

Kraak Porcelain for the Portuguese and Spanish Markets

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This paper will present an overview of the Portuguese and Spanish trade in a new style of blue and white porcelain made at the end of the Ming dynasty at provincial (privately-owned) kilns in Jingdezhen. This distinctive porcelain, commonly known in the west as *kraak*, quickly became the largest and most varied group of Jingdezhen export porcelains manufactured throughout the reigns of Wanli, Tianqi and Chongzhen. The sea routes of the Portuguese – the first Europeans to engage in maritime commerce in the Orient – and the Spanish played an important role in the prolific trade and transport of *kraak* porcelain around the world. Archaeological evidence yielded from their settlements and *kraak* porcelain finds from datable shipwrecks and survivor campsites, as well as shards found on various beaches on the coast of South Africa and California, will be discussed along with a small number of *kraak* pieces that were specially commissioned by the Portuguese and Spanish nobility and clergy. These pieces not only bear testimony to early Luso-Chinese relations, but also demonstrate that the Portuguese (as they had done from the Zhengde reign) were the first to commission *kraak* porcelain with European designs, including coat-of-arms, religious emblems or monograms and pseudo-armorials.

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Cultures of Ceramics in Global History, 1300-1800

University of Warwick, 22-24 April 2010



Global History
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