Kraak Porcelain for the Portuguese and Spanish Markets

Teresa Canepa  
*Jorge Welsh Oriental Porcelain and Works of Art, UK*  
*PhD candidate, Leiden University, NL*

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.

© Teresa Canepa 2010

---

**Cultures of Ceramics in Global History, 1300-1800**  
**University of Warwick, 22-24 April 2010**

[http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/research/globalporcelain/conference](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ghcc/research/globalporcelain/conference)