazes of European tradition and were acquainted with Chinese

multicoloured porcelain, the pottery makers of Puebla made blue-and-white a distinctive feature of their work from the 1650s until the end of the New Spain viceroyalty in 1821. Currently, nine certified workshops retain these same techniques and continue using both the white tin glaze and the cobalt oxide blue – a legacy of the galleon trade.⁴

Chinese porcelain made for one purpose was sometimes adapted in Mexico for an entirely different function. Such practical needs in turn led to innovative forms in local ceramic production. For example, Chinese porcelain jars with a square base, straight walls, and inclined shoulders were intended to store tea (cat. 39, another example is in the Museo Nacional del Virreinato). Although made for export to the West, these jars did not meet the needs of consumers in Mexico, where chocolate was the most popular hot drink. An eighteenth-century painting shows how these jars became vases (p. 81, fig. 4).⁵ This painting depicts the Christ of Chalma, a highly venerated image, whose sanctuary is located in the State of Mexico.⁶ The jars shown at his feet are Chinese Imari ware, with decorations of blue and red underglazes, highlighted with gold lustre.⁷ Puebla potters also replicated this type of square bottle (cats. 39, 40). The subtle scenes of flowers, landscapes, and gardens in the Chinese examples became fleshy plant motifs in Puebla ware. Symbolic and ornamental motifs inspired a hybrid repertoire of decorative shapes and patterns.

The decoration of Puebla ceramics often followed the compositional strategies of Chinese porcelain. For example, the segmentation on the edges of plates and basins (*lebrillos*) from Puebla is derived from kraak export porcelain from the period around 1600. A large Puebla jar shows four large vegetal lobes that descend from the neck, which alternate with four medallions where fancifully dressed figures and parrots appear (cat. 41). The same organisational pattern can be seen in a Chinese jar (cat. 42), which demonstrates that Puebla artists studied and reinterpreted Chinese porcelain.

Mexican ceramicists were also influenced by European prints where stereotypes about the inhabitants of Asia were created from stories and drawings by travellers. The bowl with the depiction of a man holding a parasol as he walks through a field of cacti shows how Puebla potters created artistic versions of life beyond the Pacific Ocean, fashioned from visual sources and local references (fig. 1). A Chinese figure walking with a parasol became a recurring motif in the West. The Dutch illustrator Cornelius Pronk created prints of Chinese women walking with a parasol, which were sent to China where they were used on porcelain services. In the case of the Puebla *lebrillo*, the main



Fig. 1 Basin. Mexico, Puebla, late 17th or early 18th century. Tin-glazed earthenware. Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City.

figure responds to this motif, however, the way it was surrounded by plants, possibly cacti, and the poly-lobed arches that decorate the walls of the work, shows the hybridisation of various visual languages that took place in Mexico.

Puebla potters also added mythical animals like the phoenix to their creations, as well as the *rui* cloud motif and scenes of wise men or children playing in open spaces surrounded by *pailu* fences. Traditional Chinese flowers such as lotuses, chrysanthemums, and peonies make their appearance. Each of these elements was reinterpreted by incorporating local references.⁸ The symbolism of most of these motifs were unknown to the Mexican ceramicists, so they became merely decorative patterns, as happened with cloud motifs. However, in some cases the fusion of forms retains the significance of the original. The phoenix, Chinese symbol of the empress, was assimilated with the quetzal, a bird with beautiful plumage that had been highly appreciated since pre-Columbian times (cat. 43). As time passed, the Pueblan Chinese-like ceramics came to occupy a place in Mexican taste as important as that of Chinese porcelain, as confirmed by eighteenth-century inventories.⁹

**Japanese heritage:
From *byobu* to screen and from
maki-e to *maque***

Among the treasures that arrived in Mexico in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were painted screens and lacquered furniture from Japan. The trade in these objects had been established by the Portuguese through the port of Nagasaki, as illustrated by a number of Japanese screens which depict the arrival of ships and the

exchange of goods. Japan began to produce luxury goods for the West, including chests, cabinets, shrines, reliquaries, and other objects. This production, often called *nanban* 南蛮 (“southern barbarian”), flourished around 1580 until 1639, when most foreign trade was closed by Japan. This category of Japanese export art form left a mark on Mexico, as shown in estate records between 1660 and 1730. This gap between the *nanban* period itself and its influence on Mexico maybe due to several factors. First, local artists may have later produced work in emulation of Japanese objects in order to satisfy the demand of Mexican consumers who admired Japanese creations. Secondly, Mexican inventories refer to Japanese works, mainly lacquerware, which were called *maques*. It is also very likely that some Japanese pieces continued to arrive through Chinese traders who took them to Manila to be sent on the galleons.¹⁰ Finally, Japanese lacquered furniture was greatly valued, and may have been modified and adapted in order to maintain their function.

Folding screens are one of the main artistic expressions that Japan bequeathed to the West and, therefore, to Mexico. These works, which can be considered paintings as well as furniture, take their name from the Japanese *byōbu* 屏風 (“wind screen”). In viceregal inventories in New Spain, they are called *biogos*, *biobos*, *beobos*, or *biombos*.¹¹ It remains unclear how Japanese screens arrived in Mexico, but their influence can be strongly felt. The *Biombo of the Palace of the Viceroy of Mexico*, dated between 1676 and 1700 (fig. 2), shows the headquarters of the government, the city hall, the Royal and Pontifical University, and the mint. Also depicted are the shops of the market (Parián, where, among other products, merchandise from the galleons was sold), stalls with palm roofs where vegetables are sold, and fountains where figures come to get water. Ladies and gentlemen dressed according to the customs of the first half of the seventeenth century walk through the streets, while a carriage pulled by three pairs of horses comes into the square.

These scenes of daily life are interrupted by golden clouds which are very similar to those found in Japanese painting, for example, works of the Kanō school which represent storm clouds and irregularities of the territory. It is striking that, just as the Japanese artists marked reliefs similar to textile brocades on the clouds of their screens, Mexican painters followed their example, but simplified the patterns, as seen in this screen, so that the clouds have a diagonal pattern. However, the *biombo* has a golden frame with engraving that resembles textile brocades very similar to the motifs present both in the clouds and in the frames of Japanese screens for the Western market.

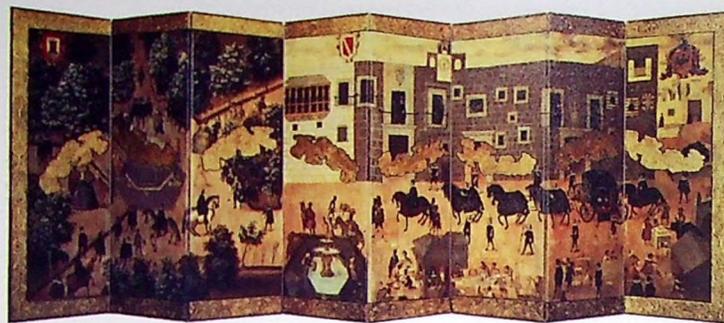


Fig. 2 *Biombo of the Palace of the Viceroy of Mexico*. Mexico, between 1676 and 1700. Wood, fabric, oil. Museo de América, Madrid.

Asian lacquered furniture also left a strong mark on the applied arts of the viceregal period and the present. Two Japanese lacquer techniques had a strong influence on Mexican art: *raden*, which consisted of inlaying small pieces of mother-of-pearl and bone, and *maki-e*, a word that means gold, since gold and silver dust was applied to lacquer to create ornamental motifs. Because of this technique, Asian lacquer became known as *maque* in Mexico.¹²

The most obvious influence of Japanese lacquers on Mexican art can be found in furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl, produced in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose geometric and foliate patterns are directly inspired by Japanese designs. However, the most interesting and complex interpretation of Japanese lacquer are Mexican paintings on wood with embedded shells, made between the 1650s and 1750s. Called *enconchados*, these paintings have a unique luminosity because of the mother-of-pearl under the paint layers. The pieces of shell are normally set under the costumes and architectural details.¹³ For the most part, the shell fragments are irregular, although there are some known works that show regular cuts.¹⁴

The themes taken up in *enconchado* painting include, first of all, the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, considered the founding story of New Spain, usually depicted in a series of several paintings.¹⁵ Secondly, there are historical cycles of battles associated with the Habsburg kingdoms, which were normally based on European prints. For example, the González brothers made a series of six *enconchados* depicting the Battles of Alessandro Farnese.¹⁶ The only *enconchado* screen known was produced by the González workshop and belonged to the viceroy José Sarmiento de Valladares. It represents *The Sieges of Vienna and Belgrade* (Museo Nacional del Virreinato and the Brooklyn Museum). The reverse shows hunting scenes. Subtle vegetal details appear at its base, inspired by the designs of Japanese lacquered furniture in a pictorial style, produced

between 1630 and 1690, mainly for trade with the Netherlands. A Japanese desk from that period is preserved in Museo Casa del Alfeñique, Puebla. These works may have come to Mexico through Chinese merchants who traded them in the Philippines before they crossed the Pacific on the galleons. It is likely that the pictorial style lacquers also left their mark in the very delicate strokes used to outline characters or represent trees, and mountains, which are seen on several panels, such as in *The Battle of Zempoala* and *The Conquest of Cholula* (Museo Franz Mayer).

The third group of themes that the *enconchado* painters captured was devotional. Series of paintings included the lives of Christ and the Virgin, allegories of the Creed, lives of saints, and devotions to the Virgin Mary, especially the Virgin of Guadalupe. A work signed in 1696 by Nicolás Correa depicts the *Wedding at Cana* (fig. 3), which stands out for the black background that dominates the composition, similar to the urushi lacquer, also due to the different sizes of mother-of-pearl applications, which were delicately placed to render the figures' clothing, architectural frames, silverware, and wood grain of the floor. The mother-of-pearl cutouts were painted with warm ochre and gold tones, reminiscent of the metallic sheen of Japanese lacquer. The Virgin of Guadalupe signed by Agustín del Pino (one of only three works are known to have been made by the artist) shows the image surrounded by roses (cat. 59). Both the Virgin's tunic and mantle, as well as the vegetal ornaments, are inlaid with mother-of-pearl. It has a black background frame (which possibly did not belong to it initially, since it hides the signature), where the shell applications form birds and flowers with rounded petals. These types of frames, like the trimmings that outline historical panels or other religious scenes, were also made by painters and derive from decorative patterns typical to *nanban* art. Some frames, like the one mentioned here, were very similar to Japanese furniture; while others (such as the trimmings of the *Conquest* panels of Museo Nacional del Virreinato and Museo Franz Mayer) incorporated local details, such as fruits of various species and colours. The art of the frames also expressed the way in which Japanese art was interpreted and appropriated in New Spain.¹⁷

The impact of Asian art on Mexico continues in the present. For example, the reception of Japanese lacquerware in New Spain allows us to understand the source of indented patterns in Michoacan *maques*. In the *maque* furniture produced in the workshops of Pátzcuaro, Uruapan, and Olinalá, Chinese motifs often appear in combination with hunting scenes and architectural elements drawn from the European tradition. The state of Mihoacán lay on the main route between Acapulco and Mexico City, and the town of Pátzcuaro was the location of

the royal customs, where galleon merchandise was inspected. Artists and residents in the region had intimate knowledge of the Asian objects brought by the galleons. Antonio de Anciola y Lavayen and his son Juan Ignacio, owned estates on the road from Pátzcuaro to Acapulco, and had a flock of mules which carried goods from Acapulco. Cayetano Gómez de Soria traded in both Acapulco and the port of San Blas; his house in Morelia had a "reception room... adorned with beautiful Chinese vases, ivory figures, and paintings brought expressly by the ships of the East."¹⁸



Fig. 3 *Wedding at Cana*, 1693. Nicolás Correa (Mexican, 1660–1720). Oil on wood with mother-of-pearl. Hispanic Society of America, New York.

- 1 Translated from Spanish by Antonio Quiroz Miranda.
- 2 Curiel 2007, pp. 301–3.
- 3 Pirouz-Moussavi 2017, pp. 107–30.
- 4 Ibid, pp. 33–95.
- 5 Ana Paulina Gámez in *Guía Museo Nacional de Arte* (Mexico City, 2006), p. 91, repr.
- 6 <https://g.co/arts/6xE8KLHWedewjwpqeA> accessed 2023.
- 7 Bonta de la Pezuela 2008, pp. 202, 207.
- 8 Curiel 2007, p. 307.
- 9 Ibid, p. 306.
- 10 China, Korea, and the Netherlands maintained commercial contact with Japan on certain islands. In the case of the Chinese, it was the Ryukyu Islands.
- 11 Curiel 1999. Curiel also mentions that there were screens intended to decorate the dais halls in Mexican stately homes, which is why they were called "rodaestrados." Other terms include "arrimador" and "arrimador de dextra."
- 12 In Spain, Asian lacquer is called "charol", but this term was rarely used in New Spain. Ocaña-Ruiz 2017, pp. 146–47.
- 13 Among the artists who have been identified as makers of *enconchados* are Juan and Miguel González, Nicolás Correa, Agustín del Pino, Pedro López Calderón, Antonio de Santander, and an artist identified as Rodulpho. Ocaña-Ruiz 2015, p. 76.
- 14 One is a Virgin of Guadalupe from the Capuchin convent of Castellón de la Plana, Valencia; and another of the same subject in a private collection, New York.
- 15 Examples include Museo de America, Madrid; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; the series divided between Museo Franz Mayer and Museo Nacional del Virreinato. The first and third are signed Juan and Miguel González, while the second is signed only by Miguel.
- 16 Based on prints by Romeyn de Hooghe. Ángeles Jiménez 2020 et al. pp. 22–23.
- 17 Ocaña-Ruiz 2007, pp. 519–22.
- 18 Garabana 1971, pp. 66–67.

