

## **An Ethno-archaeological perspective of Maritime Cultural interaction between Southeast China and the West world during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries**

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### **Abstract**

*The Portuguese and Spanish navigation from Europe to East Asia and America opened the early globalization, one of the most important periods of cultural interaction in human history. The broad and deep maritime cultural exchange and conflict between Eastern Asia and the Western world resulted in this period after the arrival of the first European navigators. In the Southeast China region, a series of tangible and intangible cultural heritages as shipwreck with cargos' content of different cultures, maritime trading remains, East-West mixed seaport building, and the exchange of agricultural goods have been identified and studied through archaeological and ethnographical methodology. The results show a significant cultural change in eastern Asia resulted from maritime cultural interaction and early globalization since the arrival of Spanish and Portugal ships to the region in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

**Keywords:** China, Spain, Portugal, Maritime

### **Background: the early contact of Portuguese and Spanish with China**

The early contact between Portuguese and Chinese in the southeast coastal region of Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang was full of difficulties due to the policy of Ming Dynasty to ban commerce (Lin Rengchuan, 198: 32-50; Wu Chunming, 2003: 283-287) .

After Vasco da Gama sailed pass the Cape of Good Hope好望角 in 1498, Portugal quickly controlled the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean, replacing the Arabs. A series of Portuguese trading halls and military fortress were set up along the coasts of the Indian Ocean from 1501 to 1511, such as Cochin科钦, Cali Carter卡利卡特, Goa果阿, Colombo科伦坡 and Malacca马六甲. The Portuguese struggled to trade with the Ming Dynasty for all most a century. From 1515 to 1522, the governor of Malacca Jorge d'Albuquerque and F. P. de Andrade sent two ambassadors to the Ming court to no avail. They were relegated to desolate islands like Wuzhou浯屿 in Zhangzhou of Fujian, Shuangyu双屿 in Ningbo of Zhejiang where they traded with smugglers at risk of confronting imperial authority (Lin Rengchuan, 1987, P.131-175). The situation changed when the Portuguese were allowed to settle at Nakasaki长崎 (Japan) in 1543 and were permitted in 1557 to colonize Macau 澳门 which had connections to Manila马尼拉.

Timor帝汶, Vietnam越南 and Siam暹罗. However, they were not permitted to dock in Canton (now Guangzhou广州) and Quanzhou泉州. The success of Portuguese colonies in Eastern Asia resulted in a long distance maritime trade route between Eastern Asia and Europe connecting Nagasaki, Macau, Malacca, Hormuz霍尔木兹海峡, Cape of Good Hope and Lisbon里斯本.

The Spanish navigated to East Asia slightly later than the Portuguese, they arrived in East Asia from America and set up a permanent trading base in the Philippines. Their fleet tried to open another Europe-Asia maritime route across the Pacific between 1519 and 1522. During this period, the Portuguese Fernando de Magellan led a Spanish fleet that sailed across the Atlantic, and the Pacific to arrive in the Philippines. His ship sailed west to the Indian Ocean and back to Europe through the Cape of Good Hope and succeeded in the earliest circumnavigation of the world. This pan-Pacific experience set great benefit for the Spanish, but they met similar difficulties with the Ming ban.

After their arrival in the Philippines, the Spanish took almost half a century to conquer the archipelago. They fought the Portuguese to control the Moluccas摩鹿加群岛 in 1529, they confronted Philippine aboriginals and established the pan-Pacific trade route to link Asia, America and Europe through the Manila Galleon马尼拉帆船 in 1565. They also sought to expand into Southeast China. Their requests to settle in Amoy (now Xiamen厦门) in 1574, and in Guangdong广东 in 1598 were refused by the Ming Dynasty. In 1626, the Spanish fleet occupied Keelung鸡笼 in Taiwan from where they engaged in smuggling activities until they were defeated by Dutch colonists in 1642. After their unsuccessful colonizing experience in southeastern China, the Spanish carried out indirect maritime trade with Chinese merchants. The Spanish established the Manila Galleon, which sailed across the Pacific to Acapulco阿卡普尔科, the cargo was transferred to Veracruz维拉克鲁兹, and the goods were sailed to Europe. They developed a series of extension routes linking Manila to Amoy, Macau, Canton, Siam, Borneo婆罗洲 and other regional Eastern Asian seaports, connecting them with this early global maritime trade system.

