

Jingdezhen Porcelain Distribution in Iberian Peninsula during the 16th and 17th Centuries

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Chinese porcelain export to European market in massive quantity began when the Portuguese expanded their commercial power in Asia in the early 16th century. Their clandestine commercial activity in Guangdong and later establishing Macao as an official commercial base favoured greatly the ceramic export to Lisbon and further distributed them to other European port cities. Shortly after the Spaniards began the Manila galleon trade exporting Asian goods to America further on to Seville from 1565. Two Iberian monarchies were connected to Asian trade and were strongly influenced by the Asian material culture importing luxury goods and absorbing into their culture as a symbol of wealth. However, the archaeological facts do not match this history since there is a scarcity of Chinese porcelain in Spain whereas there are abundant porcelain materials in Portugal. The discussion will be focused on the excavated pieces in Spain and Portugal and study the flow of Chinese ceramics during the 16th and 17th century from the archaeological and historical point of view. How do we explain the scarcity of the Oriental ceramics in major part of Spanish territory and the abundance of Chinese ceramics in Portugal? Can it be explained by the difference of material culture between two societies? By observing the spatial distribution of Chinese ceramics and historical documents related to ceramic trade in Iberian Peninsula, the author will intent the reconstruction of trade route and re-put the excavated ceramics into a historical context.

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