Filipino furniture

It is almost impossible to identify individual furniture makers in the Philippines during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whether Chinese immigrants or local Filipino artists, or collaborations between them. Chinese styles and techniques were gradually integrated with local motifs to create hybrid forms, with many motifs being shared across Asia and Europe along the trade networks. The collection of San Agustin church in Manila, much of which can be documented to the seventeenth century, helps identify other pieces of Philippine furniture (see p. 19). For example, claw-and-ball feet emerging from beast masks and symmetrical scalloped carvings on the apron can be found in numerous pieces of Philippine furniture. Sometimes thought to have been made in Guangzhou and then exported to the Philippines, many of these works are made of tropical hardwoods, which points to an origin in the Philippines. Contemporary observers noted that there was a thriving community of Chinese furniture makers there who almost certainly collaborated with indigenous artists. co

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Altar table

Philippines, 18th century

Wood (*balayong*), metal, 70 × 80 × 50 cm

Paulino and Hetty Que

This type of altar table was commonly used in homes in the Philippines for the display of offerings or religious figures. Early Philippine examples like this one resemble Chinese tables, with curving legs that end with paws grasping balls. Beast masks with long tongues are at the top of each leg. Wide stretchers connect the legs to provide stability, while the short feet protect the furniture from moisture. Aspects of this design can be found in furniture made in China, Europe, and Southeast Asia. The *balayong* tree (*cassia*) is native to the Philippines.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, two regions noted for producing altar tables were Batangas and Baliuag. The demand for such pieces spread to other regions, including Bicol, Mindoro, and Cebu. CO



Chest

Philippines, 17th century

Wood (*kalantas*), metal, 100 × 55 × 65.5 cm

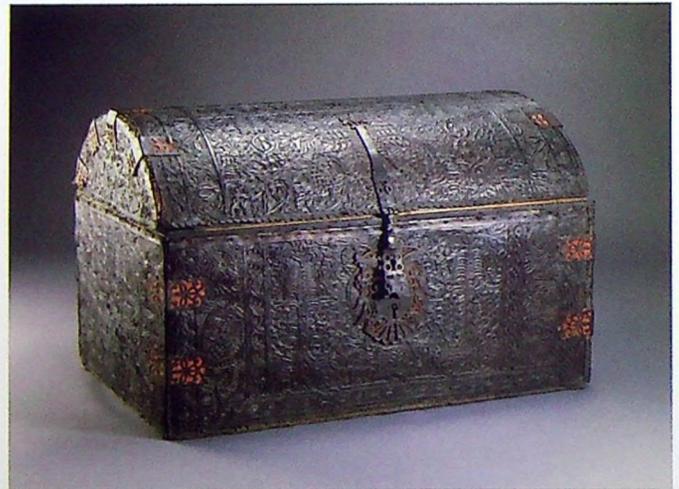
Paulino and Hetty Que

Flowers and swirling leaves have been carved in high relief on this chest. On the front, a hunter on horseback pursues a deer with his dog, while another hunter aims at a bird. The carving and colour of the *kalantas* wood give the impression that the chest is meant to imitate stamped leather furniture from Spain, Mexico, or Peru (fig.).

Leather furniture, traditionally believed to have originated in the Islamic world, was used in Spain throughout the Middle Ages, and also flourished in Mexico and Peru.¹ Simple wooden chests were covered with embossed and painted leather. Examples would have arrived in the Philippines, where they inspired local artists.

A chest of this size would have stored valuables on a voyage, since similar examples have been found in Mexico and Spain. Constructed from tropical hardwoods that were naturally resistant to insects and pleasantly fragrant, these chests were ideal containers for clothing and other important materials.² The wood used is *kalantas*, a type of mahogany found in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.

Antonio de Morga, a lawyer and official, wrote in 1609 that there was an abundance of trees in the Philippines: “There is plenty of cedar, which is called *kalanta*, and a finely coloured wood called *asana*, ebony, one kind finer than another, and other costly woods for all sorts of works.”³ The Spanish capitalised on the existing woodcarving traditions and use of hardwoods. A similar style of carving in ebony can be found in furniture made in Indonesia and Sri Lanka for the Dutch. CO



Chest. Peru, 18th century. Leather, wood, iron.
Brooklyn Museum, Augustus Healy Fund.

1 S. Shorto in Brooklyn 1996, pp. 280–83.

2 Rachel Kaplan in Los Angeles 2022, pp. 310–12.

3 De Morga 1909, p. 177: “Ay mucho cedro, que se llama calanta, y maderas finas coloradas, que se llama asana, evano, uno mas fino que otro, y otras maderas apreciadas, para todas obras.” Asana is also known as *narra* wood.



77

Box

Philippines, late 17th century

Wood, bone, silver, iron, 16 × 46 × 38 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04943]

This box displays several delightful designs made with bone inlaid into wood. On the top is an unidentified coat of arms while the corners are decorated with double birds surrounded by frilly leaves. The sides show chariots drawn by winged dragons, probably based on a European print. The scrolling vine and flower border resembles a popular design found in Chinese blue-and-white porcelain and Indian chintz, and which also appears in Mexican blue-and-white ceramics.



78

Armchair

Perhaps Philippines, 18th century

Painted and gilded wood (mahogany), gilded leather,
106.5 × 64.5 × 58 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04575-01]

This carved and gilded chair appears to be coated with red lacquer, as would be typical of Chinese export furniture. The wood is apparently mahogany, which would suggest that it might have been made by a Chinese artist working in the Philippines. The simple form with straight, flat arms originated in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The ornate leather back and seat are not original to the chair but were added later.

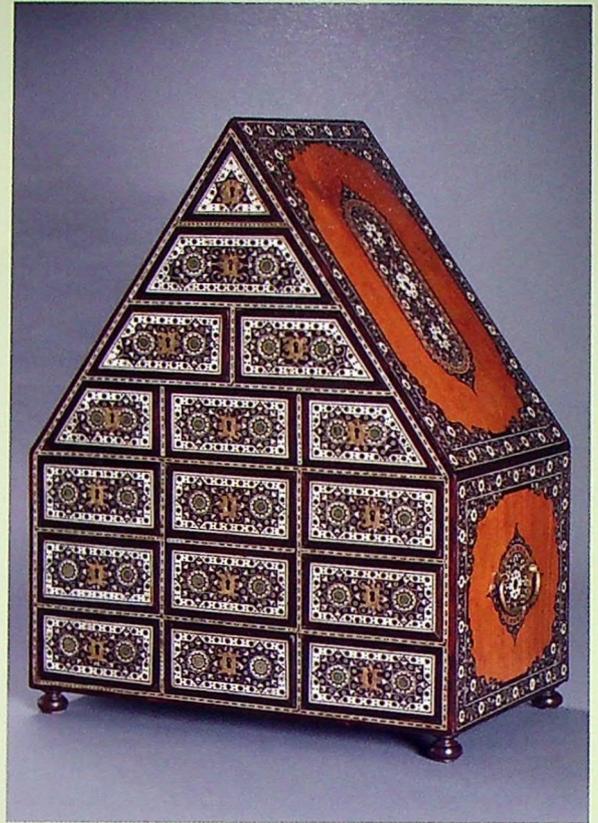


Writing cabinets

The writing cabinet enjoyed considerable popularity from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Essentially a small chest of drawers, it had a hinged front panel that could be used as a writing surface. The cabinet could usually be locked for transport or to secure valuable documents and goods. These intimate pieces of furniture invited close inspection and were often elaborately decorated. Furniture makers in the Americas and Asia contributed new motifs and materials to the genre, especially through the use of rare hardwoods and exotic materials such as tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and bone. Lacquered cabinets made in Asia were exported to the Americas and Europe. Decorative schemes were borrowed from the symbolic systems of China, Mexico, and the Renaissance to delight sophisticated connoisseurs. Spanish and Mexican colonial inventories of elite households often contained Spanish, Flemish, Neapolitan, German and Asian cabinets.¹

A distinguishing feature of this type of furniture made in the Philippines is that the inlays are usually made of bone rather than ivory. Contemporary pieces made in Gujarat, India, for the Portuguese market commonly employ ivory for inlay decoration. Ivory was not especially rare in the Philippines as it was used for religious sculpture. It may have been regarded as appropriate for sacred images, which in turn prevented its use on secular furniture. There may also have been a more pragmatic reason: bone was cheaper.²

In Spain's Nasrid period (1232–1492), artists in Granada often mixed ivory and bone in their inlaid furniture and this practice may have been transferred to Spanish colonial possessions.³ Both materials were typically shaped, carved, engraved, or pyrographed before being inserted into a wood support. co



Cabinet. India, Gujarat, 17th century. Tortoiseshell, ivory, wood, silver, metals. Asian Civilisations Museum [2015-00516].

1 Rivas Pérez 2013, p. 79.

2 Jose and Villegas 2004, p. 250.

3 Campos Carlés de Peña 2013, p. 90.

79

Writing cabinet with the arms of Mexico City

Manila, early 17th century

Wood, bone, silver, 32.5 × 42.2 × 33.6 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2019-00743]

While the basic form of this writing cabinet is European, the materials and decoration are connected with Chinese furniture making in the Philippines. Several features can be found in Chinese furniture, including the lion heads, paw-shaped feet at the corners, and the drawer pulls with lion heads.

The inlay decoration on the surface of the table is unusual in depicting the founding myth of Tenochtitlan, capital of the Mexica (Aztecs, see p. 19, fig. 7). A crowned eagle perches on a nopal flowering cactus, which grows atop the Aztec glyph for water. The eagle holds a snake in its beak. A nobleman at the left with a beaded necklace points to the bird.¹ His attire resembles that seen in an illustration of Acamapichtli, king of the Mexica of Tenochtitlan. On the right side, a noblewoman gestures with a necklace towards the eagle and holds a flowering branch. This motif was used as the coat of arms of Mexico, which suggests that the cabinet was made for an important person in New Spain, either on commission or as a gift. CO

Prov: Álvaro Roquette & Pedro Aguiar-Branco, Lisbon.



1 Crespo 2019, pp. 344–47.

Writing cabinet

Manila, 17th century

Wood (*balayong*), bone, iron, 45.5 × 32.5 × 33.5 cm

Fernando and Catherine Zobel de Ayala Collection

This cabinet exhibits imaginative variations on common designs found in Europe and China. The pattern of diagonal interlocking lines recalls Chinese patterns, while the motifs at the corners consist of two birds joined together to create an abstract flower – reminiscent of double-headed Habsburg eagle, but with a whimsical flavour.

Prov: acquired in Mexico.

Ref: Jose and Villegas 2004, p. 250.



81

Chest

Manila, 18th century

Wood (mahogany and dalbergia), bone,
brass, 76 × 120 × 56 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [04929]

On the front is an unidentified coat of arms, surmounted by a three-pointed coronet which identifies the patron as a viscount. The double-bird design seen on other cabinets appears at the corners. The escutcheon is flanked by two vases filled with flowers and pairs of birds resting on the stalks.



82

Cabinet of drawers

Philippines, around 1700

Woods, bone, silver, 60 × 81.5 × 43 cm

Family of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee

83

Writing cabinet

Philippines, around 1700

Woods, bone, iron, 60 × 84.5 × 45.5 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [00415]

Both of these cabinets are richly decorated with vines, figures, and fantastical animals, created by setting engraved pieces of bone into wooden panels. They share a characteristic type of segmented vine formed from interlocking C-shaped sections – rather than the continuous flowing tendrils often found in European and Chinese designs. This type of decoration is quite different from the presumably earlier inlaid furniture made by Chinese makers in the Philippines, which is sparer in decoration and often has a double bird motif (cats. 79–81). Most of these examples have claw-and-ball feet that emerge from animal masks. They have certain similarities with furniture made in India for the Portuguese market, for example, in the fine inlays and combination of European and Asian motifs.¹

In the cabinet with ten drawers (cat. 82), the centre drawer with a lock is decorated as though it were a coat of arms, with a crown above



1 Cat. 83 is referred to as seventeenth to eighteenth century Indo-Portuguese on the website of the Museo Franz Mayer.

the metal lock plate, flanked by two lions holding fly whisks. On either side of a lotus flower are male figures holding palm fronds and baskets. The combination of Chinese motifs (the lotus and lions), with European Renaissance design (the nudes) indicates that this cabinet was produced in a cross-cultural environment like Manila. Additional evidence indicates that the furniture maker was Chinese: most of drawers are marked with Chinese characters indicating their positions: 東, 中, 西 (right, middle, and left), with additional indications of above or below, 上, 下.

The top of the cabinet is decorated with vines from which two half-figures emerge. The lower apron of the cabinet may have been reconfigured to support a cover which is now missing. The original cabinet of drawers probably had neither a fall front nor a cover.

The writing cabinet with a hinged front (cat. 83) is densely inlaid with segmented vines. In the central oval medallion is a large bird spreading its wings and two smaller birds to either side. This motif closely resembles the Christian symbol of a pelican piercing its breast to feed its young, representing the sacrifice of Christ. A new base was added to the cabinet after it was made, apparently using the original feet. AC

Prov (cat. 82): Álvaro Roquette & Pedro Aguiar-Branco, Lisbon.



The global success of the Manila shawl

Helen Persson Swain

Richly embroidered square silk shawls with silk fringes, with or without knotting, can be found in museum collections all over the world. They are often called Manila shawl, or *mantónes de Manila* in Spanish, because they were sold and shipped through Manila, which led to the belief that they were made there. They also called China shawls, piano shawls, flamenco or tango shawls, or Spanish/Mexican shawls – names that speak to a complex trade that linked China, the Philippines, the Americas, and Europe for centuries.

The large embroidered shawl was a new product on the global market from around 1800, produced near the trading ports in southern China, particularly Guangzhou (Canton).¹ There are references to “shawls” coming out of China in the early eighteenth century, supposedly ordered by Spanish merchants, but it is uncertain if those were of the same type discussed here.² Silk products, including raw silks and piece-goods, had been China’s main luxury export for thousands of years. Providing textiles to suit the tastes of different export markets was a strength of the Chinese silk industry and explained China’s global domination of silk supply.

Manila shawls were likely produced as a commercial reaction to the popularity of the Kashmir and Paisley shawls of Indian export production. The large Kashmir shawl, woven from fine wool and sometimes with knotted and long fringes, became indispensable in the West during the eighteenth century, when they were worn with light cotton dresses and later draped over mid-nineteenth-century crinolines (stiff petticoats designed to hold out a skirt).

The production of these shawls advanced to a large-scale industry in Guangdong province after the First Opium War (1839–42). The silk, usually a crêpe in plain weave, was mainly woven outside Guangdong, for example, in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, and must have been specialised for this type of manufacture. Wide looms produced the roughly square pieces without seams, usually measuring well over 200 by 200 cm; normally, Chinese silks had a loom width of around 72 cm. The woven silks were brought to the Guangzhou area to be embroidered, work that was carried out by both men and women.³

Domestic versus export embroidery

As with most export wares, the large square shawl is not part of the Chinese dress tradition, though the knotted edges and fringes may have come from the Chinese textile custom, where they are found both on domestic wall-hangings and women’s sleeveless coats. The embroidered elements on the shawls range from traditional Chinese designs, including dragons and pagodas, to motifs that were essentially foreign, such as roses, grapes, pinecones, and birds of paradise (fig. 1). The various motifs were put together based on their exotic appeal, and templates appear to have been re-used for multiple markets. While the motifs were stitched faithfully according to the same stitches as employed on textiles made for the domestic market, such as variations of satin stitches and seed knots, the use of spun silk is a feature of export embroideries.⁴ This contrasts with the flossed silk yarn found on domestic work, which requires a high level of technical skill to manipulate while embroidering. Embroidering with spun yarn was not only quicker but also sturdier, which allowed for handling and shipping with minimal risk of surface damage. Some Manila shawls, if not all, came in elegant storage boxes, a few of which still survive with their shawls. A bi-coloured container decorated in gold lacquer on red and black is in the collection of the Museo Franz Mayer (fig. 2) and a box accompanying a white shawl has been identified in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

The fashion for Manila shawls

Manila shawls were distributed around the globe. In Western fashion, the wide crinolines of the 1850s and 1860s advantageously displayed the elaborate embroidery and intricately knotted fringe, which spread across the skirt. Shawls for Western consumption are overwhelmingly embroidered on white (fig. 3), pastel, and black silk backgrounds, with flower motifs dominating the whole. The knotting on the shawls became increasingly complex over time and could be as wide as 10 cm or



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

- Fig. 1** Manila shawl. China, late 19th century. Plain weave silk, spun silk embroidery. Asian Civilisations Museum, Gift of Mr Nicholas Schmourlo [2016-00352].
- 2** Covered box for a Manila shawl. China, 19th century. Carved, lacquered, and gilded wood. Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City.
- 3** Manila shawl. China, around 1860s. Plain weave silk, spun silk embroidery. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, given by Mrs Evelyn Street.
- 4** Child's tunic (*jubla*). China, late 19th to early 20th century. Plain weave silk, spun silk embroidery. Indian Heritage Centre, Singapore [2018-00747-003].

more above the actual fringe, which also increased in length over the course of the nineteenth century.⁵

Large shawls fell out of mainstream fashion with the changing styles of the 1870s. The fullness of form supported earlier by the crinoline was now gathered at the back of the skirt over the *derrière*, and shawls did not drape as elegantly as before. However, the demand for Manila shawls remained within the aesthetic movement, and they became associated with a bohemian lifestyle.⁶ Perhaps responding to this demand, some shawls became more artistic around this time, displaying creative and clever design – a flamboyant bi-coloured shawl in the exhibition may fall into this category (cat. 84). A number of other bi-coloured shawls from about the same date survive in other museum collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Victoria and Albert Museum, indicating a wide distribution and use.⁷ When folded in half, the wearer could choose which colour to display, and this amusing novelty would certainly have attracted fashionable clientele as well. The bi-coloured shawl shows blue flowers on one side but in multicolour on the other side of the square. Notably, the blue floral embroidery is reminiscent of the popular *sanlan* (three blues) design of Chinese domestic embroidery.