## **Shipwrecks and early international maritime trade in eastern Asia during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries**

Although Spain and Portugal had to face the difficulties of the Ming ban, they nonetheless carried out trade with Southeast China. In the last 20 years, underwater archaeological investigation has yielded a series of shipwrecks dated to 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries identified as the remains of private endeavors of maritime trade from Southeast China.

### **(1) Nanao shipwreck**

The Nanao南奥 shipwreck is located at the south of Nanao Island (Sun Jian, 2012). The site was discovered in 30 m of water, and was surveyed and excavated in 2000-2013. The wooden wreck remains are 27 m by 7.8 m and had 23 compartments. The shape of hull was identified as local traditional shipbuilding technique of Fujian and Guangdong. More than 30,000 artifacts have been salvaged from the site, including export ceramics, bronze, iron, tin, stone, wooden, bone, lacquer, more than 10 species of vegetation dry food. These contents are dated to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

95% of the artifacts from the site are blue and white from the Zhangzhou and the Jingdezhen kilns. This blue and white porcelain are similar to Swatowware or Clark artifacts. The Zhangzhou kiln漳州窑 was located next to Wuyu (浯屿) and Moon seaport (月港), harbors famous for their smuggling activities. The Ming ban had forced private merchants to move away from local official harbors such as Canton and Quanzhou and carried out smuggling activities with the Portuguese and Spanish. They sailed out from Wuyu, Suangyu, Nanao or Zhangzhou Moon ports to meet European maritime traders at Macau, Malacca, Nagasaki and Manila. The Zhangzhou kiln which produced Clark ware had specialized in products for European consumption. Preliminary studies show that Clark ware from Nanao shipwreck share great similarities with material recovered from Portuguese, Spanish, and early Dutch shipwrecks like the *San Diego* and the *San Felipe* (Fujian Provincial Museum, 1997; Edward Von der Prrten, 2013). This appears to indicate that the Nanao wreck was involved in this type of illicit activities. Most of the content of Nanao was export goods, therefore the ship could have been in its outbound route. There does not seem to be European material on board, but there are artifacts of European influence (Fig.1).



**Fig.1: Iron Cannon from Nanao shipwreck. Its use in a commercial ship points to European influence**

The presence of firearms in ships is probably of European influence, since pre-European era junks have not yielded this kind of material.

## **(2) Donggu shipwreck**

Donggu 冬古 is another island in the border region of south of Fujian province also involved in smuggling

activities during the Ming ban. The shipwreck was discovered in the small

bay of Donggu, south of Dongshan, one of camp site of Zheng Chenggong troops during late Ming to early Qing Dynasty (Chen Liqun, 2001; Donggu Underwater Archaeology Team, 2003; Ao Jie and Zhao Jiabin, 2005; Li Bin and Sun Jian, 2005 ). The underwater survey and excavation on the site uncovered many artifacts as ceramic, bronze, iron, tin, stone and wooden. A coin with inscription of Yongli Tongbao 永历通宝 was discovered, which had been casted and used during the regime of Zheng's family in Taiwan and Fujian (1647-1683). Taking into account the weapons and armor found in the site, the boat could have been part of the military fleet of Zheng's clan. The ceramic artifacts from the site include bowl, plate, dish and cup of blue and white porcelain, of which most are daily necessities. Most of this porcelain is from the local kilns of Zhangzhou, Dehua 德化 and others around Fujian. A few blue and white might be from the Izink kiln in Japan from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This shows the close connection between Zheng's clan with Japan (Li Jianan 2012).

