Cover Page

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**Author:** Llorens Planella, Maria Teresa (Teresa Canepa)
**Title:** Silk, porcelain and lacquer : China and Japan and their trade with Western Europe and the New World, 1500-1644. A survey of documentary and material evidence
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Trade in Chinese Silk to Western Europe and the New World
1500–1644
This chapter relies mainly on primary and secondary printed sources, which contain valuable information relating to the silk trade as well as to the varied types and quantities of Chinese silks (raw silks, woven silk cloths, and finished silk products) imported into Western Europe and the New World via the Atlantic and Pacific sea trade routes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. China was renowned for its high quality silks first brought to Europe overland via the trade route that came to be known in the late nineteenth century as the Silk Road, the finest being produced in the eastern coastal provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang. Silk, which was among the earliest of the global trade goods, remained China’s major export throughout the Ming dynasty. This was probably due to both the introduction of improved varieties of mulberry (of smaller size that could be planted closer together and harvested sooner) and the unprecedented number of imperial silk weaving workshops established in regions with a developed silk industry. The workshops in the capital, Beijing, manufactured satins and tabbies for imperial and palace use. Those in Nanjing, the former capital during the early Ming, manufactured silks for officials and official gifts. Silks were also sent to the court from official silk workshops outside the capital, located at Suzhou in Jiangsu and at Hangzhou in Zhejiang, the latter renowned for its twills, brocades, and satins, as well as for local types of gauzes and weaves. Exported from the eastern ports of Canton and Amoy, silk was a much coveted trade good because it was high in value, light in weight and easy to pack, store and transport.

Letters, accounts, chronicles and treatises written by Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and English merchants, explorers and clerics who either travelled themselves to Asia and the New World or based their writings on reports from others who visited these distant places during

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1 Unless otherwise specified, Chinese silks will be referred to as silks throughout this doctoral dissertation.
3 There are a total of twenty-two official workshops established across eight provinces. In Jiangsu, workshops were also located in Suzhou and Songjiang. In Zhejiang, besides Hangzhou, they were located in Wenzhou, Taizhou, Wenzhou, Ningbo, Ningbo and Hangzhou. In Fujian workshops were located in Fuzhou and Quanzhou; in Jiangsu at Nantong, Nantong and Shanghai, and in the Yangzi delta. There were also minor silk workshops in Jiangxi, Anhui and Hunan, 2007, p. 110. The various types of silks produced will be discussed in the following pages of this Chapter.

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11 Ibid., p. 145. The various types of silks produced will be discussed in the following pages of this Chapter.
13 The period of this study, provide detailed descriptions and personal comments concerning the material qualities, rich colour schemes and decorative patterns, and sometimes even of the purchase or sell price of the various types of silks that were shipped to Europe and the New World as merchandise, private consignments or gifts. Other textual sources such as ships registers, probate inventories, wills, dowry letters, and notarial records, allow us to better understand the functioning of this intercontinental silk exchange in the early modern period, particularly the commercial networks through which these imported silks circulated, and the different ways in which they were acquired, used and appreciated within the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and English societies in Western Europe as well as the multi-ethnic societies of the Spanish colonies in the New World. Moreover, they show how these silks, despite the existence of sumptuary laws imposed by governing authorities against luxurious dress and ornamentation in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, were inextricably linked to the construction of an individual’s identity, serving as visible social indices, as well as of the Catholic ecclesiastical institutions, serving both as material testimonies of the Iberian expansion to Asia and the missionary work carried out in this distant region of the world.
14 Although visual sources depicting silks of the late Ming dynasty are exceedingly rare, a small number of surviving embroidered silk cloths, and finished silk products housed in public and private collections in China and the rest of the world help us visualize the types of silks traded by the Europeans and more importantly, those that were made as special orders for the Iberian market for both religious and secular use during the early period of European trade with China, in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

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7 Ma, 2005, p. 21.
8 Sumptuary legislation was enforced sporadically in Europe during the Middle Ages and early modern period to regulate the consumption of goods. Sumptuary laws not only constituted a legal instrument of economic and social control, but also served to intervene in politics. They focused mainly on new forms of apparel, either forbidding or prohibiting certain social groups from wearing certain types of clothing and accessories, and the consumption of expensive foodstuffs and luxury. For more information on this subject, see Maria Daoud-Jones, Moisés, ‘Reconciling the Prodigal of a Few with the Catholic Church: Sumptuary Laws in Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, in Maria E. Daoud-Jones, Sumptuary Legislation and Consumption in Medieval Europe, Vol. 39, No. 3, Fall 1999, pp. 491–517, and Paul Ferrari and Estelle Dessolles, The Rise of Consumerism, Oxford, 2006; and Günther Lottes, ‘Reconciling the Privilege of a Few with the Common Good’, in Günther Lottes, Using and Resisting the Law in European History, Pisa, 2005, pp. 190–226. For a detailed study of the cultural and monetary value of silk in Europe, especially in Italy, focus on the relationship between dresses and textiles, see Lisa Miracco, Needlework, Privilegs and Patents: Silk Fabrics in Italy and Northern Europe, 1500–1625, New Haven, 2004.
Silk Trade to the Iberian Peninsula, the Southern Netherlands and the Spanish Colonies in the New World [2.1]

Trade to Portugal [2.1.1]

The earliest documentary reference to the presence of silk in Portugal dates to 1501.

On returning from China that year, the Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral presented to Manuel I many exotic goods, including porcelain and 'golden coffers full of pieces of damasks and satins from China', which he had acquired from the captain of a ship from Cambay. As described in Chapter 1, after securing trading posts in Goa in 1509; Malacca in 1515; and Hormuz in 1515, the Portuguese gained access to a variety of Chinese luxury goods that were much sought after in Europe, particularly silk and porcelain.

Evidence of silk in Portugal before the settlement of Macao in 1557

The Portuguese saw an unprecedented opportunity of economic profit in a large-scale trade of raw silk, woven silks and finished silk products by sea from Canton and Malacca. Tom Pires in his Za de Oriente, written in Portuguese between 1512 and 1515, informs us of the exchanges made at anchorage off Canton. He notes that: ‘the chief merchandise from China is raw white silk in large quantities…’

12 The merchants of the land of China also make voyages to Malacca across the Great Sea. (Quoted in Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, ‘Chinese Silks in the Royal Court of Lisbon, 1500–1640’, exhibition catalogue, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (res-22-a).)


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17 Archaeological excavations in China indicate that before the fourth century, people started to use calligraphy for writing on arel is a set of three flags, one in damask and two in white taffeta bearing the coat of arms of Christ and two in white taffeta bearing the coat of arms of Christ. (Mentioned in Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, ‘Chinese Silks in the Royal Court of Lisbon, 1500–1640’, exhibition catalogue, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (res-22-a).)

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The History of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) indicates that during the late Ming, large amounts of woven silk were imported, used mainly for ceremonial costumes and ordinary clothing of the emperor and empresses, the courtiers of the prince, and the audience uniforms of the cabinet ministers of the government. The Ming court is known to have bought
certain large quantities of silk for ceremonial wear and
costumes, especially for the imperial family. The emperor, the empress, the queen, the princes, the princesses, and the
bureau officials all wore various kinds of silk clothing
during the court ceremonies.

Silk fabric weaving techniques in China include
Kesi (slit tapestry weaving) and Jinji (taffeta). During the Ming dynasty, there were four main types of
tapestry (Kesi) woven: silk, metallic thread, gold, and silver. Kesi was lustrous, and Jinji was sleek, but both types were
lightweight and appropriate for hot and humid weather. For a discussion on these gauzes and their various decoration
techniques, as well as images of surviving Ming examples, see Kuhn, 2012.

Kesi (slit tapestry weaving) is a fabric in which a satin weave is used to form a surface pattern with a smooth appearance, and with a soft feel. During the Ming dynasty, there were four main types of
tapestry (Kesi) woven: silk, metallic thread, gold, and silver. Kesi was lustrous, and Jinji was sleek, but both types were
lightweight and appropriate for hot and humid weather. For a discussion on these gauzes and their various decoration
techniques, as well as images of surviving Ming examples, see Kuhn, 2012.

The predominant fabric of the Ming dynasty was Jinji (taffeta). Taffeta fabrics are
damask fabrics with a twill pattern on a twill ground, faced and a weft-faced binding. By the Ming dynasty, Jinji was
used to make ceremonial costumes and ordinary clothing of the
prince, and the audience uniforms of the bulwark-emperor and empresses, the court dress of the
emperor and empress. For a discussion on Jinji damask textures and surviving examples, see Kuhn, 2012.

Satin is a fabric formed by interweaving a warp
and a weft yarn in a simple way. Taffeta fabrics are
damask fabrics with a twill pattern on a twill ground, faced and a weft-faced binding. By the Ming dynasty, Jinji was
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The Portuguese used the Macao-Malacca/Goa-Lisbon trade route to supply silk
and other Asian luxury goods to India, Portugal and the rest of Europe. In the period
1581 to 1586, the years following the union of Spain and Portugal, the Crown allowed
freedom of trade, but continued to reserve for itself the profitable trade in pepper,
silk, and cinnamon. In late Ming China, meanwhile, silk production began to shift
after 1581 from rural areas to suburban villages in the Lower Yangtze. Taxes in kind
were abolished that year, which meant that the state no longer provided any direct
demand for silk tabbies even in traditional silk weaving regions. A small amount of
silk tabbies continued to be produced in Zhili and Jiangxi for sale in central markets,
such as Hangzhou, as well as in Sichuan, Guangdong and Fujian, but these later
regions mostly exported raw silk to the Lower Yangtze.