Manila shawls once again became highly fashionable in the 1920s and 1930s with the craze for everything Oriental – no garment was better suited to express this taste than the shawl. They became so large and with such deep fringes that they enveloped the wearer from neck to toe, and the embroidered flowers were large and in bright colours.⁸ They could be sensually wrapped tight around the body or dragged decadently. Their place of manufacture was increasingly advertised as Spanish, sometimes Venetian and Persian.⁹ In some cultural institutions, they have even been attributed to the country of their use. For example, a Manila shawl in the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm was described by the donors as having been embroidered by a Swedish relative.¹⁰ This geographical fluidity can be explained by heightened anxieties about the colonial legacies of these countries, but also as a result of fantasies of oriental mysticism, Latin excess, and escapism – promises of an unspecified East.¹¹ After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, Chinese women also began to wear Manila shawls, but they were consumed as a Western fashion item and adopted as part of a process of “modernising” the wardrobe. Today, the production of these shawls, now in thin satin, has been revived in China, where they are mostly sold as souvenirs for tourists.¹²

Other markets?

Manila shawls for the Western export market were also acquired by members of the Parsi Zoroastrian community living in Gujarat, India. Parsi women had long favoured Chinese-style embroidered clothing, and it is possible that Chinese embroidery workshops were established in the town of Surat in western India to supply this market.¹³ The figure and landscape ornamentation found on some Manila shawls can be compared with Parsi textiles (fig. 4), as well as sleevebands made for Chinese dress, for example, those showing figures of women waiting at pavilions, which for a Chinese viewer symbolised finding a romantic match for a young woman.¹⁴ Exactly this design appears on an early twentieth-century black shawl, where it appears to the right of the central family scene (cat. 85). The border, with large red flower heads interspersed with scenes of human activity, has similarities to embroideries found on Parsi clothing. It also demonstrates in the intense purple peonies the popularity of synthetic dyes after they were introduced to China in the 1870s. Charmingly, the faces of the figures are made up of small discs of carved and painted ivory. This shawl references many visual stereotypes typical of Chinese works made for export, such as pagodas, butterflies, peonies, bridges, and people, which appear to have been popular with the Mexican market.¹⁵

Hispanic women in particular enthusiastically embraced the Manila shawl – in Spain, Manila, Mexico, California, Peru, and other Spanish American colonies.¹⁶ They were purchased in Manila and shipped to Acapulco and then across the Atlantic to Seville. A large part of the shawls in these cargoes must have remained in Mexico, while some went south to Peru and Argentina, with small amounts destined for New Mexico and the Californian coast, based on extant shawls.¹⁷ Although the shawls spread across Spain as a fashionable garment for women, they were especially linked with the south of Spain and the flamenco dance.¹⁸

Orders were undoubtedly sent to China from Manila, and from Mexico and Spain via the galleons, which specified patterns to the Hispanic taste.¹⁹ A green shawl from the Museo Franz Mayer (fig. 5) is most likely one of those made specifically for the Mexican market. The green background seems to be distinct to a colonial Mexican aesthetic seen in other shawls, for example those in the collection of the Spanish Colonial Arts Society, Santa Fe, and also in some liturgical vestments.²⁰ The thin fringing with simple macramé knotting also appears more often in a Mexican context, and is reminiscent of that on the Mexican *rebozo*, a large, fringed mantle.²¹



Fig. 5 Manila shawl. China, second half of the 19th century. Plain weave silk, spun silk embroidery. Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City.

Inspiration and imitation

Because of the popularity of these shawls, copies were made outside China in an attempt to capture a share of the market. For example, local shawl makers in Seville started to manufacture their own version of the Manila shawl, some woollen and brightly embroidered, from the second half of the nineteenth century.²² In Mexico, larger versions were produced that covered more of the body, although the typical Chinese motifs had disappeared by the early twentieth century. In both Spain and Mexico this production took place at a relatively small scale until around the turn of the twentieth century.²³

These shawls were called *mantones de Manila* by the Spanish, but it is unclear when this began. It was common to name a product after place of production or trading port, as with Coromandel screens, which were produced in China but shipped to Europe from the Indian coast. However, the term *mantones de Manila* has confused many textile historians, and the question is whether these shawls were also produced in Manila. Indeed, it is possible that the embroidery came to be carried out at trading centres in the Philippines, where imported Chinese goods, once embellished, were sold on for re-export. The Chinese are well known to have used satin stitch almost exclusively, while Philippine work is claimed by some scholars to be characterised by a combination of Chinese satin stitch and European cut and drawn work.²⁴ However, Chinese embroiderers came to master these latter techniques too, and there were large migrations of Chinese, particularly to the district of

San Fernando, near Manila. It is nearly impossible to definitively identify shawls with cut and drawn work as Philippine work, as it could just as well be Chinese embroidery executed either in mainland China or San Fernando.

It has also been suggested that designs with blossoms much larger than those normally seen in Western export shawls, and in bright colours (predominantly shades of red), may be another feature distinguishing *mantones* from the shawls made in China. But these features occur across a vast range of collections, particularly in shawls made in China in the early twentieth century, supporting instead the idea that Chinese craftspeople found ways to make their wares appealing to a range of markets.

The output of shawls in China must have been enormous, based on the hundreds of extant examples in collections worldwide.²⁵ Increased global demand, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, generated both exclusive, high-quality products for those who could afford them, and a plenitude of cheaper shawls of varying qualities for a wider market.²⁶ This huge production may offer an explanation as to why the appearances of the shawls vary so much internationally, and why there are different attributions for where the shawls were made. This, together with the shawls being “named for their users rather than their makers”, has blurred their origins.²⁷ Further research is required to situate the Manila shawl firmly within the context of Chinese export industries that produced goods to please different foreign tastes.²⁸

- 1 Wilson 1987, p. 28.
- 2 Wilson 1990, p. 221. Gayatri-Hoffman 2001, p. 12, claims the first mention of the importation of embroidered shawls into Europe occurred in 1720s by Spanish merchants placing orders for opulent shawls.
- 3 Wilson 1987, p. 32.
- 4 Chang 2010, p. 109.
- 5 Personal communication from Alexandra Parker, 13-6-2023.
- 6 Wilson 1987, p. 32.
- 7 Metropolitan Museum of Art [1970.94.2], which also has a blue floral embroidery similar to sanlan. V&A, inv. T.316-1960.
- 8 Wilson 1990, p. 221.
- 9 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 46.
- 10 Persson Swain 2023, p. 135.
- 11 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 46.
- 12 Robinson 1987, p. 75.
- 13 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 44. This article highlights ancient Chinese trading networks and intercultural exchanges between India, Persia, and China that pre-date European imperialism.
- 14 Chang 2010, p. 110.
- 15 Personal communication Alexandra Parker, 14-6-2023.
- 16 Wilson 1990, p. 220; Robinson 1987, p. 68.
- 17 Robinson 1987, pp. 66–67.
- 18 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 40.
- 19 Robinson 1987, p. 68.
- 20 See Peck 2013 for examples of Hispanic liturgical vestments in colonial aesthetic.
- 21 Personal communication with Alexandra Parker, 13-6-2023; Worth 1986, p. 51.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Personal communication Alexandra Parker, 13-6-2023.
- 24 See for example, Robinson 1987, p. 70 and Chang 2010, p. 113.
- 25 Other notable collections include the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, National Museum of the Philippines, National Museums Scotland, National Trust and National Trust Scotland, Peabody Essex Museum, Royal Ontario Museum, and several private collections.
- 26 Persson Swain 2023, p. 134.
- 27 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 44.
- 28 My deepest thanks and gratitude to Alexandra Parker, who is doing her MA thesis on export shawls at the University of Warwick. She generously shared her research and thoughts with me for this article.

84

Manila shawl

China, 19th century

Woven and embroidered silk, 220 × 210 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [06897]

The two sides of this shawl have a different design. One is embroidered with blue silk, while the other has variously coloured flowers and a pheasant. Like modern reversible fabrics, shawls like this offered the wearer a choice depending on the rest of their outfit.



Manila shawl

China, early 20th century

Woven and embroidered silk, ivory, 240 × 240 cm

Museo Franz Mayer, Mexico City [10530]

The centre of this shawl shows a family gathered in a garden. The faces are made up of small discs of carved and painted ivory. The figures and landscape are comparable to Parsi textiles. Parsi merchants living in Gujarat and Mumbai traded in Chinese-style embroidered clothing. Chinese embroidery workshops may have been established in western India to meet this demand.





Woman with a Manila shawl

Juan Luna (Filipino, 1857–1899)

Spain, Madrid, 1880s

Oil on canvas, 112.5 × 77 cm

Ayala Museum, Makati City,

Gift of Mercedes Zobel McMicking



An elegant woman turns to display a sumptuous silk shawl embroidered in yellow, its fringe dramatically accentuated by her black dress. A large fan sets off her profile. Two marble fountains in the back identify the setting as Madrid: at the left is the Fountain of Neptune near the Prado Museum, with the Fountain of Apollo on the right side, which lay a little further north on the Paseo del Prado.¹ Many painters across Europe and America were captivated by the glamour of the newly moneyed classes at leisure, whether at cafes, racetracks, and other urban entertainments. However, this work is distinct from images of fashionable women made in Paris or London because Manila shawls were far more common in Spain than elsewhere, where cashmere shawls were preferred by the elite.²

At first it seems that the painter proclaims his Philippine identity through the intense focus on the Manila shawl. Edward Sullivan insists that this Asian touch “has a specific meaning as a visual strategy in a work by a Philippine painter. These hints of the artist’s own cultural identity contrast with the very deliberate setting of the painting in the Spanish capital city.”³

On the contrary, by the late nineteenth century the Manila shawl had become so ubiquitous in Spain that its exoticism had been lost and it was no longer regarded as especially Philippine. Silk shawls were exported directly from China without passing through Manila, and the erroneous belief that the shawls were made in Manila began to erode even in the popular imagination. There was a growing taste for Chinese motifs on the shawls (cat. 85) and the most luxurious examples arrived in elaborate lacquer boxes, which made very clear their origins in China (p. 169, fig. 2). Indeed, new names had to be invented for the old Manila shawls, such as flamenco, piano, or Chinese shawls.

Moreover, Manila shawls were worn by all classes of women in Spain. At the time Juan Luna depicted the fashionable figure in a grand setting redolent of culture, he was also painting prostitutes and lower-class women wearing the same shawls on nearby backstreets (fig. 1).⁴ Where one woman turns demurely away, the sensuous *chula* holds a cigarette and stares brazenly at the viewer, her provocative posture emphasized by the sharp diagonal drape of the textile. The contrast between the two reveals Luna’s fractured and contradictory view of women, one shared by many nineteenth-century male painters of the urban scene. Writers in Luna’s circle, including his brother Antonio and José Rizal, also took up the subject of Madrid prostitutes, describing them in sympathetic terms.⁵

Murder and amnesia In September 1892, Juan Luna killed his wife and mother-in-law, and injured his brother-in-law. The details of the crime are deeply disturbing. On several occasions, Luna had violently beaten his wife, Paz Pardo de Tavera.⁶ According to Raquel Reyes, who examined court records, “Luna put the barrel of the revolver he bought a few days earlier with his wife’s money, to the temples of his wife and mother-in-law and at point blank range ‘made their skulls fly’.”⁷

He was imprisoned for four months and tried for murder but was found innocent. Apologists contended that Luna shot at a locked door and killed the two women accidentally, or that the killing was justified as Paz was having an affair.⁸ Luna was welcomed back by most of Manila society and celebrated as a national hero after his death. That this attitude should survive to the present-day is disturbing: most recent scholarship on Luna mentions the murder only in passing and fails to confront its connection with his art.⁹

Two historians have tried to understand Luna’s act in a wider context. Norman Owen examines the aggressive masculinity of the Propaganda Movement, a group of educated, Spanish-speaking Filipinos living in Europe. They were inclined to displays of machismo, with Juan Luna and his brother Antonio among the most

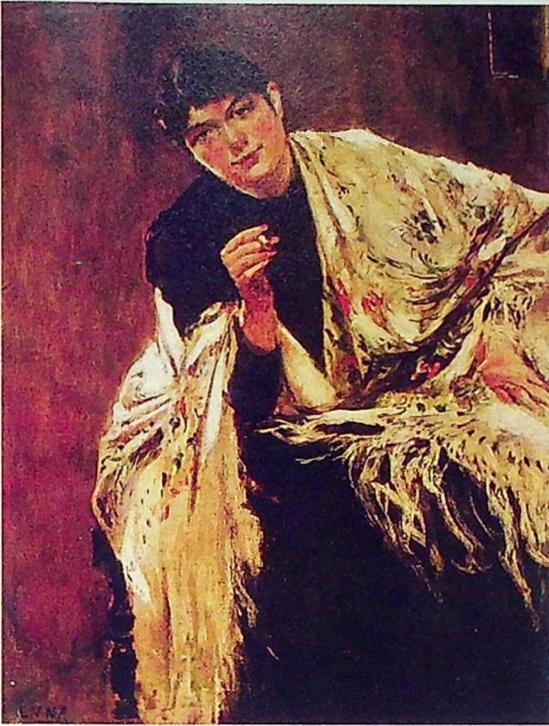


Fig. 1 *Una Chula II*, 1885. Juan Luna (Filipino, 1857–1899). Oil on wood. PAGREL Collection.

aggressive.¹⁰ Raquel Reyes insightfully analyses Luna's art and life as a tortured response to the independent modern woman especially in connection with writers and intellectuals.¹¹ However, her groundbreaking work has been largely ignored by art historians.¹²

What can we make of this extended amnesia? Do we forgive the crimes of a patriot even when they were committed far outside any political context? Luna's status as a national hero should not discourage modern observers from confronting his crime, and his paintings of women – from fashionable figure to mother, worker, and prostitute – need to be understood in light of his violence. AC

Ref: Sullivan 2006, pp. 68–69.