Some artifacts from the shipwreck are interesting for the understanding of maritime cultural contact between Zheng's clan and European colonists. Many firearms including iron cannons and gunpowder have been identified as imitations from Portuguese or Spanish, some of clear Mediterranean or European influence (Fig.2). The arms trade of Zheng's clan had been recorded in detail in European documents (William Campbell, 1903; Iwao Seiichi, 1959). The popularization of European firearms in China during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century could be a result of maritime cultural exchange. A bronze tobacco pipe

from the site (Fig.2) –the oldest recorded in China– highlights this interaction, since tobacco originated from the Americas and was introduced in Asia by Europeans.

### **(3) Other shipwrecks of 16-17 century in southeast China**

More than ten further wrecks from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have been identified in the seas of Southeast China. They are Baijiao 2 白礁二号 and Longwenyu 龙纹屿 (Zhao Jiabin and Wu Chunming, 2010), Laoniujiang 老牛礁, Jiuliang 九梁, Wanjiao 1 碗礁一号 (Zhou Chunshui 2013), Guangao 广澳, Baolinggang 宝陵港 (Wu Chunming, 2003, P. 22-24), Yuzhuojiao 1 玉珠礁一号, Langhuajiao 1 浪花礁一号, Panshiyu 1 盘石屿一号, Shiyu 3&4 石屿三号、四号, Huaguangjiao 4 华光礁四号, in Xisha 西沙 archipelagoes (Zhao Jiabin 2012), and etc. They were identified as the remains of local Junks.



(right)

The Baijiao 2 shipwreck is located in Dinghai bay in the estuary of Minjiang. Dinghai had been the key fort defending the provincial capital Fuzhou in Ming and Ding dynasty.

Most of the artifacts from the site are celadon and blue and white, these bowl, plate, pot were identified as products of Pingnan, Wuyishan, Pucheng in north of Fujian province, dated to middle of 17 century. Similar thing had been discovered in Akita, Aomori, Kumamoto counties of Japan, showing the possible maritime cultural contact in this region.

Longwenyu locates 1000 m south of Baijiao 2. A Bronze cannon with inscription of “Guo Xing Fu” (国姓府) was collected from the site (Fig.3, left 1-2). The name Guo Xing is associated with Zheng (Chen Lijun, 2010).

According to historical records, Zheng’s fleet sailed Dinghai bay in 1654-1657 and fought with the the Qing Dynasty (Yang Ying and Chen Bisheng, 1981,P. 7, 79, 138—141, 158—160).

The Guangao shipwreck is also related to Zheng’s family where the bronze seal of Zheng’s subordinate Zhongzhenbo and bronze canons with inscription of “Guo Xing Fu” were salvaged (Chen Lijun, 2010).

#### **(4) Private maritime business groups of Southeast China**

After the establishment of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, the Chinese empire carried out maritime tributary trade朝贡贸易 and enforced the Ming ban that forbade maritime commercial activities. From the Ming and beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1368-1683), maritime trade was controlled by the government. Nevertheless, private merchants counteracted the ban with illicit trade, though facing grave reprieves should they be found. The arrival of the Europeans encouraged and favored the development of these activities. They organized themselves in family groups and armed their junks with firearms in European style to fight the government’s fleet. They were names as pirates by the officials of the Ming Dynasty, and they kept close connections to Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch traders (Lin Rengchuan, 1987, P. 183-200, 204-208; Wu Chunming, 2003, P.283-287).

According to historical documents, more than 15 different families took part in smuggling activities in the Southeastern coast of China in the Ming and Qing dynasties (Lin Rengchuan, P.85-130). Zheng’s family was the largest and strongest; they had been active in the eastern Asian sea between Fujian, Guangdong, Vietnam, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. The first generation of this family is Zheng Zhilong

(郑芝龙1604-1661) who was born in Shijin石井village in Fujian province. He was the adoptive son of a Portuguese wealthy business man in Macau. He migrated to Hirado平户in Japan and joined the local Chinese business family Li Dan李旦when he was eighteen years old (1622). Zheng Zhilong married a Japanese woman and strengthened his own maritime trading business with Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch traders. His son Zheng Chenggong (1624-1662) carried on and expanded this family business, controlling international maritime trade of eastern Asia for half century.