The Chinese trade network was well established in the early Ming period, with
the development of the Silk Road that linked China with the Middle East and
Europe. In the late 16th century, the Ming dynasty began to recognize the
economic potential of trade with the West, particularly with Portugal and Spain.

The Portuguese, who had established a trading post in Macao in 1557, quickly
recognized the potential for trade with China. They began to import large quantities
of raw silk and silk products, including woven textiles, from China, which were
then exported to Europe. This trade relationship was further strengthened by
the arrival of the Portuguese fleet in Macao in 1557, which allowed for direct
trade with China.

Trade in Chinese Silk
Antonio Bucarro, writing in 1635, doubles the estimate of the given value by Linschoten in 1596. Because, according to him, the quantity of silk exported yearly from Macao to Goa was about 6,000 piculs. Still, however, represented only about 5-6% of all the Asian textiles imported into Europe.

As a fine and strong material, the purchase price of silks in Canton varied at the time.43 In his Itinerario Linschoten gives a detailed description of the types of silks available and their purchase prices, and states that 'it is to be understood that in China there are three sorts of silks, that is, one sort called Linschoten which is esteemed for the best. The second called Fuscan, which is also good. The third and worst Silk is called Lankam, besides these there are other sorts of Silk, as Silk spun, call raw Silk, and Silk that is spun and made in threads, which the Portuguese call Rettes. The white spun Silk of Linschoten is the Pico 50 or 60. Ryalls of eight. That of Fuscan is worth the Pico, 120. or 125. Ryals of eight, the spun Silk of Lankam, is worth the Pico, 75. or 80. Ryals of eight, the Retres of that money. The white spun Silk of Fuscan is worth the Pico, 140. or 145. Ryals of eight, the纺丝毛的桑树丝绸 is worth the Pico, 85. or 90. Ryals of eight, the white spun Silk of Fuscan is worth the Pico 150 or 170. Ryals of eight, the Retres white, and other Silks of Fuscan and Susam, is worth the Pico 150 or 155.

Ryalls of eight, the Retres of China is worth ru. 240 per maund at 16 pice the pound. But it was dear, as it usually was valued at seventy scudos in money, and in silver weight one hundred pounds of twenty ounces to the carat.

Linschoten in 1596. Because, according to him, the quantity of silk exported yearly from Macao to Goa was about 6,000 piculs. In 1596, Linschoten sold his book to the Amsterdam publisher Cornelis Claesz who published it in 1598. The Itinerário was reprinted in 1599, 1600, and 1601. Citations throughout this doctoral dissertation are taken from the digitalized English translation of Linschoten's Itinerário published in 1983, by D. Tracy.

According to Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. The estimate given by Bocarro, as convincingly demonstrated by Jordan Gschwend, 1996, p. 85. Therefore one must rely on fragmentary information provided by a small number of manifests that have been preserved, inventories, contemporary accounts of voyages and shipwrecks, as well as on visual sources to identify fairly accurately the various types of silks and estimate the volumes imported into Lisbon. The large differences in quantity and style of raw silk shipped by Portugal to Macao suggest that the Portuguese had an interest in the Chinese silk industry and the Chinese market for the Portuguese goods they exported. The Portuguese soldier and chronicler, Diogo do Couto (1524–1616) in his Itinerário the Voyage and Viceroyalties which left Goa in 1559, informs us that the galáu (Açor was also called Parent) left Goa laden with a number of government officials and a cargo that included silk.42 He states that the ship’s commander, Francisco Barreto, who was returning to Portugal after serving as Governor of Portugal in India (1555–1556), ‘ordered many of the merchants’ goods to be thrown overboard, including ‘some of silks, and many valuable and rare Chinese goods’, after the ship was badly damaged during a storm near the Cape of Good Hope.43 Silk was also among the cargo brought by private individuals in the 1600-ton nau, the galáu, which left Goa together with the agaue and five other ships.

We learn from an unknown author who made a list of his personal belongings as part of the cargo of the sinking. Gaya was being transshipped to the Agaue, that he was bringing to Lisbon ‘one Chinese silk wicket cushion’, ‘one pillow made of the same silk on one side’, ‘one antependium [altar frontal]’ of silk fabric and of another silk from China ‘for Our Lady of Hope’, ‘one small Chinese box with silk flowers for Francesco di Aruj and his wife Maria’.44 In light of this information, it would appear likely that not only the Melinde of one from the Bengal and the two from China for windows embroidered with silk.45 This text clearly shows that a small quantity of finished silk products, including furnishings for both secular and religious use, were imported into Lisbon as part of the Portuguese trade with the East. The official summary of the manifesto of the São Salvador, one of four ships of the fleet that left India in 1587, states that among the cargo were 141 crates of Chinese silks and 188 bundles of various textiles. The São Salvador was damaged off the coast of the Solomons and the two ships lost in the shipping lane, but the São Salvador’s cargo was thrown overboard.46 An account published this same year by the Italian merchants Cezar Federci and Gasparo Balbi, who watched the unloading of the remaining cargo in Hormuz, mentions only 40 crates of silk and 80 small textiles of various types.47 In all probability part of the silk and other textiles, most likely packed in privately owned chests, was thrown overboard on the upper decks, were easily accessible and therefore thrown overboard.48

Richard Hakluyt (1522–1616) in his work The Principal Navigations, informs us that when the 1600-ton carrack Madre de Dios was captured on her inbound journey...
The six-panel folding screen, one of a pair, housed in the Museu Nacional de Arqueologia near the Azores islands by the Englishman Sir John Burgh (or Burrows) in 1592, the cargo carried by the ship was as follows: 'The principal wares after the jewels ... consisted of spices, drugs, silks, calicos, quilts, carpets and colours, ... the silks, damasks, tabrets, sermons, altars, that is, counterfeited cloth of gold, unwrought China silk, slaved silk, white twisted silk. The white twisted silk is probably the same as the white 'Silk that is spun and made in threads, which the Portuguese call retina'.

Of particular interest to this study are the inventories drawn up by officers of the Portuguese trade in Macao, noted that ‘... all sorts of merchandise is brought thither, as by natives as strangers: only that which the Portuguese trade into for India, Japan and Manila, cometh one year with another to five thousand three hundred chests of various silk stuffs, each chest including 100 pieces of the most substantial silks, as velvet damask and satin, of the lighter stuffs, as half-damasks, ... and many things of less importance’. The ‘velvet damask and satin’ mentioned by Semedo may refer to a type of silk velvet with gold thread with an alternating diaper pattern formed by four pommel-roll motifs similar to that that was cut and sewn in Portugal into a compass cloak, lined with red silk satin and trimmed with metallic brocaded, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 2.1.1.3). The pommel-roll motif was frequently used on Chinese luxury goods that were presented as diplomatic gifts. Thus the silk velvets of this cloaking, dating to the sixteenth century, may have been a diplomatic gift taken to Portugal where it was cut and sewn into this popular style of cape.

Of particular interest to this study is the inventories drawn up by officers of the Portuguese trade in Macao, noted that ‘... all sorts of merchandise is brought thither, as by natives as strangers: only that which the Portuguese trade into for India, Japan and Manila, cometh one year with another to five thousand three hundred chests of various silk stuffs, each chest including 100 pieces of the most substantial silks, as velvet damask and satin, of the lighter stuffs, as half-damasks, painted and inkle tulresses ... besides small pearl, sugar, polonaise dishes, China wood ... and many things of less importance’. The ‘velvet damask and satin’ mentioned by Semedo may refer to a type of silk velvet with gold thread with an alternating diaper pattern formed by four pommel-roll motifs similar to that that was cut and sewn in Portugal into a compass cloak, lined with red silk satin and trimmed with metallic brocaded, now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 2.1.1.3). The pommel-roll motif was frequently used on Chinese luxury goods that were presented as diplomatic gifts. Thus the silk velvets of this cloaking, dating to the sixteenth century, may have been a diplomatic gift taken to Portugal where it was cut and sewn into this popular style of cape.