- 1 Sullivan 2006, pp. 69–69 (repeated by Capistrano-Baker 2015, p. 249), identifies the fountain on the right as a variation on the fountain of the Buen Retiro park, but that was built after the painting was made. The painting shows an allegorical figure atop a plinth, which is the structure of the Fountain of Apollo, completed in 1802.
- 2 McCauley 2012, pp. 202–3, fig. 3, cats. 97–99. On the shawl in French art, especially Edouard Manet's *Olympia*, see Dolan 2015.
- 3 Sullivan 2006, p. 68.
- 4 The group of works is discussed by Reyes 2008, pp. 43–45, figs. 7, 8; and Sullivan 2006, pp. 69–71, fig. 22.
- 5 Owen 1999, p. 37; Reyes 2009, p. 43.
- 6 Reyes 2008, pp. 73–74.
- 7 Reyes 2008, p. 76, based on the trial proceedings.
- 8 Pilar 1980, p. 188. N. Joaquín in Pilar 1980, p. 13, simply ignores the crime entirely and states that many Parisians defended Luna.
- 9 For example, Sullivan 2006, p. 73. The crime is recorded only in chronologies in San Francisco 2006, p. 183; and Singapore 2017, p. 166; and is not mentioned in Capistrano-Baker 2015.
- 10 Owen 1999, p. 29.
- 11 Reyes 2008, pp. 67–77.
- 12 The exception is Sullivan 2006, pp. 67–68.

Nameplate of Charles D. Mugford

José Honorato Lozano (Filipino, 1815–1885)

Manila, around 1850

Bodycolour and ink on paper, 45.4 × 59.37 cm

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Bequest of Henry Mugford, 1904

[M1395]



M: *The Greed of King Midas*. Giacomo Paolini. Italy, around 1570. Engraving. British Museum, London.

This drawing renders the name Charles D. Mugford with figures who contort, gesture, huddle together, and hold objects to form the letters. For example, a group of Chinese men cluster around a tree to form the letter C, while the R is shaped with the help of a pig. Filipino men compose the last name: a pig helps form the F; a man in white in front of a barrel makes up the O. In the middle register, two Americans comprise the initial D.

Based on a long European tradition of making letters and words from figures (*fig.*), nearly always with an element of humour and often with satirical and political overtones, José Lozano imaginatively expanded the form to include the people and places of the Philippines. Made for local and foreign patrons, these delightful drawings often contain details relevant to the client. In this case, Charles Mugford (1809–1868) was an American ship captain who founded a steam-powered rope company in Santa Mesa, just outside Manila. The two registers are divided into Chinese and Filipino figures, reflecting the workers of his factory. Next to the letter D is a man carrying a coil of rope and the American flag. Mugford himself might be the seated man, as a photograph suggests.¹ The backgrounds are no less interesting. The upper register shows a colourful procession of Chinese men on horseback with bales of goods in front. A Chinese ship is at the right and a fishing boat at the left. In the lower register, ships flying French, American, and Spanish flags demonstrate Manila's trading connections. Amusement and humour are essential characteristics of a work like this, which functioned as a souvenir that recorded the people and environs of Manila.

Lozano In 1850, Rafael Díaz Arenas described Lozano's work, noting that in addition to landscapes and history paintings, "By him are all those pictures that are in many houses, forming a placard (*letrero*) with the name of a person, in which one admires the narrative forms of the letters."²

Lozano's images are often called "letras y figuras" but the term does not seem to have been used in his lifetime. It would be more appropriate to call this drawing a *letrero*, meaning placard or nameplate. These works were commissioned by Spanish officials, American merchants, and numerous local residents, for example, Francisco de Yriarte (governor of Santa Cruz), William Peirce (American consul in Manila), Ogden Edwards, Emilio Perez del Pulgar, Eulalia de Roca, and Gervasio Gironella.³

It has been stated that the genre derives from country type pictures (*tipos del país*) which Lozano also drew (cats. 88–89), but the categories are quite distinct.⁴ The purpose of Lozano's pictures of individuals was to record characteristic details of costume and physiognomy, whereas the *letrero* drawings used anonymous figures to form the letters. Díaz Arenas calls Lozano's letters "formas historiadas", meaning historiated or figural forms, which underlines their distinctiveness. Lozano created a number of albums that combined a nameplate with landscapes and drawings of different peoples, but the genres remain separate.⁵

Charles Mugford Born in Salem, Massachusetts, Charles Mugford came from family of ship captains. After several world voyages, he arrived in Manila in 1843 on the *Areatus* with his brother Thomas.⁶ Together with Oliver Keating, another captain, he set up a steam-powered rope factory near Manila. The factory was described in 1851: "At Santa Mesa, in the neighbourhood of Manila, the rope is spun up by the aid of steam and good machinery, established there for the purpose, and still carried on by an old shipmaster, who produced by far the best rope of all that is made."⁷ Most of the rope was exported to the United States and the factory continued to thrive until the end of the century: "here hundreds of natives are employed in the long sheds, producing cords and ropes and hempen fabrics from the products of the Philippine soil."⁸ Mugford, who was also involved in importing ice and transpacific shipping, was described



in 1854 as “generous and kind, and well-beloved by the mestizos, or natives, who he employed, as well as by others”.⁹

Racial tensions Lozano’s image of Charles Mugford surrounded by contented Chinese and Filipino workers is certainly a fantasy, but it unintentionally reveals some of the racial conflicts that involved Mugford and the two predominant ethnic groups in the Philippines. In March 1853, Mugford’s brother Thomas was tragically killed by a group of workers at the Santa Mesa rope factory. In Mugford’s account, wages could only be partially paid on one payday, with the remainder postponed for two or three days. This angered the workers and the next day “some thirty disguised natives” killed Thomas Mugford and another merchant.¹⁰

There was a delay in capturing the killers and Mugford requested assistance from the American Commodore Matthew Perry, who was then in Asia to forcibly open Japan to foreign trade.¹¹ Perry wrote to the governor general of the Philippines, the Marques de Novaliches, and in a demonstration of American power a naval ship visited Manila in August 1854, by which time several of the killers had been sentenced. Shortly after, Mugford sold his share in the rope factory and returned to Massachusetts.

Mugford was also involved in shipping from China, which occasionally involved the transport of Chinese workers across the Pacific. In 1856, he requested that the United States outlaw the transport of indentured Chinese workers to South America.¹² Mugford was concerned with the poor treatment and high death rate of the Chinese workers: “many evils and abuses had occurred on board ships, and many deaths had occurred.” This was in contrast to the Chinese who travelled to Australia and California of their own will. In 1862 Congress passed a law that forbade American ships from carrying Chinese labourers to third countries, although the provision was later used to prevent Chinese immigration to America. **AC**

Prov: Charles Mugford, Salem, by descent to Henry Mugford, bequest 1904.
Ref: Capistrano-Baker 2020, pp. 262–66.

- 1 Putnam 1924, photograph after p. 12.
- 2 Díaz Arenas 1850, 11th cuaderno (De las tres nobles artes) [also in Cariño 2002, p. 14]: “De él son todos esos cuadros que hay en muchas casas formando un letrero con el nombre de una persona en los cuales se admiran las formas historiadas de las letras.”
- 3 De Yriarte: Blanco 2009, fig. 1. Peirce: Peabody Essex Museum. Ogden: Capistrano-Baker and Priyadarshini 2020, p. 250. De Roca: Christie’s, London, 23 Sept. 2004. Gironella: Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid. Perez: León, Manila, 5 June 2021.
- 4 Capistrano-Baker 2020, p. 262. Blanco 2009, p. 3, suggests that the 1849 decree requiring Filipinos to adopt a Spanish surname might have stimulated Lozano’s nameplates, although the artist’s wealthy clientele was likely unaffected by the decree. Blanco also overestimates Lozano’s inventiveness and incorrectly calls Lozano’s works canvases (p. 1).
- 5 See “Album: Vistas de las Islas Filipinas y Traces du sus abitantes” in the Biblioteca Nacional de España (online and Cariño 2002). Other albums are discussed in Cariño 2002, pp. 51–94.
- 6 Putnam 1924, pp. 12, 23–25, 50, 58–59. Copies of the *Salem Directory* for 1846–59. Mugford first arrived in Manila in 1843 as captain of the *Areatus*: Phillips Library, PEM, Mugford family papers: *Areatus* (Ship) shipping papers, 1844–1845. Capistrano-Baker 2020, p. 294.
- 7 MacMicking 1851, p. 223. On the Santa Mesa Cordage Factory, see Owen 1984, p. 63; Legarda 1999, pp. 304–8. George Sturgis joined the firm in 1850.
- 8 “Philippine cordage, yarns and fabrics”, *Textile World Record* 28, no. 6 (March 1905), p. 88. On Mugford’s ice importing, see Legarda 1999, pp. 311–12.
- 9 “A private journal of John Glendy Sproston, U.S.N.” in Beasley 2002, vol. 5, pp. 92–93.
- 10 *Ibid.* These episodes are recounted here for the first time.
- 11 Mugford wrote to Perry in Japan in June 1854: Perry 1856, vol. 2, p. 139; also pp. 144, 146, 147.
- 12 House of Representatives 1856, pp. 74–76: letter of 7 Jan. 1856 to Peter Parker, the American commissioner to China, Hong Kong. Senate 1859, vol. 2, p. 1128.

88

A mestizo of Manila

José Honorato Lozano (Filipino, 1815–1885)

Manila, mid-19th century

Pencil, pen and ink, and watercolour, heightened with white on paper, 35.7 × 27.5 cm

Inscribed: Manila Mestizo Spanish ½ caste

National Gallery Singapore [2019-00784-001]

89

A mestiza: Going to Mass

José Honorato Lozano (Filipino, 1815–1885)

Manila, mid-19th century

Pencil, pen and ink, and watercolour, heightened with white on paper, 35.7 × 27.5 cm

Inscribed: Going to Mass

National Gallery Singapore [2019-00784-003]

The inscriptions in English hint that these drawings were made for an American or British merchant.

Prov (both drawings): Christie's, London, 29 Oct. 2019 (lot 78).



90

A mestiza

Justiniano Asunción (Filipino, 1816–1896)

Signed: Par Justiniano Asumpcion año de 1843.

Manila, 1843

Watercolour and gold on paper, 25.5 × 17.5 cm

Asian Civilisations Museum [2019-00767]

91

A mestizo

Justiniano Asunción (Filipino, 1816–1896)

Manila, 1840s

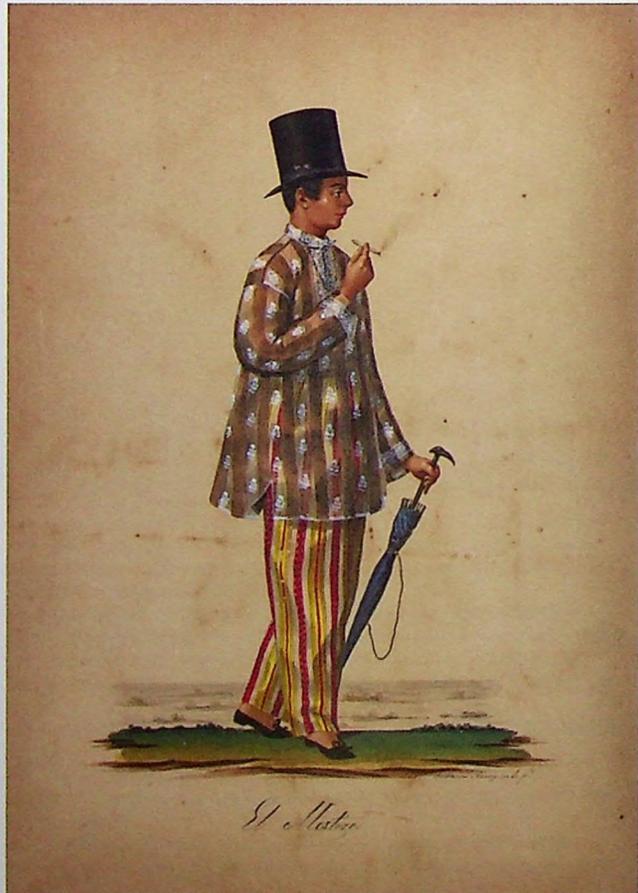
Inscribed: El Mestizo

Watercolour on paper and cardboard, 35.5 × 26.6 cm

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem; museum purchase, 1991 [E83543]

These paintings are examples of “country types” (*tipos del país*), which depict the various peoples of the Philippines in their typical costumes. They usually have finely drawn and individualised faces, and pay particular attention to fabric and details of dress.

Country types were popularised by the Filipino artist Damian Domingo (1796–1834), who was one of Justiniano Asunción’s teachers. They were often produced as sets to be sold as souvenirs to traders or tourists in Manila. The works are similar to Mexican *casta* paintings of the eighteenth century, which illustrate the different classes and ethnicities of Mexican society. However, Philippine country type images show single figures rather than groups, and thus resemble Chinese export paintings of various classes of people.