Indeed, all of these private maritime business groups played a key important role in the process of cultural exchange between East Asia and western world when the Chinese government was absent from international trade. The shipwrecks as Nanao, Donggu and others appear to be the remains of these private endeavors. According to historical nautical guide's Books as *Sun Feng Xiang Song* 顺风相送 and *Zhi Nan Zheng Fa* 指南正法 (Xiang Da, 1961) dated to late Ming and early Qing dynasties, these private merchants were concentrated on the Eastern and Southeastern Asian seas. Their smuggling routes connected the region with the outside world, to Europe and America.

### **Maritime cultural heritages in Southeast China resulted from early globalization**

Apart from the shipwrecks, other factors attest to the cultural exchange that occurred from this early globalization, both tangible and intangible: architecture, maritime settlement pattern, plants, life style, trade, religion, culture, science, and so on.

#### **(1) European Architecture and change of settlement landscape of China**

The most significant cultural change after interaction of east and west in southeast China is the introduction of European-style architecture, which started with the Portuguese and Spanish. Their settlements in Macau, Wuyuan, Shuangyu and Keelong were rooted out by the official army of the Ming empire enforcing the Ming ban, except for Macau. But other buildings remain; in 2004, more than twelve European-style buildings were evaluated as UNESCO world heritage (Wang Guoqiang, 2004).

The oldest European building in Macau is Sao Paulo Church which was built between 1555 and 1562 by the Portuguese (Fig.4).

St Dominic's Church is another early building of Macau which was built in 1587 (Fig.5). Nossa Senhora da Guia church was built in 1622 at East Wangyang mount. The city library and town hall were built in 1656 and 1784, with the typical characteristic of

Portuguese architecture. Further European influence from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century has conferred a distinctive Western landscape in many port cities in China, such as Amoy (Fig. 6).



**Fig.4: The front wall ruins of Sao Paulo Church of Macau (1595)**

The cultural dissemination of European architecture in the last 500 years has impacted local construction in Taiwan, south of Fujian, and east of Guangdong, which uses red brick of European influence. The red brick building in south of Fujian, east of Guangdong and Taiwan might have been the result of architecture cultural mix of east and west from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

## **(2) Foreign plant species, change of agriculture and life-style**

The Portuguese and Spanish brought not only a large amount agricultural and industrial product as maritime cargo, but also introduced a series of foreign plant species directly or indirectly into China such as sweet potatoes, potatoes, corn, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkin, peanut, ipomoea, bitter and cigarette. This new products changed the Chinese agricultural system, the diet and their life style.