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the Portuguese mercantile elite in Lisbon. One of them was Manuel de Paz, who established a business with his half-brothers and uncles to trade in diamonds, pearls, silk, cotton, porcelain, and spices.76 Manuel, who survived the wreck, was returning to Lisbon with a large shipment of valuable goods. As noted by Bettencourt, the large quantity of textiles identified in the ship’s documentation included 923 items of silk, but these only represented 3.57 percent of the total of all the textile cargo. There were nearly 95 items of taffeta, 38 or more of damask, 19 of velvet and 9 of satin.77 The list of the goods found on the nearby beachside or turned in to the mayor included references to the silks salvaged from the wreck as well of their packing: ‘Jeronimo Camello delivered according to Manuel Nunes’s inventory / six small rolls of white silk / […] and thus another two small rolls of white silk;’ ‘Shoemaker Gaspar da Silva delivered according to Pere Fernadez Coelho and Melchior da Fonseca’s inventory / thirteen fathoms according to Manuel Nunez’s inventory / six small rolls of white silk / […] and thus another two small rolls of white silk;’ ‘Manuel Duarte delivered according to Cassiano Machado’s inventory / thirty-two small rolls of white silk / […] three small rolls of white twill silk / […] and another two of silk;’ ‘Antonio Gomez delivered according to Antonio Nunes’s inventory / […] and six cushions of purple damask like fabric / […] and one bolt of white taffeta / […] and another of blue / […] and another of pink damask like fabric / […] and another of white red silk taffeta.’ It is not known whether these woven silk cloths originated solely from China, or if they were also from Persia or Turkey. In this list, however, one finds some specific references to woven silk cloths and finished silk products from China. These include a ‘silk bedspread from China,’ ‘blue taffeta lined of yellow taffeta from China,’ ‘blue taffeta from China,’ ‘Coloured taffetas and calicoes from China,’ ‘tabernacle curtains with their silk tassels from China,’ ‘taffeta from China,’ ‘embroidered taffetas from China,’ and ‘white twilled silk from China.’ The presence of ‘white twilled silk’ in the cargo demonstrates that such silks were imported into Portugal for over two decades, at least from 1592 (Madre de Deus) to 1615. The limited quantities of woven silk cloths and silk finished products that arrived in Lisbon in the early sixteenth century appear to have been almost exclusively for the personal use of members of the royal court, clergy and high-ranking nobility. This was probably due to their high purchase price, and the sumptuary laws against luxury dress and ornamentation passed at the time, first by John II in 1535 in Evora, and then by the young King Sebastian I (c. 1557–1578) (hereafter Sebastian I) in Lisbon in 1560.78 The novelty and scarcity of the silks imported from China meant that they were held in high esteem, and thus eagerly sought after for use in both secular and religious contexts. Textual sources show that various types of woven silk cloths and finished silk products served political as well as social purposes. Finished silk products, for example, were used in diplomatic exchanges. After the defeat and death of Sebastian I during the battle of Alcâcer Quibir in North Africa in 1578, Cardinal Henry (c. 1578–1580) after succeeding to the Portuguese throne sent a white taffeta cape as ransom for Portuguese noblewomen imprisoned there.79 It can be cautiously inferred from this luxurious gift, silks played a crucial role in Portugal’s diplomatic relations and served as tangible images of the power of its seaborne empire at the time. Embroidered, painted or coloured woven silks were used as basic material to make Catholic liturgical vestments. The exotic and colourful Chinese motifs of such elaborately patterned silks must have been so desirable that they were adopted for use even though they did not conform to Catholic iconography.80 Silk cloths and finished silk products were also seen as garments or used as furnishings to decorate ecclesiastical interior spaces. From the Tratado ento que se eimilhau por estes acaus da China written by the Dominican Friar Gaspar da Cruz (c. 1520–1570) in 1569 we learn that many rank badges, the woven or embroidered insignia worn by Chinese civil and military officials, were worn by officials on the front and back of their coats and sold in Lisbon, and subsequently used as liturgical ornaments for the churches. A square badge for a sixteenth-century official dating to the sixteenth century, probably made in southern China, that once formed part of a group of similarly embroidered rank badges sewn together into a hanging or curtain housed at the Palazzo Corsini in Florence serves to place the type of rank badge that may have arrived to Portugal at the time, most likely through Macao (Fig. 2.11.4).81 Recent research by Ferreira has shown that by the end of the sixteenth century a variety of silk cloths were integrated regularly in sumptuous festivities of sacred-
Fig. 2.1.4 Square rank badge for a six rank official
Embroidered in floss silks and gold thread
China, Ming dynasty, sixteenth century
Dimensions: 36.8 cm x 38.1 cm
Provenance: Palazzo Corsini, Florence


Rank badges were worn during most of the Ming dynasty. The iconography of the badges for all ranks between wore examples in the late Ming, depicting restored landscapes, inhabited by animals in banks and the copious type of parrots and other birds in their personal ovals. For a discussion on Ming and Ming rank badges, see John E. Vinehill and Jacqueline Simcox, Emblems of Empire: Selections from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2005, pp. 60-68, and Mary M. Stratton, Dragons, Dragons: A Few True Stories of the Japanese Screen Museum of Art, New York and Manchester, 2000, pp. 167-169.

Fig. 2.1.5 In the image below, two emblems of the same design illustrate the iconography of the late Ming and are worn as badges by six rank officials. The original Portuguese text reads: ‘… os balustrades, & paredes, & vestiao seus pilares, & arcos’. Father Belchior de Santa Anna, writing in 1657, informs us that during the celebrations of the canonization of St. Teresa de Avila in 1619, the balustrades and pillars of the church’s choir were adorned with ‘many rich embroideries from China, & with glossy silks’, and ‘covered its walls, & dressed its pillars, & arches’.

The silk cloths used in Jesuit festivities, as Pacheco Ferreira has remarked, not only served as material testimonies of the Portuguese expansion to China and the Jesuit missionary activity there, but also had cultural, economic and political symbolic meanings.90 The Father João Sardinha Mimoso describes a theatrical performance offered by the student of the Jesuit college of Saint Anthony of King Philip III of Spain/II of Portugal (r. 1598–1621) (hereafter Philip III) during his visit to Lisbon in 1619, informs us that the thirteen angels that appeared on the prologue of the performance were dressed in ‘rich clothes [of] various cloths, of embroidered broacades from China’.91 Mimoso also notes that a common space annexed to the stage where the King and members of the royal family attended the event was ‘hung with silks of various colours from China fresh, and perfumed’.92 Two accounts concerning the Jesuit festivities held in 1620 and 1622 respectively, the beatification and then the canonization of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Francis Xavier, refer to participants of the processions wearing contemporary clothing items made of various silk cloths. Father Diogo Marques Salgueiro, for instance, notes that the figure representing Faith wore a robe of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves of white silk from China, and that of Ternate wore ‘very long over sleeves 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and religious festivities, but also into their households. By both men and women who incorporated them not only into clothing for daily use
inter-Asian trade.
main commodities traded by the Portuguese were raw silk, and Japanese and New
began, the Crown recognized the unprecedented opportunity of economic profit in
least from 1592 to 1615. The most common woven silk cloths imported were taffetas,
beads on embroidery and two cushions and four carpets of the same work
converted in gold and silver from China' that Governor Luís da Silva had left in
silk of the wife of Domingos Ribeiro de Vila Nova de Gaia.

Silk continued to be shipped yearly to Lisbon in the 1650s, as suggested by the
information from the textual sources discussed thus far it is possible to conclude that soon after direct Portuguese trade relations with China began,
national fashions, and offers insights on the role of silk cloths had been integrated regularly in sumptuous festivities of sacred-profane context
the end of the century such woven, embroidered, or painted silk cloths had been regularly used as liturgical ornaments for the
images of the power of its seaborne empire. Catholic ecclesiastic institutions, the

Trade to Spain [2.1.2]

In 1573, only eight years after Leghari conquered Cebú and established the first Spanish colony in the Philippines, and Urdaneta discovered a return route to Acapulco across the Pacific, Chinese silk began to be exported to the New World and a small quantity of it was subsequently re-exported via the port of Veracruz to the motherland, Spain. Silk for personal use, as well as furnishing items for both secular and religious use, as sacred images and silk weaving spread via the Arab conquest to Andalusia in southern Spain in the first half of the eighteenth century. Although white silk is commonly mentioned in textual sources, there are also many references to coloured silks. Some of the silks were woven, embroidered in gold thread and colourful silk, or painted with traditional Chinese motifs of flowers, birds, animals and deities. Finished silk products included clothing items, the consumption of which was not unknown to the Spaniards, especially colourfully embroidered silks, which they used for public displays. They would most probably have acquired them as royal gifts or through the Jesuits in Japan who participated actively in the silk trade from 1578 until their expulsion in 1639.

It was not until the early seventeenth century that woven silk cloths and finished silk products were more widely available to people from different social groups in Lisbon and other cities where many inhabitants had accumulated considerable wealth through trade. In Oporto, as has been shown, silk clothing and furnishing items were much appreciated by both men and women who incorporated them not only into clothing for daily use and religious festivities, but also into their households.

Manuel Correia (the Far East)

Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer

Trade to Chinese Silks
ñigo López de Mendoza, I Marqués de Santillana (1398–1458), gave to the church of the hospital he built in his villa of Buitrago a ‘chasuble … of aseytuní [cloth of fine silk from China]…’ that belonged to his wife, Catalina de Figueroa. By the sixteenth century, imported woven silk cloths were still considered a luxury and available only to the royalty, nobility and wealthy merchant classes. 

According to a account written in 1570 by an unknown author, _Relation of the voyage to Luzon_, when the Spanishiards captured two Chinese junks off Mindoro they found many valuable goods including silk, both woven and in skeins; gold thread; mesh; and other curious articles.107 A regular trade in silk between the Chinese and Spanish empires began the following year, when Legazpi moved the colonial capital northwards to Luzon, where Manila was founded. This trade, based on the exchange of Chinese silks for New World silver, is described in a brief narrative written by Legazpi’s notary Hernando Riquel and others, of the events of the Philippines between 1570 and 1573. It states that in 1571 ‘…there came to the port of this city three ships from China, and to the neighboring islands five more. Those which came here brought merchandise such as is used among the Chinese, and such as they bring here ordinarily. The distance from this island is not great, the voyage lasting about eight days. … For the chiefs, they brought a few pieces of silk and fine porcelains; but these goods are not especially out of the common. For the Spaniards they brought some fine ware and other articles, which they readily sold, since we are here have plenty of money, and the Chinese need it. They are so delighted that they will surely return in six or seven months, and will bring a great abundance of many rare articles. They brought specimens of many kinds peculiar to their country, in order to arrange the price at which they can be sold – such as quicksilver, powder, … silks in textiles of many kinds and in skeins’.108 A text described as a ‘Relation of what was brought by the two ships from the islands of the West’ written at the end of this narrative, which appears to have been added by the officials in Mexico, lists 712 pieces of all kinds of silks among a variety of goods brought by two ships that came from Manila in 1573. More importantly, it informs the King that ‘For their Majesties individually, are sent from the islands of the West’ written at the end of this narrative, which appears to have been added by the officials in Mexico, lists ‘712 pieces of all kinds of silks’ and other curious articles, to the Augustinian Friar Martin de Rada the following year.109 By the sixteenth century, imported woven silk cloths were still considered a luxury and available only to the royalty, nobility and wealthy merchant classes. 