92

A mestiza of Manila

Justiniano Asunción (Filipino, 1816–1896)

Manila, after 1841

Inscribed: Una Mestiza de Manila

Hand-coloured lithograph, 30 × 20 cm

National Gallery Singapore [2014-01429]

93

A mestizo of Manila

Justiniano Asunción (Filipino, 1816–1896)

Manila, after 1841

Inscribed: Un Mestizo de Manila

Hand-coloured lithograph, 30 × 20 cm

National Gallery Singapore [2014-01425]



A mestiza

Tingqua (Chinese, 1809–1870)

China, Guangzhou, 1854

Watercolour on paper, 35.5 × 26.6 cm

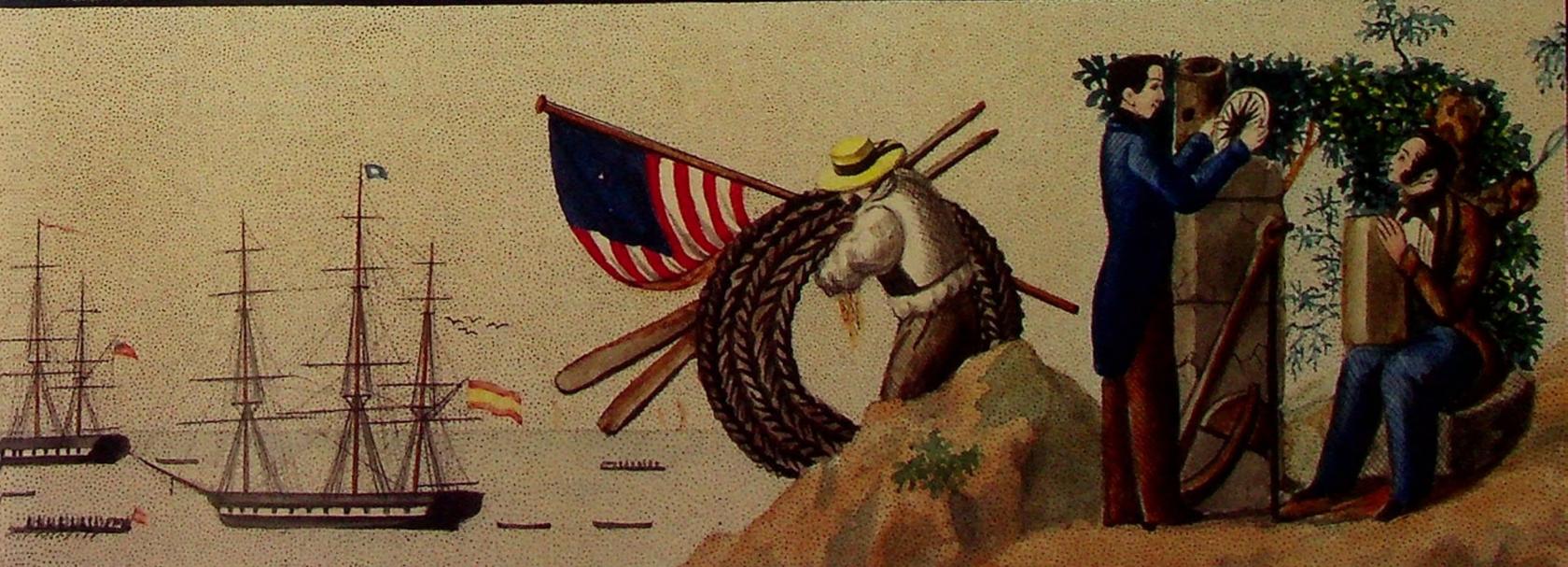
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem; museum purchase
from the estate of John Heard, Augustine Heard
Collection, 1931 [E83532.48]

This is a nineteenth-century Cantonese copy of Justiniano Asunción's "country types" painting depicting a mestiza. As with the original drawing, the blouse and long skirt are accessorised with a whitework fichu (small triangular shawl) around the shoulders and a dark overskirt.

Chinese copies of Philippine originals were unknown until very recently. A master album dated to 1854 with the stamp of the Cantonese export painter Tingqua contains this and other copies of Asunción's works.

Ref: Capistrano-Baker 2020, pp. 258–62.





Fashioning national dress in the Philippines

19th-century country types to 20th-century couturiers

Florina H. Capistrano-Baker

The invented tradition of a national dress after Philippine independence from the United States in 1946 derives from a hybrid dress system that evolved in the Christianised lowlands of Luzon and the Visayas through the Spanish colonial period (1521–1898). The earliest known illustrations of pre-colonial dress are late sixteenth-century watercolours by an unidentified Chinese artist in a manuscript known as the Boxer Codex. The images depicting Visayans are accompanied by descriptions written by an anonymous author (fig. 1).¹

The dress and garments of Visayan women consist of brightly coloured striped cotton fabric, though others are made from one of their plants from which they fashion these garments. And some of the women wear plain taffeta and damask from China... They accompany this [lower garment] with a bodice or doublet with ruffled half sleeves that reach down to the elbows, although some are full sleeved... they are close fitting and collarless... they fasten in front with braids or cords of silk.²

Tagalogs inhabiting the coastal and riverine areas of southern Luzon in present-day Manila and environs are similarly described.

The jackets and bodices they wear are of the same form we have described regarding the Visayans. And they also wear their clothes skin tight, revealing the shape of their waists and breasts because they do not wear chemises or stockings. The wives of the chiefs, when going out of their houses, are customarily carried on



Fig. 1 Inhabitants of the Visayas. Philippines, early 1590s. Bodycolour on paper. Boxer Codex, fol. 24r. University of Indiana Library, Bloomington.

the shoulders of their slaves and in this manner travel through the streets. All of them wear small pieces of cloth over their clothing which reach to their waists; these are made of cotton and are of a variety of colors. Others are made of satin, taffeta and damask brought from China.³

One may argue that the pre-colonial, two-piece garment constructed of local and imported fabrics persisted and mutated through time, evolving during the Spanish period into the hybrid *baro't saya* (literally “blouse and skirt”) and *traje de mestiza* (“dress of the mestiza”) and ultimately the twentieth-century *terno*, now widely considered the Philippine national dress.⁴ Changing over 400 years of Western hegemony, this hybrid dress system was self-consciously deployed in the twentieth century to visualise nation. Foreign styles and elements were selectively appropriated, adjusted, and domesticated through the use of materials suitable for the tropical environment.

Country types

Colonial accounts along with images of attire in paintings, prints, and photographs allow a reconstruction of the evolution of men’s and women’s garments. Nineteenth-century watercolours popularly called *tipos del país* (“country types”), by Filipino artists such as

Damian Domingo (ca. 1796–1834), Justiniano Asunción (1816–1901), and José Honorato Lozano (ca. 1821–1885) portray local inhabitants, ethnicities, occupations, and costumes. Elite men are depicted wearing tailored shirts and trousers of local and imported materials (cats. 88, 91). Elite women wear long tailored skirts (*saya*) constructed from local or imported fabrics from China and India with sheer tops of local *nipis* (literally “thin”), cloths woven from various plant fibers such as banana (*abaca*) and pineapple (*piña*). Among the best-known painters of *tipos del país* is Justiniano Asunción. Known for using a meticulous technique called *miniaturismo*, Asunción expertly portrays the whitework fichu worn by a mestiza in a painting included in the exhibition (cat. 90). It has been suggested that Spanish missionaries encouraged the use of a shawl to cover the breasts and darker overskirt (*tapis*) to conform to rules of modesty, although other schools of thought suggest alternative origins for such accessories.⁵ These early to mid-nineteenth-century country types depict the hybrid *baro't saya* with elements that will become conventionalised components specific to garments widely referred to as *traje de mestiza*.⁶

Also in the exhibition is a nineteenth-century Cantonese copy of Filipino artist Asunción's country type depicting a mestiza in traditional dress (cat. 94). As with the original painting by Asunción, the blouse and long skirt are accessorised with a whitework fichu around the shoulders and a dark *tapis* over the skirt. She also wears a whitework veil and carries a handkerchief in one hand. Chinese copies of Philippine originals were a previously unknown phenomenon until this author first published on the topic in 2004.⁷ A master album dated 1854 with the stamp of the Cantonese export painter popularly known as Tingqua (Guan Lianchang, active 1830s–70s) contains copies of Asunción's works.⁸ The copies of Asunción's works in the album are replicated in unbound watercolour paintings from Tingqua's workshop, such as the example in the exhibition. Fine whitework such as those portrayed in the nineteenth-century *tipos del país* paintings occur in Philippine and overseas collections (cat. 96). Spanish, French, and Belgian nuns from various religious orders are said to have introduced European needlework techniques to the Philippines.⁹

Mirroring the metropole

During the Spanish colonial period, clothing was used to indicate ethnic and regional affiliations as well as political power, for these dictated one's customary dress. Travel accounts by Europeans in the nineteenth century, in combination with contemporaneous “country type” paintings of Philippine inhabitants and their clothing, allow a

reconstruction of garment types associated with specific ethnicities and social classes. Lowland Christian clothing consisted primarily of tailored garments (except for the wraparound overskirt or *tapis*). Elite women wore ankle-length skirts held up with drawstrings tied to the waist. Such skirts were made from locally woven cotton, abaca, silk, or imported fabrics from China and India. Over the skirt, a shorter *tapis*, often made from striped cloth, was wrapped around the waist. Women wore translucent tops (*baro*, also called *camisa*) made from *nipis* cloth, a gossamer plain-weave fabric of fine abaca, piña, silk, cotton or a combination of these fibers. The blouse usually consisted of a central panel with a narrower panel on each side, and square-cut armholes as seen in surviving eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples in European collections. The straight sleeves became wider and shorter through the years.

A decorative shawl (*pañuelo*) was worn over the shoulders in the style of the European lace fichu to conceal the transparency of the blouse. Some early examples of the blouse are lined with modesty panels of white cotton cloth for this purpose. The basic ensemble, called *baro't saya*, changed over time in response to fashion trends in the Europe and America. The early nineteenth-century version has narrow, straight-cut sleeves, high waisted skirt and *tapis* echoing the Empire-style silhouette of European fashion. The skirt became fuller, then slimmer, and continued to evolve through time mirroring European fashion. Gonzalez and Higgins trace subtle changes in the *traje de mestiza* from the 1860s to the 1960s, citing key features such as the relative proportions of the blouse and skirt, the length and shape of the sleeves, the size and manner in which the shawl is worn, and the style of overskirt (*tapis* or *sobrefalda*). They note that the *sobrefalda*, typically of black illusion tulle or lace embellished with beads, sequins, and embroidery, became a fashionable alternative to the more tightly woven *tapis* by the early 1900s (fig. 2).¹⁰

In the late nineteenth century a full skirt worn with a blouse with bell sleeves became fashionable and would later acquire the sobriquet “Maria Clara”, after the heroine in the novel *Noli Me Tangere* written by the national hero, José Rizal. The character was based on Rizal's real life sweetheart Leonor Rivera, seen in late nineteenth-century photographs wearing the popular style of *traje de mestiza* of the time. Mirroring the European metropole, female attire assumed the silhouette of late Victorian styles that filtered into the Philippines. The bodice became tighter as the full skirt flared out. The European serpentine skirt was also adapted to the Philippine *saya* – tightly fitted at the hips with an exaggerated tail. Elite men similarly wore hybrid clothing consisting of sheer *nipis* shirts

and embroidered silk trousers imported from China. European style trousers were also worn, along with Western-style blazers and top hats.

Modistas, designers, and couturiers

As the Philippines moved toward independence in the twentieth century, the need to assert a national identity for the newly imagined nation spurred a reinvention of traditional dress to visualise nationality. Many formerly colonised Southeast Asian nations similarly revitalised local forms of dress to create their respective national attires as a boundary keeping mechanism in the face of globalisation.

As with pre-colonial attire, the colonial dress system allowed the wearer to affirm individual and group identity through culturally specific garments and accessories. Moving toward independence in 1946, the reinvention of traditional dress became an important strategy in asserting nationality. Historians Mina Roces and Louise Edwards stress the importance of “inventing” national dress in the process of nation building – a phenomenon paralleled in other postcolonial nations. The fashioning of national dress itself often becomes a transnational project that blurs distinctions between Western and non-Western elements.¹¹

Ramon Magsaysay (president from 1953 to 1957) is generally credited with popularising the men’s traditional *barong tagalog*. This collared shirt with long sleeves and decorative embroidery has a slit on each side for ease of movement. Worn untucked and constructed from natural fibers, it was officially declared the national attire for men by presidential decree in the 1970s. By this time, the loose silhouette had mutated to a slimmer fit after modifications introduced by the French designer Pierre Cardin.¹²

Like the men’s *barong tagalog*, the women’s hybrid *baro’t saya* and *traje de mestiza* continued to evolve over time. In the 1920s the emergence of prominent fashion designers who considered themselves style-makers and artists led to more lofty designations such as couturieres and couturiers in lieu of the modest *modista* (dressmaker) or *costurera* (seamstress). In her study of Filipina beauty regimes and their role in modern nation building, historian Genevieve Clutario traces the important transition from household seamstresses who constructed clothing designs dictated by their elite patrons, to influential twentieth-century designers who considered themselves cosmopolitan style-makers. They sought to link the local to the global while maintaining a sense of national identity, selectively adapting and translating European fashion trends for their Filipino clientele.¹³

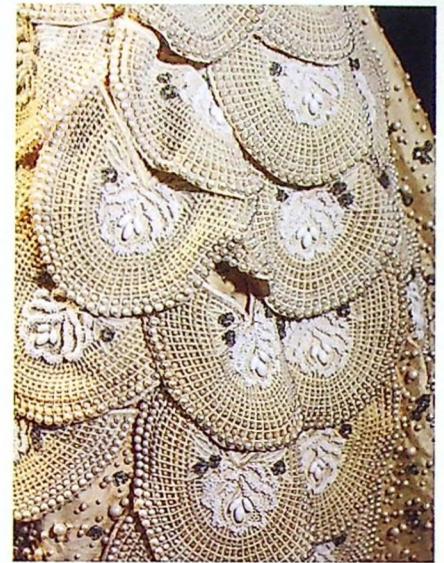


Fig. 2

Three elite ladies wearing the *traje de mestiza* with narrow skirt (*saya*) and tail (*cola*) with translucent, beaded overskirt (*sobrefalda*); sheer blouse with wide bell sleeves and matching shawl (*pañuelo*). Arayat, Pampanga, 1921.

3

Detail of a Valera gown (cat. 98). The flared skirt is embellished with heavily embroidered and beaded overlapping scallops cascading down each side. Sprinkled in between are pearl beads of different sizes and rhinestones mounted in silver-coloured settings.



Pioneering designers such as Pacita Longos and Juanita Mina Roa flirted with innovations such as experimenting with shorter, sometimes detachable sleeves; connecting the bodice and skirt; eliminating or retaining the *pañuelo*. The most prominent designer of the 1920s, Longos is said to have shortened the bell sleeves to create the stiffly starched butterfly sleeves.¹⁴ But it is the younger designer Ramon Valera (1912–1972) who is widely credited with promoting the modern one-piece *terno* silhouette with crisp butterfly sleeves and elegant, simplified lines eliminating both *tapis* and *pañuelo*. Dramatic embellishments of embroidery, sequins, beads, and sometimes, actual jewelry are sewn onto the fabric (fig. 3). He also refashioned the *traje de mestiza* into a Maria Clara wedding gown with prominent bell sleeves.¹⁵

Valera was born to the upper class, as were most of the early fashion designers. He rose to prominence in the 1930s and continued to dominate the fashion

world after World War II.¹⁶ For his innovations in redesigning traditional dress, Valera was named the Philippines' first National Artist for fashion design in 2006.¹⁷

In 2022, almost two decades after Valera was declared a National Artist, couturiere Salvacion Lim Higgins (known as Slim, 1920–1990) received the award, which cited innovations that “transformed the national costume into a world-class silhouette, inspiring generations of Filipino designers.”¹⁸ Like Valera, Slim adapted and refashioned traditional attire into patriotic “Filipiniana” wedding gowns celebrating Filipino identity (fig. 4).¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Slim also designed costumes for the internationally acclaimed Bayanihan Philippine National Dance Company, which broke onto the world stage at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair and New York City’s Winter Garden Theatre on Broadway in 1959.²⁰

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had earlier declared the younger couturier Jose “Pitoy” Moreno (1925–2018) a National Artist for fashion design through “presidential prerogative” in 2009, although the Philippine Supreme Court later revoked the award for not following prescribed procedure.²¹ Moreno was nominated again in 2022, though Slim received it instead. Moreno had shared Slim’s studio, eventually taking over the space when the latter moved out. The atelier’s proximity to the Philippine Women’s University, home of the Bayanihan dance company, was fortuitous for – like Slim – Moreno began designing costumes for the Bayanihan in addition to his elite clientele. He began to conduct research on traditional Philippine costumes and textiles as he revitalised traditional dress forms such as the Maria Clara and *terno*.²² As with his predecessors Valera and Slim, Moreno’s designs incorporated local and global dress systems that aimed to elevate traditional dress to high fashion (fig. 5). While Valera had no formal degree in design, Slim and Moreno both studied the fine arts – Slim at the University of Santo Tomas and Moreno at the University of the Philippines. All three designers reinvented and transformed Filipino dress from homemade concoctions to haute couture, for both local and international consumption, deploying national dress as a visual manifestation of nation and gateway to global prestige.