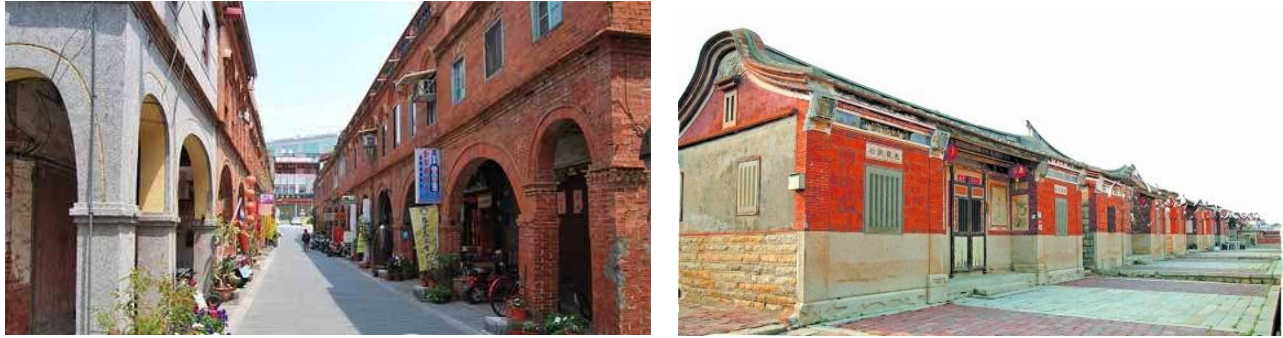




*Fig.5: St Dominic's Church of Macau (1587)*



*Fig. 6: The landscape of European architectures in Amoy, Fujian*



*Fig. 7: The red brick house in South of Fujian*

Most of these foreign species were imported by the Portuguese and Spanish from South America to Southeast Asia (Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia), and were introduced to China through maritime trade (Lin Rengchuan, 1987, P371-379). The name of sweet potato in China was Fan Shu (番薯) which means foreign (Fan) potato (Shu). It was first taken to Fujian and Guangdong in 1580, and then it spread to Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Sichuan, Guangxi, Jiangxi, Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, Shandong, Henan, Hebei, Shanxi and Guizhou in the beginning of Qing Dynasty. The corn was another important crop introduced in Fujian and Guangdong in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The peanut was introduced to Haicheng 海澄 county in Fujian in the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It then spread to Zhengjiang and beyond at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. Potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, pumpkin, ipomoea, and bitter were also introduced to China in the middle and late 16<sup>th</sup> century. The cultivation of all of these foreign crops enriched the Chinese diet.

Tobacco was introduced from America to the Philippines via the Manila Galleon in the middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was taken into China through the Moon sea port in Fujian at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century. It spread to Southwest China and beyond in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### **(3) Christian missionaries and change of religion, culture and science of modern China**

There were two waves of Christian missionaries prior to the maritime arrival of the Europeans in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The two waves arrived through the land Silk Road during the Tang (618-907) and Yuan (1271-1368) Dynasties, respectively called Jing Jiao 景教 and Yelikewen Jiao (也里可温教). The arrival of Spanish and Portuguese brought about a

third wave that arrived with the Portuguese and Spanish maritime expansion. Religious beliefs were accompanied by other European knowledge of science and culture that had a effect on Chinese socio-cultural life (Lin Rengchuan, 1987, P. 414-418).

The Catholic Diocese of Macau was established in 1576, which was the first and most important missionary center in the Far East. Matteo Ricci利玛竇 and Jules Aleni 艾儒略 were two of the most famous and most productive missionaries in China during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was the pioneer missionary of the Jesuits in China (Zhang Xiping, 2002). He arrived at Macau in 1582 and was permitted to go to Guangzhou and Zhaoqing in 1583. He stayed in Zhaoqing for 20 years and then went north to Nanchang, Nanjing, and finally he arrived in Beijing in 1600. He studied Chinese and preached in that language, and he also learned Chinese traditional literature and culture. He preached by way of "reconciliation strategy," making friends with Chinese scholars and officials.

Jules Aleni (1582-1649) was another great missionary of Catholicism who arrived in Macau in 1610 (Jules Aleni, 2011; Pan Feng Chuan, 2006). He was sent to Beijing, Shanghai, Yangzhou and other places to preach, and was active in Shaanxi, Shanxi, Hangzhou and Fuzhou. He had stayed in Fujian for 23 years and set up dozens of churches before he died in 1649. Soon after the works of these missionaries, Catholicism developed quickly in China. There were more than a hundred thousand Catholics in China in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> century, many of whom were senior officials of the imperial court of the Ming Dynasty. The dissemination of Catholicism influenced Chinese religious life and philosophy, complying with the original Confucian and Buddhism. The introduction of new knowledge by missionaries also had great influence in China. Matteo Ricci was the most famous academic missionary in China, who specialized on western mathematics, surveying, geography, and surveying. He published more than 10 different Chinese books as 6 volumes *Geometry Theory*《几何原本》, 8 volumes *Mathematics Compare of East and West*《同文算指》, *Survey and Cartography Theory*《测量法义》, *Pythagorean Theorem*《勾股义》, *Similarities and Differences of Measurement*《测量异同》, *Principles of Astronomy*《乾坤体义》. These publications were co-authored by his students Li Zhizao 李之藻 and Xu Guangqi 徐光启 who

had been senior officials of Ming Dynasty (Zhang Xiping, 2002). Other missionaries like Jules Aleni also contributed to the spread of knowledge (Jules Aleni, 2011; Pan Feng Chuan, 2006; Alexander Wylie, 2011). All of these works greatly promoted the development of modern science in China, the mutual understanding of East and West, and advance in the progress of China and eastern Asia.

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## **Biography**

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