In all probability, the aforementioned silks are the same ones that Mendoza, who had never visited China, wrote about in _The Medieval Heritage of Mexico_ in 1583, when referring to the Chinese, writes ‘They make gold into threads as is done in Milan, and weave them with silk. Also, they have found many valuable goods including “silk, both woven and in skeins; gold thread, mesh; and other curious articles”.’110 We learn from a letter from Captain Juan Pacheco Maldonado to Philip II, probably written in 1575, that patterned silks were also traded but at low prices. Maldonado notes that ‘Twelve or fifteen ships from the mainland of China come each year to the city of Manila, laden with merchandise: figured silks of all sorts; … The prices of everything so moderate, that they are to be had almost for nothing’.111 Remarkable for the quality and low sell price these silks continued to appear in Spanish documents in the following decade. For instance, the Augustinian Juan González de Mendoza (1540–1617) in his two-volume work _History of the Great and Mighty Kingdom of China and the situation thereof_, first published in Spanish in 1585, notes that ‘They do make great store of silk, and excellent good, and give it very perfect colours, which does exceed very much the silk of Granada, and is one of the greatest trades that is in all that kingdom’. He also remarks on the price of silk cloths and the way in which they are sold, saying that ‘The velvets, damask, satins, and other sorts of webs, there which is made, is of so small price, that it is a wonder to speak it, in special unto the price of the Chinese silks, which are sold here from their silks there by the yard, neither any other kind of webstorie, though it be linen; but by the weight, wherein there is least difference’.112 Mendoza, who had never visited China, based his observations on second-hand accounts compiled over many years.113 A chronicler of this time, de Lavezaris and others, to the Augustinian Friar Martin de Rada the following year, to the Chinese, writes ‘They make gold into threads as is done in Milan, and weave them with silk.

In 1583, Pope Sixtus V asked Mendoza to compose a History of the things that are known in China. Two years later, Alonso de Molina de las Casas made similar inquiries, years to consult all and give an account of all the silks that are there to be found and that are sold in the Indies published in Madrid at 1586. The latter was translated into English by the suggestion of Richard Hakluyt and published in London in 1588. The chronicles are from history of the Orient and roughly Kingdom of China and the situation thereof. Corona’s history of the Padre Juan González de Mendoza and de Lavezaris to the Chinese, writes ‘They make gold into threads as is done in Milan, and weave them with silk. Also, they have found many valuable goods including “silk, both woven and in skeins; gold thread, mesh; and other curious articles”.’114

In 1563, the council of the Audiencia of Mexico City instructed the merchants in Manila to trade for Chinese goods and kept a steady trade with them. In 1571, the council of the Audiencia of Mexico City instructed the merchants in Manila to trade for Chinese goods and kept a steady trade with them. 

107 *Relación de los Estados de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico City, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
108 *Relacion de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
109 *Relación de los Estados de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico City, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
110 *Relación de los Estados de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico City, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
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113 *Relación de los Estados de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico City, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
114 *Relación de los Estados de las Islas del Oeste* (Mexico City, 1572), vol. 1, fols. 95r-96r.
to choke off trade to such extent that no Chinese wares will be consumed in this realm, since a man can clothe his wife in Chinese silks for 200 reales [25 pesos], whereas he could not provide her with clothing of Spanish silks with 200 pesos.

This may have been an exaggeration of the Viceroy, but it serves to illustrate the high price differential between these imported silks. In a memoir written in 1602 by Fray Martín Ignacio de Loyola, Bishop of Rio de la Plata, he declares that 'The trading in, and consequent use of, the silks from the Philippines in the Philippines themselves resulted in a consumption of 200,000 pieces of silk and satin, in addition to 50,000 pieces of damasks, satins, taffetas, and gorvarans, picotes, and other cloths of all colors, some embroidered with the same; woven cloths and brocades of gold and silver upon silk that cannot be counted, the fineness of two strands, and other silk of inferior quality; fine untwisted silks, white and of all colors, in small sciss; quantities of smooth velvets, and velvet embroidered in all sorts of patterns, colours and fashion; and others, with the ground of gold and embroidered with the same, woven cloths and brocades of gold and silver upon silk of various colors and patterns, quantities of gold and silver thread in skein, upon thread and upon silk, but all the spangles of gold and silver are false and upon paper; damasks, satins, taffetas, and gorvarans, picotes, and other cloths of all colors, some finer and better than others; quantity of linen made of grass, which they call lenciuylas, and white cotton tablecloths of different kinds and sorts, for all sort of uses'

The raw silk, mostly from Zhejiang, as well as the various silk cloths mentioned by Morga, would most probably have been shipped by Chinese merchants from Canton to Manila.

Relations written by Spanish Jesuits in the early seventeenth century for the promotion of the Jesuit missionary work in Asia provide evidence of the silk trade in Manila. For instance, Pedro Chirino (1557–1635) in his Relación de las islas Filipinas published in Rome in 1604, gave a detailed account of the Jesuit activities in the Philippines from 1581 until his departure in 1602 and reports that 'From the silk which they usually buy, and sell to the Spaniards, are raw silks, in bundles, 8000. silks, of the fineness of two strands, and other silks of inferior quality; fine untwisted silks, white and of all colors, in small sciss; quantities of smooth velvets, and velvet embroidered in all sorts of patterns, colours and fashion; and others, with the ground of gold and embroidered with the same, woven cloths and brocades of gold and silver upon silk of various colors and patterns, quantities of gold and silver thread in skein, upon thread and upon silk, but all the spangles of gold and silver are false and upon paper; damasks, satins, taffetas, and gorvarans, picotes, and other cloths of all colors, some finer and better than others; quantity of linen made of grass, which they call lenciuylas, and white cotton tablecloths of different kinds and sorts, for all sort of uses'.
For instance, when the King and his wife Margaret of Austria (1584–1611) attended but also set a royal example to his subjects in expressing sobriety on special occasions. The outward manifestations of luxury and external appearance may have affected the importation of silks from China into Spain, first via Lisbon and after 1571 via New Spain. As Martínez Bermejo to luxury and external appearance may have affected the importation of silks from China into Spain, first via Lisbon and after 1571 via New Spain. As Martínez Bermejo stated of the Filipino Islands, written in 1640, reports ‘We trade also with the Portuguese, who come to the Manila every year with two or thirty ships, and bring here silks, musk, precious stones, ...’ (139). Bobadilla next gives a detailed description of the Chinese trade in silk and other valuable trade goods to Manila, stating that ‘The inhabitants of the Manila also go to Macao sometimes, to carry their merchandise there; but their chief trade is with the Chinese, who come annually, at the end of the month of December and the beginning of January, with twenty or thirty vessels, laden with products and valuable merchandise. They usually sail from Osaka and Chiliheu, ports of a province that the Chinese call the Philippines. They have other sorts of cloth stuffs, and some of these are as fine as those which come from France and the Low Countries; and many black stuffs of which the Indians make their clothes. They bring silk, twisted and of all colors, damasks, velvets, taffetas, and double taffetas; cloths of gold and silver, galons, and laces; coverlets and cushions; and porcelain, although not the finest variety, as the trade in that is prohibited ...’ (140). Among all the silk stuffs brought by the Chinese, none is more esteemed than the white – the snow is not white, but if they could see the manufacture, they would learn it’. (141).

In 1580, the King and his wife Margaret of Austria (1584–1611) attended festivities to celebrate the wedding of the manquises of La Baeta in December 1601, (1513–?). After living in Brazil and New Spain, established himself in Manila in 1580, (1513–?). After living in Brazil and New Spain, established himself in Manila in 1580. In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo

Silk, Porcelain and Lacquer

Trade in Chinese Silk

The inventory of the cargo recovered from the shipwreck Nuestra Señora del Rosario, which sank two years earlier, in 1589, while en route to Spain, included five pieces of silk, sent by the Chinese, and a small quantity of silk, along with porcelain and other Asian goods, was re-exported from New Spain to Seville in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. (149) Documentation reveals that some silks were sent especially for Philip II and other members of the royal court in the early 1570s, and that woven silks were sent as private consignments ordered by individuals working for the court in the early 1590s. In 1591, for example, Don Juan de Zapata, caballerizo (groom) of Philip II, placed a personal order of Chinese goods that included some pieces of damask and satin to although the ship Santa Maria, niter (judge) in the Chancillería (Court of Justice) of Mexico City. (150)

The inward registers of merchandise coming to Seville from New Spain for the years between 1640 and 1660 recently studied by Gasch-Tomàs indicate that 96 percent...
of all the Asian textiles imported into Seville was raw silk from China. Various types of raw silk were imported, including thrown silk, bunded silk, floss silk, and long-haired silk. Woven silk cloths only amounted 4% and finished silk clothing was completely absent. The author notes that the fact that not even one of a number of probable importers of Seville retailers of this period includes Chinese silks among the supplies, suggests that they were not being retailed in this city of Andalusia, which as mentioned earlier, was one of most important commercial ports of Iberia, along with Lisbon, and the only Spanish port that had a monopoly of trade with the Spanish colonies in the New World. However, textual sources indicate that Chinese raw silk was imported from New Spain into Granada as early as the late 1580s. For instance, in 1589, for example, the merchant Mateo Santa Ana sent 190 cants of raw silk from China to his sisters Francisco and María de Santa Ana living in Granada. Two years later, Mateo Santa Ana shipped 120 cants of raw silk from China to Francisco Núñez, from Granada. Raw silk was also imported from Manila, via Mexico City, as shown by the order of the secretary Antonio Jiménez in Madrid that included 2 pieces of white satin for him and a crimson velvet canopy with golden silk laces in 1607.