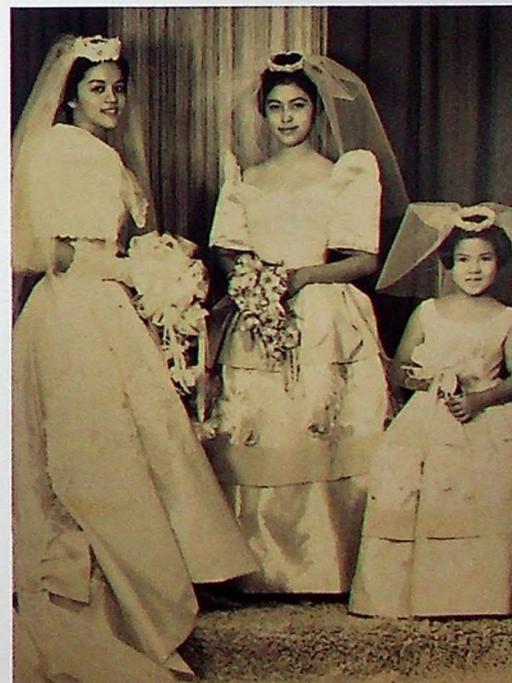


Fig. 4 *Terno* by Salvacion Lim Higgins (cat. 97), worn by Victoria Ramos Tanjuatco. The butterfly sleeves match the bodice and *pañuelo* of the same lace fabric. The softly pleated skirt provides a contrasting texture to the lace overskirt connected to, and extending the lines of, the bodice, and sleeves.

5 “Filipiniana” wedding ensemble by Jose Moreno, featuring distinctive butterfly sleeves on the bridal and maid of honour’s gowns. L-R: Angelina Hemedes Aldaba (bride), Fe Hemedes (maid of honor), Patricia Aldaba Lim (flower girl).

- 1 The Boxer Codex is named after the noted historian Charles Boxer, who owned the manuscript and whose papers and books are now in the Lilly Library at Indiana University, Bloomington. The codex is generally believed to date to shortly after 1590 and was possibly commissioned by Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas or his son Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, both governors general of the Philippines (1590–93 and 1593–96, respectively). Recent research proposes a later date of 1595 and possible compilation by Antonio de Morga (in the Philippines 1595–1603). See Souza and Turley 2016, pp. 1–27.
- 2 Ibid, p. 335.
- 3 Ibid, p. 364.
- 4 Mina Roces makes a similar argument in Roces 2007, p. 23.
- 5 Roces 2007, pp. 24, 29–31.
- 6 Various publications define the term *traje de mestiza* in different ways. One interpretation references an ensemble consisting of a *baro* or *camisa* (blouse), *saya* (skirt), *pañuelo* (shawl), and an optional *tapis* or *sobrefalda* (overskirt). See Gonzales and Higgins 2015.
- 7 See Capistrano-Baker 2004; Capistrano-Baker 2017, pp. 237–56; Capistrano-Baker 2020, pp. 255–67; and Capistrano-Baker 2022.
- 8 I thank Karina Corrigan for providing access to this album and other export paintings in storage at the Peabody Essex Museum.
- 9 Clutario 2023, p. 110.
- 10 Gonzales and Higgins 2015, pp. 25, 47, *passim*. A different seriation and periodisation is asserted in Moreno 1995, pp. 228–41. Here the term *traje de mestiza* references a style popular during the US colonial period featuring a narrower skirt post-Maria Clara and a tulle overskirt (*sobrefalda*). The history of usage, precise definition, and periodization of the terms *baro't saya* (Tagalog) and *traje de mestiza* (Spanish) are problematic and require further study.
- 11 Roces and Edwards 2007, p. 5.
- 12 De la Torre 2000, p. 40. See also Roces 2007, p. 32–33 for a discussion of political and international implications of promoting the use of the *barong tagalog*.
- 13 Clutario 2023, pp. 190–95.
- 14 See for example, Capistrano-Baker and Castro 2010, pp. 337–42.
- 15 "Ramon Valera: The Philippines' First National Artist for Fashion Design" <https://impakngsikatlus.wordpress.com/2012/11/29/ramon-valera-the-philippines-first-national-artist-for-fashion-design/> Accessed July 18, 2023.
- 16 See Valera 2005.
- 17 This author had the honor of serving in the final selection committee convened by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) for the 2006 National Artist Awards.
- 18 Presidential Proclamation No. 1390, Republic of the Philippines.
- 19 See Higgins 2009.
- 20 Domini M. Torrevillas, "As Bayanihan turns 45," *Philippine Star*, August 8, 2002 <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2002/08/08/171256/bayanihan-turns-45-> Accessed July 25, 2023.
- 21 Thelma Sioson San Juan, The Diarist, <https://www.thediarist.ph/bid-for-national-artist-awards-for-fashion-heats-up/> Accessed July 18, 2023.
- 22 See his books, Moreno 1990 and 1995.

95

Blouse (baro)

Philippines, mid to late 19th century

Pineapple fibre cloth and cotton cloth appliqué, 100 × 38 cm

Intramuros Administration Collection, Manila

This blouse is entirely worked in the *sombrado* technique, heavily embellished with volutes terminating in flowers. The blouse, skirt, and scarf (*baro't saya*) make up the traditional ensemble worn by women in the Philippines. The ensemble appears in nineteenth-century drawings and, like most fashion, evolved over the years.



Three scarves (*pañuela*)

Philippines, 19th century

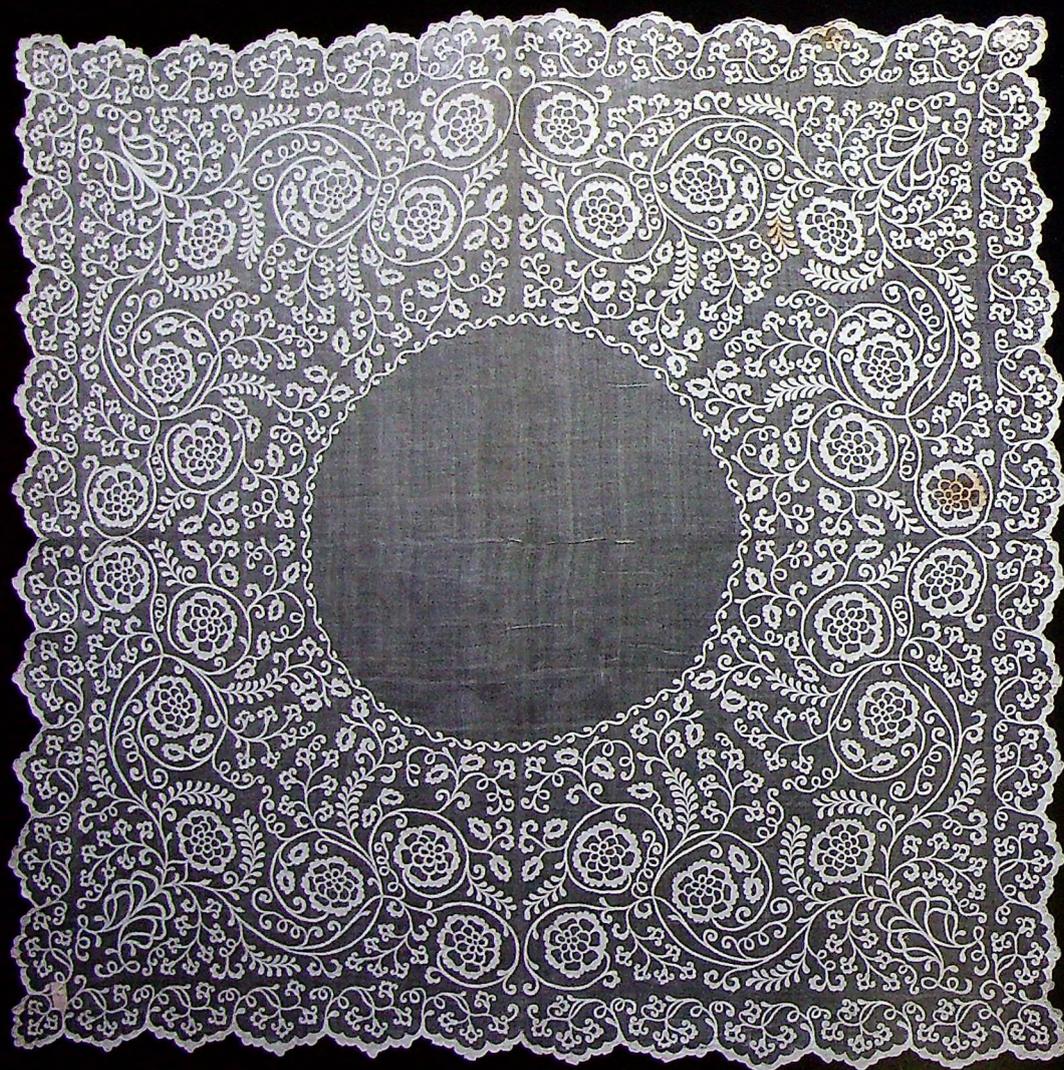
Pineapple fibre cloth and cotton cloth appliqué, 80 × 80,

95 × 40, 103 × 46 cm

Intramuros Administration Collection, Manila

The *pañuelo* is a lace-like embroidered neck scarf or shawl, worn around the shoulders over a blouse. Flowers and leaves are embroidered on cotton cloth, then cut and applied on the fabric with invisible stitching on the back side of the translucent base cloth. This technique is called *sombrado*, or shadow work.

The rectangular *pañuelo* is extensively decorated with fleurettes, leaving the central area untouched. The triangular *pañuelo* is threaded in satin using the *calado* technique, where fibres are taken out from the fabric, and the remaining intact fibres are woven into patterns. This technique not only adds detail and texture but also creates depth.





97

Terno

Salvacion Lim Higgins (Filipino, 1920–1990)

Manila, 1961

Silk, lace, and beads, length 138 cm

Mark Lewis Higgins

The designer known as Slim opened her shop in Manila in 1947, launching a remarkable period of fashion creativity. This wedding gown was created for Victoria Ramos Tanjuateo in 1961.

Although this *terno* is the formal Philippine national dress with distinctive sleeves, European couture elements can be seen in the skirt—a reflection of the hybridity of Filipino culture. Notably, it is also a Southeast Asian garment worn for a Catholic ceremony, evidence of three centuries of Spanish rule.

In 1960 Slim and her sister Purificacion founded Slim's Fashion & Arts School, the oldest fashion institution in the country. In June 2022 Slim was posthumously proclaimed a National Artist in the category of design.



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Terno

Ramon Valera (Filipino, 1912–1972)

Manila, 1962

Silk, lace, and beads, length 140 cm

Ms Maritess Pineda



Ramon Valera was one of the Philippines' most celebrated fashion designers, best known for innovations to the traditional *terno* dress. Valera first came to prominence in the 1930s and was renowned for elegant gowns. He dressed several first ladies and society women in the mid-twentieth century. This dress was worn by Maritess Pineda at her debut in 1962. Valera was posthumously awarded the first National Artist for Fashion Design in 2006.

The *terno* has its origins in the *baro't saya*. *Terno* means matching suit in Spanish, and the modern Filipino outfit is usually made of the same fabric in a single piece. In the 1940s, Ramon Valera developed the famous style of exaggerated butterfly sleeves, a narrow waist, and a long skirt.

Cross-cultural fertilisation and borrowing

Hybrid textiles and fashion along the galleon route

Circe Henestrosa

Commercial exchange existed between Southeast Asia and Latin America when both were part of the trade routes and territory of the Spanish empire. The Manila galleons transported silks in addition to spices, porcelain, and other Asian goods to the port of Acapulco. Upon arriving in Mexico, they were sold on to other Latin American regions such as Peru, Ecuador, Panama, and Nicaragua. Manila was a strategic convening point for silks from China, spices from the Southeast Asia, and cottons from India. The Manila galleons transported textiles of all types: flowered silks, gauze, velvets, fine damasks, taffetas, heavy brocades, fine cottons, and shawls.¹

The trade routes between port cities have always exchanged goods as well as knowledge from different parts of the world. These cultural encounters were quickly translated into new hybrid communities that created their own art, fashion, cuisine, and at times, their own language. The Cuban historian Fernando Ortiz coined the term “transculturation” in 1940 to describe how cultures mix and blend.² Transculturation involves more than simply moving from one culture to another; it is not just the assimilation into the existing by a new dominant culture (acculturation) or the incidental or intentional discarding of an old culture (deculturation). Instead, it refers to the merging of these ideas and cultures and the concept that this will lead to new cultural events, creating something completely novel where both cultures have agency.

When Mexico and Peru emerged as commercial centres for Asian goods around 1580, “goods from China became part of the vocabulary of textiles and dress in the Americas.”³ Mexican fashions were heavily influenced by Asian fashions, but in Mexico, native features and designs were incorporated into fashion trends.⁴ Mestizo and indigenous artisans in the Americas were fascinated by the hand-painted motifs and needlework of Chinese textiles. Despite having their own ancient weaving techniques, indigenous people in Mexico began to incorporate Spanish and Chinese techniques in their work on imported fabrics from China and Manila.

This behaviour suggests that fashion emerges in various societies as a manifestation of individuals’ self-identity and their tendency to compare themselves with others.⁵ “Traditional” does not denote a state of immutability or lack of change.⁶ Rather, local traditions are dynamic systems that have consistently adapted by assimilating and incorporating elements borrowed from other groups, whether local or international. The domain of fashion began to encompass both the fashion trends of the colonisers and the styles and practices of Latin American people.

Cross-cultural fertilisation and borrowing: Tehuana dress in Mexico

In Mexico, like most Latin American countries, a sense of national dress was created that combined old and modern techniques. For example, in the “China poblana” national dress from Puebla, “China” refers to foreigners while “poblana” refers to locals from Puebla.

Perhaps the most emblematic of all Mexican national dresses is the Tehuana ensemble. Here, the embroidery and flower motifs on the traditional dress worn by Zapotec women from the Tehuantepec Isthmus in Oaxaca are heavily influenced by the embroidered flowers and Chinese techniques of the Manila shawl (*mantón de Manila*).⁷ The shawls arrived in Mexico en route to Spain, but many of the pieces remained in Mexico, and were sold within Mexico and to other Latin American regions. This is how the shawls arrived in Tehuantepec. The peony motif – influenced by Chinese textiles – remains today one of the most iconic flowers portrayed in Tehuana dress, an essential element in their self-constructed identity.

The Zapotec women of this matriarchal society have been a subject of fascination since the sixteenth century. Numerous travellers, artists, writers, anthropologists, and feminists have depicted an ideology related to the empowerment of Zapotec women. Examples date as early as Torres de Lagúna (1580).⁸

Tehuana women have inspired feminist artists and writers such as Tina Modotti, Frida Kahlo, Graciela Iturbide, and Elena Poniatowska who viewed the Tehuanas as symbols of power and femininity. The artist Frida Kahlo, who popularised the Tehuana dress, felt a connection with Tehuana women through her communist beliefs and affinity to indigenous peoples; she was also drawn to the concept of Zapotec matriarchy, which she infused into her art, personal style, and self-image as an independent female artist (fig. 1).⁹

Isthmian women's dress is integral to their identity. It comprises three key elements: a long skirt – the *enagua* – with a gathered waistband; a square-cut geometric blouse – the *huipil*; and a hairstyle featuring braiding and flowers. Traditional Mexican garments are not tailored, but assembled from squares or rectangles of cloth, without the need for buttons or zips. The *huipil* is a sleeveless tunic with bold geometric or floral and faunal embroideries; its length varies by region. The full skirts of the *enagua* are gathered onto a waistband and secured at the side with fabric ties; they usually have a lace-trimmed or cotton flounce *holán* attached (see cat. 100). The beauty of Zapotec women's clothing and the local customs reflect and honour women's power and status, and celebrate their success and dignity. A drawing by Miguel Covarrubias from 1946 shows the evolution of the dress over time (fig. 2).

On the cover of Covarrubias's book, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec*, a seated Zapotec woman holding a flag (*papel picado*) wears a cotton red skirt and red *huipil* with hand-embroidered flower motifs probably made using the hook-needle technique, combined with chainstitch machine embroidery from Juchitán, Oaxaca. She wears the *huipil grande* or *resplandor*, as it has come to be known in recent years, after the radiating headpieces of statues of the Virgin Mary. This is a ceremonial headdress worn by the women of Tehuantepec for church, weddings, fiestas, and processions. She is adorned with golden jewellery and a large basket heaped with fruits is at her side. Tehuana women were fond of lightweight materials like silks and cottons, including printed cottons from Manchester, England, that were imported up to the 1930s. Velvet and floral embroideries of peonies, roses, and other native flowers were suitable for fiestas.

The Zapotec women use their Tehuana dress to portray their identity and communicate their indigenous values, pride, and femininity, particularly in the region of Juchitán. Residents of Juchitán, San Blas Atempa and other towns in the Isthmus region fiercely uphold certain aspects of Zapotec culture: the aesthetic appeal attributed to local women communicates a profound ethnic pride. While the colonisers (both in the Americas



TOP TO BOTTOM

- Fig. 1 Frida Kahlo wearing Tehuana dress on the steps at the entrance of her home. Rosa Covarrubias (American, 1895–1970). Gelatin silver print. Universidad de las Américas Puebla.
- 2 Historical evolution of regional costume in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, around 1945. Miguel Covarrubias (Mexican 1904–1957). Paper. Archivo Miguel Covarrubias, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

and at home in Spain) were happy to adopt the materials into their daily wear without modifying them, the Zapotec women of Tehuantepec chose instead to translate and incorporate the embroidery techniques and flower motifs into the main elements of their Tehuana attire. These women borrowed Chinese embroideries and laces from Europe, cross-fertilising and translating them into their own visual language, creating unique Tehuana dresses that defined and represented them as local women. Today, peony and chainstitch embroideries from China remain an iconic motif on visually powerful Tehuana attire that has become a symbol of femininity as well as Mexican pride.

Manila shawls: In-between cultures

Chinese garments, particularly robes, have had a global effect as they have crossed over into various civilisations. Silk occupied a prominent status within colonial society, as it was the principal commodity sent from China in return for American silver.¹⁰ Certain silk products were intentionally manufactured as completed objects to be exported. These included embroideries and weavings intended for European and American markets; they also met a burgeoning demand for an iconic item – the shawl. Before the twentieth century, embroidered shawls were not a component of Chinese fashion culture. Manila shawls – also known as China shawls, Spanish shawls, flamenco shawls, Mexican shawls, or piano shawls – fall into this category of objects made for export to meet the demands of international customers in Europe and the Americas.¹¹

As Helen Persson Swain discusses in her essay on the global success of the Manila shawl, orders for shawls were placed in Canton (Guangzhou) for the European and American markets. The shawls then travelled from China through the Philippines, Acapulco, and finally to Seville. Chinese manufacturing converged with Latin American culture and European fashion, and was stylised with Chinese patterns, fabrics, and processes, giving birth to the Manila shawl, where peonies feature as an iconic flower (fig. 3).

These cross-cultural approaches inspired products that became universally fashionable. Manila shawls became associated with the south of Spain and flamenco dancers. Following the battles for independence from Spain and the end of the Manila galleon trade in 1815, the decline of the Spanish empire sparked a national identity crisis. In response, a new twentieth-century emphasis on local shawl manufacture in the Seville region transformed Chinese designs into Andalusian customs, turning shawls made in Spain from Chinese designs into a source of



Fig. 3

Manila shawl (detail): cat. 85.

national pride. Manila shawls therefore possess the unique characteristic of embodying both Spanish and Chinese influences, in turn allowing them to be associated with locations as diverse as Venice, Argentina, Panama, and London.¹² Paradoxically, this quality also renders them unattached to any specific place, resulting in a valuable ambiguity, an “in-betweenness” that defies categorisation either as universally applicable or as authentically local, and simultaneously embodies elements of both universality and authenticity. The significance of this quality of “both/and” cannot be overstated when it comes to grasping how fashion cultures disrupt fixed ideas associated with textiles and clothes.

Peranakan art: The evolution of embroidery at home

From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, Southeast Asia saw a particularly heightened level of exchange, driven by trade, colonisation, and technological advancement. Chinese people migrated to Southeast Asia, where they formed familial connections frequently through intermarriage with local women, giving rise to Peranakan culture. The Peranakan Chinese community resided predominantly at the ports of the archipelago, forming part of a vibrant and diverse cultural environment. As the region developed, its culture also transformed:

Chinese practices and beliefs became intertwined with the local way of life. Today, this culture is particularly evident in Malacca, Singapore, Penang, Phuket, and Tangerang.

Peranakan Chinese beadwork and embroidery are distinguished by the use of opulent materials, meticulous artisanry, sophisticated designs, and elaborate textures. They hold special cultural significance within the community, particularly among women, referred to in Baba Malay as *nyonyas*.¹³ While the gendered nature of *nyonya* needlework may not have been fully adhered to in its execution, this name serves as a useful overarching designation for this unique style of beadwork and embroidery. The Peranakans cleverly adopted beading techniques from Europe and combined them with local motifs such as peonies, peonies bordered by phoenixes, flora, fauna, and butterflies, as can be seen on a multitude of objects.

A fringed tablecloth profusely decorated with peonies and a variety of wild birds (fig. 5), is reminiscent of Manila shawls, but is masterfully crafted with *nyonya* beadwork. Closer examination reveals that the designs include the quetzal and the macaw, birds native to Mexico and Central America, as well as a citron-crested cockatoo native to Sumba, Indonesia. The cross-fertilisation evident in the motifs point to the dialogue between cultures separated by oceans and united by design. The tablecloth is a prime example of the evolution of tradition in action, and also reflects the sophisticated sensitivity of artisans in this region, whose interest in and assimilation of motifs from other cultures is clear from the design.

We can observe Peranakan Chinese adopting their preferred elements from East and West and translating these into their own hybrid visual language. Nineteenth-century photographs taken in Singapore show individuals of diverse ethnicities and origins confidently adorning themselves in attire that blended multiple fashion influences.¹⁴ Peranakan slippers appeared to be a preferred item in females' wardrobes (fig. 5).

Footwear such as flat-nose slippers also gained popularity among affluent ladies in Hanoi and royal women in Hue, the capital of Vietnam's Nguyen dynasty (fig. 6).¹⁵ These slippers featured a semi-circular toe piece and were adorned with motifs and materials reminiscent of *nyonya* examples, including peonies, which they must have obtained from Malaysia and Singapore. The *nyonyas* demonstrated a remarkable ability to readily adjust to the evolving societal norms, particularly in matters of attire, as they lacked rigid guidelines to adhere to.¹⁶ Needlework bags, slippers, pouches, headpieces, and other items show that peonies were a powerful emblem of beauty in Peranakan culture.

Fig. 4

Table cover. Penang, ca. 1920. Cotton needlepoint canvas, European glass seed beads. Peranakan Museum, Restoration sponsored by BNP Paribas Foundation and BNP Paribas Singapore Branch [2006-01927].



Fig. 5

Woman in a kimono wearing beaded *kasut manik* and two *kerosang* brooches. Singapore, around 1880s. Albumen print. Family of Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee.

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"Tonkin - Hanoi - rich women visiting". Postcard, around 1900. Ken Yap, Kuala Lumpur.

***Piñas*: Innovation and reimagination in the Philippines**

Once explorers and colonisers tasted pineapples in Panama, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela, news of the fruit's appeal spread rapidly. Through the galleon trade, the fruit and occasionally complete pineapple plants were introduced to India, China, the Philippines, Java, West Africa, Bermuda, and other regions. Pineapples are documented in the Philippines by 1558.¹⁷

As early as 1571, indigenous people of the Philippines had begun to make *piña* cloth from the fibres extracted from pineapple leaves.¹⁸ The fibre from the indigenous abaca plant had long been used to make *jusi*, a fabric commonly used in traditional attire. The pineapple plant's foliage provided a fibre comparable to the abaca. However, *piña* exhibited a greater degree of sheerness and lustre, enhancing its desirability.

Spanish missionaries in Manila were responsible for the introduction of embroidery as an art form; embroideries from China arrived with the Manila shawls. The embroidery of intricate designs onto sheer *piña* cloth resulted in highly coveted and aesthetically pleasing materials. The white-on-white embroidered fabric had a completely different aesthetic sense and language to the colourful Manila shawls.

Piña fabric enjoyed a prominent status in the Philippines, being incorporated into men's formal shirts and women's embroidered neck scarves (cat. 95). Its reputation quickly spread. Today, *piña* fabric is one of the most important living crafts in the Philippines. The Philippines has innovated for centuries and is today at the forefront of fashion sustainability.

The history of the trade route then, is one writ large across cultural traditions considered indigenous to their territories today. From the flamenco dancers of Andalusia to the Tehuanas of Tehuantepec, the Peranakans, and women from the Philippines, the galleon trade left its mark across oceans. Incorporated seamlessly, the exchanges facilitated by the trade exemplify Ortiz's "transculturation", creating innovative cultural paths where the mixing of cultures is viewed as the creation of something completely new.

- 1 Tinajero 2005, p. 68.
- 2 Ortiz 1963 (first published 1940), p. 92.
- 3 Phipps, 2013, p. 34.
- 4 Tinajero 2005.
- 5 Cannon 1998.
- 6 Molnar 1998, quoted in Tinajero 2005, p. 67.
- 7 Turok 2007.
- 8 Manso de Contreras 1661, Brasseur 1981, Brenner 1929, Covarrubias 1946, and Iturbide and Poniatowska 1989.
- 9 Tibol 1993 and Henestrosa 2018.
- 10 Phipps 2013.
- 11 Rado 2014.
- 12 Cheang and Kramer 2021, p. 49.
- 13 Cheah 2017, p. 8.
- 14 Lee 2017.
- 15 Cheah 2017, p. 12.
- 16 Fu 2021, p. 168.
- 17 Collins, 1960, p. 198.
- 18 Welters 2013.

Tunic (*huipil*), skirt (*enagua*), and flounce (*holán*)

Mexico, Oaxaca, Tehuantepec Isthmus, 1930s

Tunic and skirt: embroidered cotton, length 41.8 cm

flounce: cotton with lace trim, length 94.5 cm

Circe Henestrosa

Traditional Mexican garments are not tailored, but assembled from squares or rectangles of cloth without the need for buttons or zips. The *huipil* is a sleeveless tunic that varies in length according to region, while the full skirts of the *enagua* (skirt) are gathered onto a waistband and secured at the side with fabric ties. Even everyday outfits like this one from Oaxaca are distinguished by bright colours and striking flowers or chain-stitch embroidery.



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Tunic (*huipil*), skirt (*enagua*), and flounce (*holán*)

Mexico, Oaxaca, Tehuantepec Isthmus, before 1954

Tunic and skirt: embroidered cotton velvet, length 56.5 cm

flounce: cotton with lace trim, length 95 cm

Circe Henestrosa



The Tehuana ensemble is one of the most recognisable forms of Mexican dress. Chinese techniques and motifs, such as those on Manila shawls, influenced the embroidered patterns shown in this ensemble.

These Tehuana outfits belonged to Alfa Ríos Henestrosa and Nereida Ríos, who were indigenous women from a matriarchal society in the Tehuantepec Isthmus, in southeast Mexico. Nereida Ríos gave tunics from her hometown of Juchitán in Oaxaca to the celebrated artist Frida Kahlo, when Kahlo decided to adopt the Tehuana style. Usually paired with gold filigree jewellery, this costume symbolised femininity as well as indigenous culture and national pride in Mexico.



Tunic (huipil)

Catalina Martínez Hernández
Night and Day collection
Mexico, Oaxaca, San Pedro Amuzgo, 2016
Cotton and silk, length 111 cm
Fomento Cultural Citibanamex

Catalina Martínez Hernández's *Night and Day* collection is inspired by the Chinese concept of yin and yang, interconnected forces that oppose yet sustain each other. Similar oppositional concepts existed in the indigenous cultures of Mesoamerica. These ancient civilisations understood the regular rhythms of the sun, moon, and planets.



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Tunic (huipil)

Catalina Martínez Hernández

Night and Day collection

Mexico, Oaxaca, San Pedro Amuzgo, 2016

Cotton and silk, length 110.5 cm

Fomento Cultural Citibanamex



Archaeological discoveries

The Baja California shipwreck and the port of Acapulco

Roberto E. Junco

Archaeological research clarifies the history of the Manila galleons by providing tangible evidence of the maritime trade between Asia and the Americas. The most significant finds have been the remains of shipwrecks in the Philippines, Mexico, the Marianas Islands, and the United States.¹ In Mexico, research has largely focused on examining Chinese porcelains, which are among the materials most likely to survive the passage of time (fig.1).²

This chapter briefly presents two important galleon archaeology projects in Mexico. One is associated with a shipwreck on the coast of Baja California, which dates to the early period of the galleon route, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. The other centres on the excavation of the port of Acapulco, from where, for two and a half centuries, the galleons departed annually loaded with silver from the Americas, arriving the following year carrying goods from Asia. These sites have revealed valuable information about the makeup of the galleons' cargoes, as well as the design and construction of the ships themselves, which were among the most complex machines of their time.