Granada. Raw silk was also imported from Manila, via Mexico City, as shown by the order of the secretary Antonio Jiménez in Madrid that included 2 pieces of white satin for him and a crimson velvet canopy with golden silk laces in 1607.

Thus it is likely that the various silks registered as cargo on the late sixteenth century ships discussed above were sent as gifts or private consignments to members of the nobility, and to relatives and acquaintances of Europeans and Chinese living in New Spain. A few documented examples help to illustrate how silks were transferred from New Spain to Spain in the early seventeenth century, not only through the participation of the nobility but also of the new middle class elite. For instance in 1603, a resident of Jalapa, named Lucio Gutiérrez, sent several pieces of silk, damask and silk circles to his sisters in Spain. The following year, Alonso Diaz de la Barrera, a resident of Tuxpan, a town in the province of Veracruz, wrote a letter to the Order of the Poor Clares in Seville, asking for a part of the funds to purchase damask and other textiles from Spain, to be remitted to the Royal Contaduría (Crown Accounting Office). Two months later, the privy seal and captain Piet Heyn (1577–1629) of the Dutch West India Company (West-Indische Compagnie or WIC) wrote the entire Spanish Treasure fleet under the command of Admiral Juan de Benavides, which was anchored at Maranaz Bay, to the east of Havana. The fleet’s booty, worth over 4.8 million silver pieces, included silver, gold, silk, and other goods.

Recent research by Gasch-Tomás has shown that although gifts and private consignments of silks continued to be sent to Spain in the 1620s and 1630s, there was a considerable fall in the re-exportation of silk from New Spain to Spain onwards, which coincided with an overall decline in the trans-Pacific trade. This decline is clearly seen in an analysis of the data of the registers of a royal tax, the so-called avarice, charged on exports from Veracruz to Seville from 1660 to 1640. A brief table shows the growth of the number of consignments for the years 1633 to 1640. In 1634, for instance, there were 1,512 consignments of raw silk from New Spain to Seville, whereas in 1640, the number reduced to 1,002 consignments. This decrease is probably due to the fact that the Chinese raw silk imported from New Spain into Granada and other Spanish ports, was subject to a host of European manufactured textiles and cloth. Gasch-Tomás suggests that the reasons for the greater importation of raw silk than woven silks in Spain were that the elites in Spain were less willing to purchase woven silks from China because their strong colours and Asian motifs were not accepted in their tastes and fashions, and that raw silk was more readily acceptable because it had neither Asian motifs nor in some cases dyed. Thus it is likely that the various silks registered as cargo on the late sixteenth century ships discussed above were sent as gifts or private consignments to members of the nobility, and to relatives and acquaintances of Europeans and Chinese living in New Spain. In 1618, Juan Chena, canon of the Cathedral of Seville received as gifts some pieces of satins, taffetas, and damasks from China. That same year, Alonso de Vado sent from Mexico City a personal supply of raw silk from China to Francisco Núñez, from Granada. Raw silk was also imported from Manila, via Mexico City, as shown by the order of the secretary Antonio Jiménez in Madrid that included 2 pieces of white satin for him and a crimson velvet canopy with golden silk laces in 1607.

The Chinese raw silk imported from New Spain into Granada and other silk production centres, as argued by Gasch-Tomás, may have delayed the crisis of the silk industry in the Iberian Peninsula, place during the first half of the century. It introduced a European manufactured textiles and cloth. Gasch-Tomás suggests that the reasons for the greater importation of raw silk than woven silks in Spain were that the elites in Spain were less willing to purchase woven silks from China because their strong colours and Asian motifs were not accepted in their tastes and fashions, and that raw silk was more readily acceptable because it had neither Asian motifs nor in some cases dyed. Thus it is likely that the various silks registered as cargo on the late sixteenth century ships discussed above were sent as gifts or private consignments to members of the nobility, and to relatives and acquaintances of Europeans and Chinese living in New Spain. By the 1620s, the number reduced to 1,002 consignments. This decrease is probably due to the fact that the Chinese raw silk imported from New Spain into Granada and other Spanish ports, was subject to a host of European manufactured textiles and cloth. Gasch-Tomás suggests that the reasons for the greater importation of raw silk than woven silks in Spain were that the elites in Spain were less willing to purchase woven silks from China because their strong colours and Asian motifs were not accepted in their tastes and fashions, and that raw silk was more readily acceptable because it had neither Asian motifs nor in some cases dyed. Thus it is likely that the various silks registered as cargo on the late sixteenth century ships discussed above were sent as gifts or private consignments to members of the nobility, and to relatives and acquaintances of Europeans and Chinese living in New Spain. In 1618, Juan Chena, canon of the Cathedral of Seville received as gifts some pieces of satins, taffetas, and damasks from China. That same year, Alonso de Vado sent from Mexico City a personal supply of raw silk from China to Francisco Núñez, from Granada. Raw silk was also imported from Manila, via Mexico City, as shown by the order of the secretary Antonio Jiménez in Madrid that included 2 pieces of white satin for him and a crimson velvet canopy with golden silk laces in 1607.

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of Cerralbo, the Viceroy of New Spain, brought back with him to Spain in 1636. It lists not only a number of woven silk cloths and finished silk products but also a few embroidered silks that were made to order, including 16 pieces of striped fabric stamped (probably painted) with blue from China for a livery, 7 pieces of blue embroidered satins, 8 tapestries (laptops with the coat of arms) embroidered with silk and satin from China, 44 curtains of an embroidered velvet canopy from China, 5 pieces of velvet from China stamped (probably painted) with gold, a white taffeta bedspread and pillows from China.175

It is clear from the textual sources discussed in this section of Chapter II that the silk-for-silver trade carried out by the Spanish immediately after their settlement in Manila was very profitable due to the cheap sale price of the silks brought by the Chinese junk merchants, but after a decade or so the great demand for silks and the abundant silver taxes levied upon the Chinese silks made it more difficult to obtain even if the Spanish were willing to pay much higher prices for them. This trade was so important for the Chinese merchants that some smuggled part of the silk they brought for sale to avoid paying the custom taxes.176

As has been shown, the types of silks brought by the Chinese junks to Manila were similar to those purchased directly by the Portuguese in Canton. These included raw silks (plain and twisted), woven silks such as velvets (some embroidered in all sorts of patterns, colours and gold), damasks, satins, and taffetas of all colours, of various qualities. In addition the junks brought finished silk products, such as coverlets and cushions. This is not surprising, as the supply of silk also came through Portuguese country traders from Macao, who profited from friendly relations with Spain after the union of the Iberian crowns in 1580, when regularly to Manila to trade and obtain the much sought after New World silver. Silk also came by way of Spaniards who sometimes went to both China and Macao to acquire silk intended for private trade. After 1620, when the junks came to Manila in fewer numbers due to the civil wars in China, the Spanish became increasingly dependent upon Macao to supply silk and other Chinese goods for the annual Manila Galleons bound to the New World. Although a royal decree of 1636 prohibited trade between Macao and Manila, Portuguese ships made regular trips to Manila clandestinely bringing silks until 1640, when Macao regained its independence and began war with Manila.177

Textual sources have also shown that despite the sumptuary laws passed repeatedly by Philip II, Philip II and Philip IV in relation to luxury and external appearance, a small quantity of silk was re-exported from New Spain to Seville in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As we have seen, as early as the 1590s, woven silks were sent as private consignments ordered by members of the Madrid royal court, and early seventeenth centuries. As we have seen, as early as the 1590s, woven silks were sent as private consignments ordered by members of the Madrid royal court, and even the Archduke and Archduchess of Austria would most probably have acquired the silk, together with porcelain and other goods from China, through his familial relationship with the Spanish/Portuguese royal court.

Trade to the Southern Netherlands [2.1.3]

Documentary evidence of the presence of silk in the Habsburg territories of the Southern Netherlands is scarce. As early as 1520–1521, the famous Nuremberg alchemist and historian Olaus Magnus (1490–1555) described silk and damask which arrived in Flanders as a result of the introduction of European manufactured textiles from northeastern Europe and Italy. The greater importation of raw silk than woven silk into Seville may have been due to the Spanish elites tastes. They were probably less welling to purchase woven silks because their bright colours, but accepted more easily raw silk as it had neither Asian motifs nor is some cases dye.

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the woven silks and finished silk products registered as cargo on a number of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century ships were sent as gifts (sometimes in the form of alms) or private consignments to members of the nobility, ecclesiastical institutions and/or to relatives and acquaintances of Europeans and Creoles living in Spain. As has been shown, this re-exportation of embroidered silks such as those already possible through the participation of members of the viceroyalty’s court, nobility as well as the new middle class elites of New Spain. But the re-exportation of silks was not always a private enterprise, as sometimes silks and other goods were to be remitted to the Crown Accounting Office. From the 1620s onwards, there was a considerable fall in the re-exportation of silk to Spain, which coincided with an overall decline in the trans-Pacific trade. The limited quantities of silk cloths and finished silk products that arrived in Spain during this period appear to have been eagerly sought after for use in religious contexts. Silks were sent as gifts to members of the church in Madrid and Cadiz, and others were bequeathed to a chapel in Cordoba.