Fig.1 Distribution of Chinese porcelain in Mexico.



A Manila galleon wrecked off the coast of Baja California

The Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) serves as the governing body for archaeological work in Mexico. For over two decades it has been studying a site along Mexico's northwest Pacific coast, where the remains of a sixteenth-century Manila galleon lie as a ghostly reminder of the hardships of the journey from the Philippines to New Spain. The area along the ocean is a desolate desert characterised by low dunes. Walking along the coastline, one sees the scattered remains of the ship's cargo.

The earliest reference to the wreck comes from the writings of two Jesuit priests, Miguel del Barco and Francisco Consag. In his 1751 expedition, Consag recorded the site as follows:

By mid-morning, those who went to survey the spit of sand brought a bowl, a cup, a big cup, a plate of Chinaware, and a good portion of white wax paste. They informed us that the area is full of vases, large plates and the like, nails and pieces of iron that disintegrate into powder with contact, even the nails that are still tucked into the broken timbers; lead pieces can be found, several medium and small pieces of bronze, but what is more abundant and easily found in the wax. For lack of water, they cannot stop for much time because the nearest is very salty, and if it does not give thirst, it does not quench it. All these things indicate that a vessel sank in this sandy beach or contours, which can even happen without a big storm, or because the coast is unknown.³

The first modern reference to the site appears in George Kuwayama's *Chinese Ceramics in Colonial Mexico* (1997) which published pictures of Chinese porcelain sherds "from an unpublished site off the California coast".⁴ Kuwayama told maritime historian Edward Von der Porten that beachcombers had visited the site and gathered porcelain sherds. Under INAH's supervision, Von der Porten, Jack Hunter, and Edward Ritter, organised the first expedition to the site in 1999 (fig. 2). The Archaeological Project Manila Galleon, Baja California, has provided financial support for yearly excavations, conservation, and ongoing research at the site.

During the field seasons the team focused on developing methodologies to locate the shipwreck remains and scattered materials. Magnetometry was conducted on land and at sea to identify anomalies caused by the presence of ferrous materials. These underwater targets were verified by excavations that yielded little, in part due to dangerous diving conditions and powerful waves

in the area. In the absence of finds, the presence of ferrous materials may indicate cannons and anchors buried deep within the seabed. Walking surveys conducted on the beach and dunes led to the discovery of significant material remains related to the shipwreck. A total of 3,787 artefacts have been documented at the site, with Chinese porcelains from the Wanli period (1573–1620) representing the largest group, with 1,923 finds (fig. 3). The majority are underglaze blue-and-white plates, bowls, cups, bottles, and boxes, but there are also polychrome plates, bowls, and cups.⁵ Plates decorated with phoenixes represent a significant group, comprising 26% of the specimens found. Other finds include sherds of cups decorated with landscapes. Masterfully painted, they show a diversity of quality in the cargo. They were likely made in Jingdezhen and Zhangzhou, and are roughly comparable to

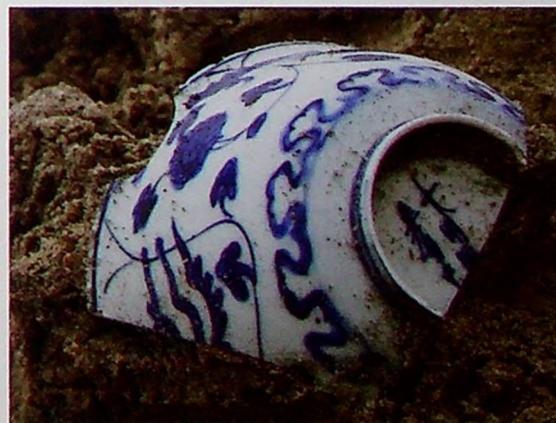


Fig. 2 INAH archaeologists working with metal detectors at the Baja California site.

3 A Chinese blue-and-white porcelain bowl from Wanli period (1572–1620) found on the beach.

the cargo of the *Nan'ao no. 1*, a Chinese trading vessel that sank off the coast of Shantou in Guangdong, possibly on its way to Manila.⁶

At least five different types of stoneware sherds and complete pieces from southern China and Southeast Asia (possibly northern Vietnam) have also been recorded, probably containers for water and staples used on the voyage. Other finds include fragments of Spanish olive jars and cloisonné plates (cat. 105), Mexican silver coins (cats. 107–9), a Chinese coin, a small lead object possibly used for fishing, pieces and complete blocks of beeswax from Southeast Asia, lead from the hull sheathing or repairs, lead shot, metal furniture fittings, a bronze incense burner cover in the shape of a guardian lion (fig. 4, cat. 103), and compass gimbals.⁷

This collection is significant, as it demonstrates what the galleons carried during the early period of the route. Beeswax, for example, was likely used for candles, with huge quantities consumed by the church. It has also been recovered from wrecks of the late seventeenth century, suggesting that it was an important merchandise shipped between the Philippines and Mexico for at least a century. Elements of the ship itself provide evidence of ship construction and the technology available at the time.

Von der Porten suggested that the wreck might be that of the *San Felipe*, lost in 1576, or the *San Juanillo* (1578), but noted that further archival research was necessary to identify it with certainty.⁸ It adds to several major galleon discoveries from the last 30 years. In North America these include the *Santo Cristo de Burgos*, wrecked in 1693 off the coast of Oregon, which yielded beeswax and porcelain sherds, and the *San Agustín* (San Francisco, 1595) which has yet to be excavated but is associated with finds on a nearby beach, along with magnetometry targets identified in the water.⁹ In the Philippines, the *San Diego* (1600) and *Nuestra Señora de la Vida* (1620) retain partial remains of their wood structures.¹⁰ In the Marianas, the *Santa Margarita* (1601) has yielded jewellery and ivories.¹¹ And in Guam, studies have identified the ballast, lead sheeting, and shot of the *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* (1690).¹² Other recent projects include survey work to locate the *San Francisco*, lost off the coast of Japan in 1609.¹³ Further work on the wrecks of the *Encarnación* (1649), *San José* (1694), and *San Andrés* (1798) in the Philippines is likely to continue in the future.¹⁴

Chinese porcelain fragments at the port of Acapulco

Acapulco's role as port connecting Mexico with the Philippines makes it a natural place to conduct research on the galleon trade. After many abortive attempts, archaeological work began there in 2015 after maintenance workers uncovered porcelain sherds at Fort San Diego while replacing an electrical cable. Given the potential for finds at the site, the Maritime Archaeology Project of the Port of Acapulco was established to excavate the fort and surrounding area, and to document its role in daily life and trade.

The initial excavation occurred at the fort, which was constructed between 1615 and 1617. Designed as an irregular pentagon-shaped castle atop a rocky cliff, it remained impenetrable throughout the colonial period but was severely damaged by an earthquake in 1776, leading to repairs that took place between 1778 and 1783. The improved fortress was surrounded by a moat and could accommodate up to 2,000 people with sufficient supplies of food, ammunition, and drinking water for an entire year. Several excavation pits were opened along the periphery of the fort, each measuring two by one metre. These yielded a rich collection of objects, with porcelain fragments also found incrustated in the cement of the walls between the stones.

The second archaeological excavation took place in 2016 in downtown Acapulco, after the local government dug a 30-metre-long ditch adjacent to the cathedral for a water system replacement (fig. 5). This ditch contained thousands of fragments of blue-and-white porcelain, primarily kraakware (cats. 112–19). Given the central location of the site, it may have been the location



Fig. 5

Excavations at the Port of Acapulco.

of the traditional Acapulco fair – an annual celebration that took place shortly after the arrival of the Manila galleon in December or January.¹⁵ Many of the porcelain sherds appear to come from objects that were damaged during the long voyage from Asia to Acapulco, some of which were likely discarded upon arrival.

The two sites in Acapulco have yielded exciting artefacts, including coins, buttons, Asian stoneware, Mexican majolica, glass, needles, metal fittings, Spanish and Peruvian ceramic containers, English earthenware, and over 7,000 sherds of Chinese porcelain. The porcelain fragments differ significantly between the two sites. The pieces found downtown are from the early years of the galleon trade, during the late Ming dynasty, including several fragments of dishes and bowls that have been stylistically dated to between 1560 and 1570 – remarkably early considering the Manila galleon route only began in 1565. The fragments recovered from the fort are mainly from the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), which coincides with its reconstruction in the late eighteenth century. The fragments found at the downtown site are larger and more complete than those recovered near the fort; further study may provide clues about how porcelains were discarded.

A typical decoration found on the Ming porcelains is a deer-in-a-landscape design at the centre with rim borders representing aquatic plants (fig. 6). Some bowls are of a type commonly known as “crow-cups”. These and many other fragments are of kraak porcelain, with characteristic panelled borders painted with various alternating decorative motifs, such as birds, animals, and flowers. Some high-quality and delicately painted sherds have been dated to the Transitional period (1620–83).

Among the finds from the Qing dynasty are fragments of small porcelain cups used for hot chocolate, possibly of the type discussed in William Sargent’s essay in this volume. These were mainly exported to the Spanish colonies in the New World and Spain itself. Other types include blue-and-white plates (fig. 6), multicoloured *sancai* and *wuca*i vessels, Batavia ware, *blanc de chine* from Dehua, Canton wares, and armorials, including a sherd with the monogram of Ferdinand VII of Spain, who reigned in 1808 and from 1813 to 1833.

The excavation project is still in its initial stages but has already contributed much to our understanding of the history of Acapulco and its international connections. Further work will undoubtedly yield more material, including Asian stoneware, but finds are anticipated to be mainly Chinese porcelain.

The exchange of precious commodities, such as spices, silk, porcelain, and silver between the

Philippines and Mexico enriched both regions and left a long-lasting imprint on their respective cultures. In Mexico, the remnants of this maritime trade route still resonate, and can be seen in many forms, like Puebla ceramics, which continue to use the shapes and colours of Chinese porcelain.¹⁶ The Baja wreck is an exceptional representation of early Manila galleon cargoes, and an indication of what the kilns of Jingdezhen and Fujian province produced for export.



Fig. 6 Chinese blue-and-white porcelain plate with a deer design, Ming dynasty (Longqing period, 1566–72).

- 1 See Junco 2016 and Von der Porten 2019 for Mexico; Jago-on and Orillaneda 2019 for the Philippines; and Williams and Junco 2021 for the US.
- 2 Gasch-Tomás 2022, p. 241.
- 3 Junco 2011, p. 881.
- 4 Kuwayama 1997, pp. 56–59.
- 5 Von der Porten 2019, p. 140.
- 6 Zhou 2019, p. 49.
- 7 Trejo and Junco 2023.
- 8 Von der Porten 2019, p. 177.
- 9 See Williams and Junco 2021.
- 10 See Goddio 1994 and Jago-on and Orillaneda 2019, p. 129.
- 11 Mathers and Shaw 1993.
- 12 Junco 2011.
- 13 Kimura 2019.
- 14 Jago-on and Orillaneda 2019, p. 129.
- 15 Junco 2018, p. 8.
- 16 Castillo and Fournier 2019, p. 253.

Material excavated from the galleon wreck
on the western shore of Baja California



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103
Censer lid in the shape of a lion
China, Ming dynasty (1368–1644), 1570s
Bronze



104

104
Key
China, Ming dynasty, 1570s
Bronze



105

105
Plate with polychrome cloisonné
China, Ming dynasty, 1570s
Copper

106
Base of a plate with phoenix motif
China, Jingdezhen, 1570s
Porcelain



106

107 – 109
Coins
Spain, 1570s
Silver

110, 111
Decorative plaques
China, Ming dynasty, 1570s
Brass

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107



108



109



110



111

Material excavated from Acapulco



112

112
Base of a plate with deer and pine design
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

113
Underside of a bowl marked 大明成化年製
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain



113

114
Base of a bowl with bird motif
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

115
Sherd from a bowl with monk and stylised qi characters
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

116
Sherd from a plate with landscape and fishing boats
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

117
Base of a kraak bowl with rabbit and rock design
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

118
Base of a plate with landscape design
China, Jingdezhen, Ming dynasty
Porcelain

119
Bowl with wave design
China, Zhangzhou, Ming dynasty
Porcelain



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115



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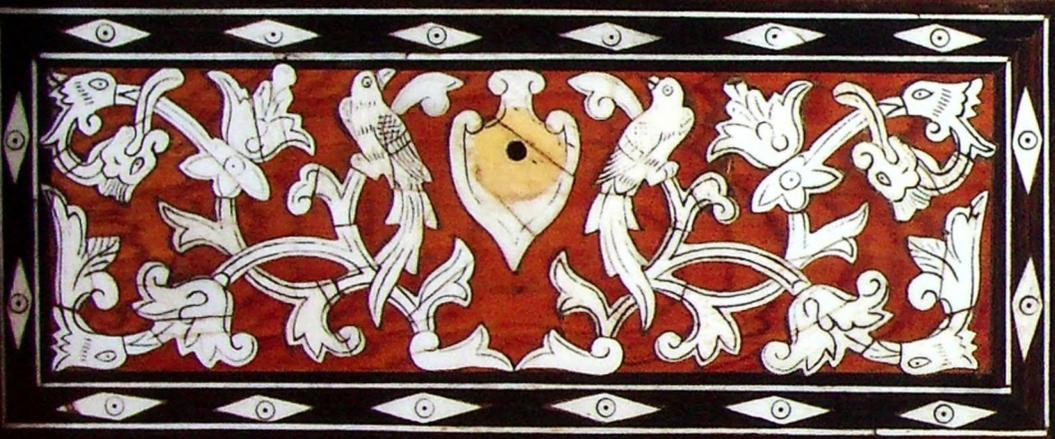
117

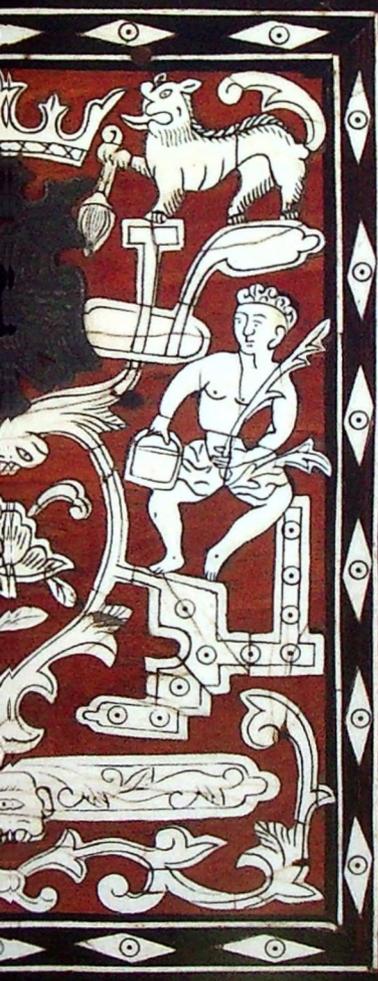


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