175 Other shipments of reexport will be discussed in section 2.1.4 of this Chapter
176 Memoria de ropa, plata labrada y joyas del Archiduque Alberto de Austria e Isabel Clara (1598–1633). Un Reino Imaginado: El Arte en la Corte de los Archiduques Alberto de Austria e Isabel Clara (1598–1633). Un Reino Imaginado
179 The possible Chinese origin of the silk lining was first suggested by Jordan, in a catalogue entry discussing the portraits of the Archduke and Archduchess (Fig. 2.1.3.1). (1600–1607) and Juan Pantoja de la Cruz in 1595–1608, who became official painter to the first and principal commercial city of Europe, more the origin, and storehouse of all goods, riches and merchandise, and a refuge and nurse of all arts, sciences, nations and virtues.179

Visual sources suggest that the Archduke Albert VII of Austria (1559–1621) was clothing items made of silk from China after his marriage to Isabella Clara (1566–1633), the eldest daughter of Philip II, in 1598. After governing Portugal as viceroy in the name of his uncle Philip II from 1583 to 1593, Albert VII and Isabella Clara ruled as independent, joint governors of the Southern Netherlands between 1598 and 1621. A portrait by Juan Pantoja de la Cruz (1553–1608), who became official painter to the first and principal commercial city of Europe, painted Albert VII wearing a big ruff collar and an elegant costume consisting of a black bohemio (cape), probably of velvet, lined with a colourful woven, embroidered or painted silk with a stylized floral pattern in white, red, grey and yellow, also used on the sleeves and the pleats of the upper hose, which may have been of Chinese origin (Fig. 2.1.3.1).180 This is suggested by the small, stylized red flowers that appear on scattered on some extant late Ming silk textiles, such as a polychrome fabric patterned with lotus scrolls housed at the Tsinghua University, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Beijing,180 and a silk lampas with an octagonal geometric pattern (judaspat) on a gold silk ground, dating to 1575–1625, in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Fig. 2.1.3.2). Albert VII would most probably have acquired the silk, together with porcelain and other goods from China, through his familial relationship with the Spanish/Portuguese royal court.
The opening of the trans-Pacific trade route that connected Manila and Acapulco enabled the colonial merchants of New Spain to annually import large quantities of silks. The potential profits of trade of these highly valued imported silks, destined for both the local market within the viceroyalty and re-export to the viceroyalty of Peru and Spain, were enormous. By this time the domestic silk textile industry in New Spain had begun to decline and there was an enormous demand for silver in China, where the price was higher than in Japan, Europe and the New World. The acquisition of silks of various types and qualities at cheap prices in Manila with silver pesos from Peruvian and Mexican mines allowed the colonial merchants to sell them at prices several times higher in the New World. Thus there was great motivation to participate in this lucrative silk-for-silver trade.

Raw silk and woven silk cloths were the most important products imported into New Spain from Manila throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As mentioned earlier, only a small quantity of silk was re-exported to Spain, via Havana. The earliest documentary reference of silk imports into New Spain dates to 1573, when two Manila Galleons left the Philippines with a cargo that included “124 bales of Chinese silk” among other goods. A letter written that same year by the Viceroy of New Spain, Martin Enríquez, to Philip II, describes in more detail the woven silk cloths brought into Acapulco saying that “…And besides all this, the ships carry silks of different colours (both damasks and satins), cloth stuffs…” The following year Enríquez wrote again to the King, this time condemning the quality of the imported silks. He states “I have seen some of the articles which have been received in barter from the Chinese; and I consider the whole thing as a waste of effort, and a losing rather than a profitable business. For all they bring are a few silks of very poor quality (most of which are coarsely woven), some imitation brocades, fans, porcelain, writing desks, and decorated boxes”. Enríquez goes on to describe the silk-for-silver trade as “To pay for these they carry away gold and silver, and they are so keen that they will accept nothing else.”

An unsigned memorial, dated 17 June 1586, informs the King that the Viceroy Don Martin Enríquez had written a letter on March of the previous year saying that the merchants of New Spain were “greatly disappointed that the trade with the Philippines Islands should be taken away from them; for, although satins, damasks, and other silken goods, even the finest of them, contain very little silk, and others are woven with grass (all of which is quite worthless), the people mainly resort to this cheap market, and the prices of silks brought from Spain are lowered. Of these latter, raffia seem to have been written by a member of the Royal Council of the Indies, Martin Enríquez, to Philip II, describing in more detail the woven silk cloths brought into Acapulco saying that “…And besides all this, the ships carry silks of different colours (both damasks and satins), cloth stuffs…’. As shown earlier, the importation of cheap woven silks from China was to cause great damage to the existing trade monopoly in silks from Spain.

Considerable quantities of Chinese silk continued to be shipped from Manila to the New World in the late 1580s. For instance, when the English privateer Thomas Cavendish (1560-1592) captured the 600-ton Santo Ame off Cabo San Lucas, Baya
California in November 1587, while she and another Manila Galleon were en route to Acapulco, the cargo included gold and a great many bundles of silk and other fine textiles.49 According to Paz-Chumacero, during the period from 1600 to 1640, Chinese silks amounted to 99 percent of all the fine textiles imported into New Spain. This included the richest残存的8 silk clothing items, 59 percent of woven silk cloths and 1 percent of finished clothing items.49

As noted by Machuca, small quantities of silk clothing items and other Chinese goods were among the personal belongings brought by sailors that crossed the Pacific from Manila to Acapulco in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Contemporary documents show that this is the case of at least two sailors who died from unknown illnesses in Colima, a small Spanish coastal settlement located in the frontiers of New Spain and New Galicia, where the galleons stopped before arriving to Acapulco to get food supplies and to send the vice-regent an official report about the status of the merchandise. The latter document is that of Manuel Pacheco, who died in 1580 without leaving a will. Pérez arrived to the port of Salagües (present-day Manzanillo) very ill and was taken to the ranch of Andrés Toscano, where he is said to have had three dresses of silk from China, of colours, and of jubón, and brocade capes, bought for 15 pesos. Two days later he died. His belongings were confiscated by constable Juan Muñoz from Toscano's house, and subsequently inventoried and sold at public auction. These included ‘2 large and 2 small porcellains from China; […] and a tafetan from China; and 2 pairs of satin zaragüellese from China, red. Iron 2 satin sayetes from China. A chamarrilla and an old silk jubón from China.‘ 50 The latter were probably the ‘satin jubinón and jaco from China, old and ragged, auctioned for 2 pesos‘ by a mussel from Colima named Andrés Jácome in 1581.51 From these documents, it is clear that silk clothing items reached through public auctions even the lower social classes, and that auctions were widely used for accessing both new and second-hand silk clothing items, the latter valued even if they had been worn for a long time and damaged.

In 1624, Gaspar Pagés de Moncada, who was the notary of the Almiranta de Vitoria to his future son in law, Captain Juan del Hoyo y Velasco, in occasion of the marriage to doña Manuela de Vitoria, who was valued at 40 pesos.52 The documentation from Colima discussed above serves as an example of wide spread local interest in silk from China; in other colonial cities it would not have been different.

Based on the information provided in contemporary documents, it is evident that by the end of the sixteenth century silks from China were common in the daily life of the colonial society of the viceroyalty’s capital, Mexico City. Probate inventories and notarial records indicate that in Mexico City, in contrast with what we saw earlier in Seville, both woven silks and finished silk products were sold in real cloth shops. For instance, when the shopkeeper Alexandre Mallin died in 1592, he had a shop that sold sataffles, zanoblas (linen woven fabric made of silk, linen or cotton), weak silk, garoppes, as well as tocas (trembles) and stockings, all from China.53 Antonio de Breede was said to have had for sale in his shop of Mexico City in 1602, a ‘jarretal and stockings from China‘.54 The latter were probably the ‘satin jubinón and jaco from China, old and ragged, auctioned for 2 pesos‘ by a mussel from Colima named Andrés Jácome in 1581.55 From these documents, it is clear that silk clothing items reached even the lower social classes, and that auctions were widely used for accessing both new and second-hand silk clothing items, the latter valued even if they had been worn for a long time and damaged.

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In the book *Travels in the New World* written almost two decades later by the English Dominican Thomas Gage, who spent the years 1625–1637 in New Spain and Guatemala, we find a similar view of the elite's ostentatious display of wealth and status in public, particularly in their dress and carriages. He observes that ‘Both men and women are excessive in their apparel, using more silks than stuffs and cloth [...]’ A husband and wife made of diamonds in a gentleman’s hat is common, and a husband of pearls is ordinary in a tradesman.217 He writes there were between thirty and forty thousand Spaniards, who are so proud and rich that half the city was judged to keep coaches [...] the beauty of some of the coaches of the gentry, which do exceed in cost the best of the Court in Madrid and other parts of the Christendom, for they spend no silver, nor gold, not precious stones, not cloth of gold, nor the best silks from China to enrich them.218 Thus, the wealthy elite of the viceregal New Spain took advantage of being at the crossroads of both trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic trade routes, and acquired silks and other imported goods not only because of their practical and ornamental functions, but also because their served as social indicators in public.

We know that wealthy women were actively involved in the circulation of silks from Manila to New Spain. A clear example is that of Doña Teresa Setin, wife of one of the richest merchants of New Spain of the time, Santiago Fedriguez,219 who placed an order for 2,000 bales of silk cloth to be sent to Ana Maria in Manila. This order is known because of the expense of the goods, their scarcity and the increase of the silk cloth’s price in New Spain, caused by Dutch privateering.220

### The Silk Trade and the columbian exchange in New Spain

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the New Spain colony is heavily dependent on the trade of silk from Manila. He informs us that ‘From the skeined silk, and the silk thread, and trama are manufactured in Nueva España velvets, veils, dependientes on the trade of silk from Manila. He informs us that ‘From the skeined silk, and the silk thread, and trama are manufactured in Nueva España velvets, veils, and in the manufacture of silk clothing in the early seventeenth century.223 Wholesale merchants, known as mercaderes, belonged to the colony’s socio-economic elite. They enjoyed a privileged position with respect to retailers, and thus could own a warehouse and/or an obojo (shop) managed by another person, and also set as retailers by proxy.224 One of them was a native from Toledo named Juan de Castellano (d. 1638), who formed a company with the master silk weaver Fernando de Pudilla in 1607, so the latter could manage a store for him and supervise the production of silk clothing. In 1634, Castellano imported silk and wool from Seville. He also hired silk artisans to finish clothes with his own dyeing to be sold in New Spain and abroad.225 Another merchant who re-sold silk in Spain was Francisco de Esquivel Castañeda, the son of a master silk weaver and trader from Granada.226 Pedro de Brizuela was a merchant who imported silk thread, lent money to a dyer, and of export products from New Spain, including silver and cochineal dye, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Eastern’ trade. The term ‘chino’ is derived from ‘China’, and thus it came to be referred to as the ‘Oriental’...
transporting Asian and various other goods from Acapulco to Mexico City, Colima, and Guadalajara. The marketplaces mentioned in his will, which were stored in several cities along the coast, included 8 pieces of taffeta, one piece of Damask, 32 pairs of cotton materials, glazed silk materials, 5 cireseilles (also spelled satijn), and 16 silk girdles. Although Villalobos traded only in small quantities, the information provided in his will and judicial procedures carried out by his best friend and executor, the indio chino Alonso Gutiérrez, reflects the diversity of his clients and the widespread distribution of woven silk cloths and silk clothing items. Most of his clients were Indians in their pueblos (pueblos de indios), but he also traded with other Filipinos, Spaniards, mestizos, mulattos, and African slaves in Spanish pueblos and cities.

As early as 1561 government licenses were sold to chinese trading in the barrio of San Juan, a marketplace near the Calle of San Agustín. From the documentation discussed above it is clear that immigrants from both Spain and Asia who settled in New Spain were traders in textiles and a considerable quantity of Asian and other imported goods, which include silks and porcelains from China. The Consulado (Consulate) of Mexico City, taken between 1589 and 1645, studied by Ballesteros Flores, list a considerable quantity of Asian and other imported goods, which include silks and porcelains from China. The Consulado was reserved exclusively for review of New Spain, a status that required a minimum ten years of residence in the colony, and was restricted to wholesale traders (the level of the viceregal commercial world), who sometimes also ran retail operations. Four of these inventories included at least one piece of silk clothing. For instance, the inventory of Antonio Díaz Cáceres, taken in 1589, lists 8 shirts of girl’s clothing made of “blue damask,” from China, and of “gold and silk from China,” as well as two “suabrentás” (a long robe worn over other clothes) made of “blue damask from China.”

The inventory of Antonio de la Mota y Portugal, taken in 1628, lists “a morning coat of damask black and lombardia” from China, new. The inventory of Francisco Nieto, taken in 1644, lists a “bodice” of black damask, from China, and two “pairs of white silk stockings from Chineseascii.” The latter item is listed as “fifteen pairs of men silk stockings from China, of the fine ones, and after counting again were 14 new.” The aforementioned inventories also list a wide variety and quantity of raw silks and woven silk cloths, and finished silk products for the lord of the manor, for the use of clergy, and for the purposes of the alhóndiga, or granary, of China. The inventory of Francisco Nieto, taken in 1644, lists “100 and a half pounds of silk from China, and 140 pounds of raw silk from China.”

The meaning of the term “textura” is unclear, but it also has early associations among inventors of silk as distinctive elements of the production of “textura” may systematically identify fabrics by their characteristic weaves. The term melange is also frequently used to indicate the mixing of raw materials, such as “A bodice of silk and damask, of the fine ones, and after counting again were 14 new.” The aforementioned inventories also list a wide variety and quantity of raw silks and woven silk cloths, and finished silk products for the lord of the manor, for the use of clergy, and for the purposes of the alhóndiga, or granary, of China.

For the Spanish original transcriptions of these inventories listing raw and woven silks, see New Spain were another particularly important social group that used finished silk garments, and woven silks for clothing and furnishings, as early as the late sixteenth century. Some tunics, chasubles and other vestments worn by the priests in the churches were embroidered and finished in China, but others appear to have been finished in workshops in New Spain. In Mexico City, Francisco de la Madrid, who placed his ward at the service of Simón Matoso for two years effective from January 18, 1592, was asked for the designation of a guardian who could sign his contracts. The Corregidor appointed as his guardian Cristóbal de Medina, who died in 1596, his belongings included a blue and yellow damask clasp, a chasuble and robe of birds from China lined with colored silks; a white chasuble with blue taffeta stole and mantilla (shorter stole) from China; a blue taffeta hanging from China; two blue and white taffeta hangings from China lined with blue linen and green and red fringes; a black damask chasuble and stole and mantilla with yellow damask border and lined with blue from China; and a purple taffeta chasuble and stole and mantilla from China with a tawny damask border.

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choice robes of Chinese damask’. For ever five (friars), two sets of delanatia [made] of the same stuff.264 These would have been transported to the missions in New Mexico through the overland supply caravans provided by the Spanish Crown.265 It is clear that finished silk products were highly appreciated by both the secular and religious colonial elites of New Mexico. While silk furnishings were prevalent in the fashionable and common spaces of the households, silk ceremonial vestments and woven silks for clothing and furnishings, both imported from China or finished in workshops in the colonies, were used by Catholic priests in the churches. We have seen that appreciation of silks of the Franciscan friars who served in New Mexico was so high that they regularly acquired ornamented and ceremonial vestments of various woven silks, through the supply caravans.

Viceroyalty of Peru (1532–1654)

Silk, as a luxury Asian good, began arriving into the viceroyalty of Peru in the early 1580s. Direct trade between the Philippines and Peru first occurred through the overland mission supply caravans provided by the Spanish Crown.266 The supply caravans, usually comprising thirty-two wagons, transported utilitarian tools, household items and luxury goods between New Mexico City and Lima. Sometimes they transported more than one type of goods at a time. In 1744, for instance, one caravan carried over 1,000 objects of different kinds, and their contents differed from those of the previous year.267

For more information on the Franciscan missions, see David E. Brading, The Catholic Missions in New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1985.

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The will of Diego Rodríguez de León. This purchase, registered just a few days after Philip II's death, consisted of various garments made with Chinese satin, silk, and taffeta, the finest Segovian broadcloth, a measure of Mexican grosgrain, all black and trimmed with the best Italian and Portuguese embroidery threads. The testator must have been wealthy for he paid 230 pesos, which was more than twenty times the value of an average indigenous man's outfit.284

Western sources indicate that silks circulated as far south as present-day Argentina by the early seventeenth century. A few references to silk are found in wills of residents of Santa Fe de la Vera, which was occupied by the Spaniards from 1573 to 1660.285 The will of Federico Garay de la Letizia, one of the first residents of the city where he served as governor in 1582 and then mayor in 1585 and 1594, taken in April 1606, lists ‘fourteen bars’ [yards] of taffeta, twelve of them blak, and the other two green from China.286 and the will of Pedro Martín, taken in January 1641, lists ‘three yards of taffeta from China.’287

The import of Chinese silk from Acapulco into the viceroyalty of Peru was once again prohibited in 1641, just three years before the fall of the Ming dynasty. Philip IV ordered that ‘Whenever any ships sail from the port of Acapulco and other ports of New Spain to Peru on the opportunities permitted, it is our will and we order our officials of those ports to visit and inspect those ships with complete faithfulness and the advisable rigor. They shall endeavor to ascertain whether such ships are carrying any silks, or merchandise from China, or the Philippine Islands. They shall also declare those found as smuggled goods. They shall divide them, and apply them as is contained in the laws of this title.’288 From the documentation discussed above it is possible to conclude that large quantities of raw silk and woven silk cloths arrived to the viceroyalty of Peru, either through official or clandestine trade, during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While the raw silk was used alongside that from New Spain in Lima's textile industry, woven silk cloths circulated widely not only to other cities of the viceroyalty, but also among a multi-ethnic clientele from all the colonial social classes, who could afford them and used them in both secular and religious contexts.

281 The Spaniards occupied the Inca city of Quito in 1534, and renamed it San Francisco de Quito. In 1563, it was established as one of the royal Audiencias of the viceroyalty of Peru. See Lane, Gularte, City and Colony in Transition, Alcalápanam, 2000, pp. 1, 5, 14 and 157.
282 Art, p. 36.
286 ANHQ, MS. 14, DM. 110; fol. 133. Mentioned in Lane, 2002, p. 46.
287 Santa Fe was founded by Juan de Garay along with other Spanish and several native American inhabitants. It is a measure of the current state of the will of Feliciano Rodríguez, one of the first residents of the city where he served as (governor) in 1582 and then mayor in 1585 and 1594, taken in April 1606, lists ‘fourteen bars’ [yards] of taffeta, twelve of them blak, and the other two green from China.286 and the will of Pedro Martín, taken in January 1641, lists ‘three yards of taffeta from China.’287

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Schiffart as having consisted of 1,200 bales of raw Chinese silk; chests filled with
coloured damask, velas (a type of polished silk), raffias and silk; large amounts of gold
thread or spun gold; cloth woven with gold thread; robes and bed canopies spun with
gold; bedding and bedspreads; and a ‘thousand other things, that are produced in
China’. From the total revenue generated at the auction of approximately
2.5 million guilders,298 the silk alone yielded in excess of 2 million guilders.

The ‘coloured damask’ may have been of a type similar to an extant length of silk
cloth purchased by Colenbrander in Amsterdam in 1616, as Colenbrander has recently
remarked, prompted the VOC to

requesting the help of the burgomaster and city council to establish a store of raw East
Indian silk.299 They intended to set up mills for the throwing of the silk, but wanted
to be sure that there was to be a supply of silk to last two years. In the council meeting
of 19 December, the large sum of 120,000 guilders was allocated for the purchase of
silk, enabling a great many poor people to earn their living thereby.299 That same
month the burgomasters of Amsterdam gave a Portuguese-Jewish merchant named
Manoel Rodrigues Vega the lease of a house, free of charge, to install a silk factory, in
exchange of trading this trade to the Dutch.300 Rodrigues Vega looked for innovative
opportunities to invest, not only by owning shares in individual voyages as well as
stock in new companies such as the Vereenigde Amsterdamsche Compagnie or United
Amsterdam Company and the VOC, but also by venturing into the silk industry. An
inventory taken in 1612 following the death of Matthijs de Praz demonstrates that
silk from China was used along other imported silks in the local silk industry. His silk
weaver’s workshop included 10 looms, a warping mill and gauking frame, and that he
worked with Neapolitan, Chinese and Vincenza silk, ‘oronsj, silk, organisin, silk, and trum
or weft silk.301

English textual sources indicate that the Dutch were acquiring considerable
quantities of raw silk at Bantam as early as 1608. In December of that year, the
Englishman Gabriel Towerson, chief factor in Bantam, wrote a letter to the EIC
informing that the Dutch ship ‘called the Black Lion laden at Ternata with cloves and
mace, and a few nutmegs, besides 400 bales of raw silk she took in here at Bantam’.302

In 1614, as mentioned in Chapter I, the States General issued a general
commission to the VOC for privatising against Portuguese and Spanish ships in Asia.
In a letter written by the Englishman Ralph Coppindall to Adam Denton at Patani
in December 1615, he states that ‘The little Jackana took a Portugall junk laden
with ebony, and I think some Chinaman betwixt her and the great ship, for they have
sold great store of raw silks which came in this ship and have such store of made silks
that they sell very good damask (twice as good as the Chincaya’s) for 2 and 2½ tares
per piece’.303 From a letter written in October 1615 by another Englishman, Richard
Wickham to Sir Tho. Smythe, we learn that the Dutch were also acquiring a variety
of silks by plundering Chinese junks. Wickham states that ‘The Hollands go beyond
all, not only us but all strangers here of late, by reason of the great quantities of raw
silk, raffia’s, satins, velvets and China wares which they steal from the Chinese, having
of late robbed many junks, whereby they sell at such rates that none that cometh
together truly by their goods can make profit here; besides their great employment which they
have by reason of their Moluccas for all kind of provisions that they sell and rum all
into ready money for the same purpose, their stealing trade supplying them yearly
when other fail’.304 Dutch plundering of Chinese junks that brought trade goods
and provisions to Manila continued in the following years. Four Chinese junks were
captured during the period Manila Bay was blocked by the newly joined fleet of
admiral Jan Dirksz Lam, between the winter of 1616 and the spring of 1617.305 In
May of 1618, the VOC ship ‘Quaede S Xin captured one large and six small Chinese
junks, and in May of the following year, the Dutch captured three further large junks near
Manila Bay.306

The annual blockades of Manila and the privatising against Portuguese and Spanish ships,
and Chinese junks, used by the VOC in an attempt to gain access to the
trade in Chinese silk by force, all failed. In 1620, the Gentlemen Seventeen advised
Batavia to send two ships to Chinhoe, to warn the Chinese of the Dutch blockade
the participation of the Dutch in the silk trade to Japan increased considerably after 1635. The Dutch merchants who lived in Formosa, mentioned in the paragraph above, had already begun to procure silks directly from Chinese junks. In November of that year, in response to the complaints of English merchants who had arrived in Formosa, the VOC made an agreement with the Chinese merchant-pirate Zheng Zhilong to become the sole supplier of large quantities of silk and other Chinese goods to its trading post in Formosa.

In a report written by Specx’s successor, Leonard Camps, to the Gentlemen of the Far East (1605–1640)’, he argued that "the Dutch were only importing a small quantity of silks into the Northern Netherlands/Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The amounts of raw silk imported by the Dutch from Japan, as well as from Chinese junks, rather than being acquired through trade, were obtained by force in the first two decades of the seventeenth century. Even after 1624, when they established themselves in Formosa, trade contacts with Chinese private merchants provided only a small quantity of silk. It was not until 1635, that the VOC made a profitable trade with the Chinese merchant-pirate Zheng Zhilong to become the sole supplier of large quantities of silk and other Chinese goods to its trading post in Formosa. Undoubtedly, this agreement was what enabled the Dutch to increase considerably their participation in the silk trade to Japan from 1635 onwards."

The English merchants were not the only ones to take advantage of the new opportunities. The Chinese were also quick to seize the chance to increase their exports to the Netherlands. In 1605, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) signed a treaty with the Chinese pirate Zheng Zhilong, who had already captured several junks from the Spanish. Under the terms of this treaty, the VOC agreed to purchase all the silk and other goods that Zheng Zhilong could obtain from the Chinese coast. This agreement was extremely profitable for both parties, as the Dutch were able to secure a steady supply of high-quality silk, while Zheng Zhilong was able to increase his profits by selling his goods in the European market.

During the 1620s and 1630s, the VOC continued to increase its trade with China, and the amount of silk imported into the Netherlands from that country also increased significantly. By the late 1630s, the VOC was importing large quantities of silk from China, and the Chinese were also beginning to supply silk directly to European markets.

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silver in abundance. From the court minutes of the EIC of July 1614, we learn that silk was bought as special commissions for private individuals in England, which includes pepper, China silks, and a large parcel of diamonds from Soudanca.

A letter sent from Macassar this same year by George Cockayne to Sir Thomas Smythe states that ‘On the 13th December here arrived a small junk sent from Bantam to visit both this factory and Saccadania, which brought in her 67½ catties China raw Linkein166; silk, which came to a very good market, but within three days after arrived here a China junk (it being the first that ever came to this place) bringing great store of raw silks, woven silks, porcelain and all other China commodities, selling it here cheaper than Bantam. Now considering the long time this vessel was to stay here the monsoon would serve for to go to Saccadania, it was thought good to employ her for Banda, I having sold little of the clothing left here with me (it being sort not fitting for this country)’. In August, George Cockayne wrote to Samparriapat to John Jourdain at Bantam informing him that ‘The cloth that fits for this place being Dragons and Penta Vermilla at 40 mas the corge; ordinary Bafins, 8 corse sold at 35 per corge; Bisammyres, 6 corge at 35 per corge; all raw silk at 6½ per cattie; 8 picules of gandum 16 mas per picull’. From a letter written in October of the same year, we learn that the English were competing with the Dutch to sell in East Asia, the EIC servants began to buy silk in increasingly larger quantities and made profit on taking raw silk from Patani to Japan.

Smythe states that ‘On the 13th December here arrived a small junk sent from Bantam that same year, we learn that the English were competing with the Dutch to sell silk in Asia, the raw silks of which country are always here ready money and reasonable profit’. As noted by Lux, after Thomas Aidworth informed his superiors in the EIC of September he left England the 22nd December laden with pepper, some cloves, mace, nuts and made profit on taking raw silk from Patani to Japan. From the court minutes of the EIC of July 1614, we learn that silk was bought as special commissions for private individuals in England, which includes pepper, China silks, and a large parcel of diamonds from Soudanca.

Documentary evidence of the presence of Chinese silk in England in the early seventeenth century is scarce. Thus a few surviving inventories list silk cloths and/or furnishings from China are of particular importance to this study. They give us an idea of the various types of silk imported and their uses. The earliest reference dates to 1601, when the inventory of the EIC is an inventory of the contents of Hardwick Hall, an Elizabethan house built by Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (1520–1608) in Derbyshire, taken immediately after its completion and furnishing, which lists a large quantity of silk cloths and furnishings, but only one specified as from China. A silk cloth is listed as ‘a Counterpoynt of China cloth of gold with a pane of white embroidered with yellow and green silk lace and fringe, and lined with blew taffety among the contents of the wardrobe of the “old building at Hardwick”.

It appears that larger quantities of silk were available in England by the next decade. This is suggested by an inventory taken in February 1638 after the death of Anne, Viscountess Dorechester, lists silk cloth as ‘5 pieces of white Cherry damask [sic], valued at £36 among the contents of the “great bond trunck”’. There are also ‘2 yards ¼ of China suteable…’; one China cushion embroidered with birds, flowers, and bees, the ground of white Gromgon lined with yellowe taffety; impinning one Tester with head and double balance fringed, and 7 curtains, whereof four are made upp, and 3 mufled, the stuffe of China taffeta white embroidered with birds and flowers. A counterpoynt stuffe lined with watchett Taffety, another China stuffe quite stiched in checker worke with yellowe silke the ground white’. One only type of silk cloth is listed in 13 years and a quarter of purple gold velvet ‘China with flower de lucas and diamond worke’.

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Chinese woven silk cloths and finished silk products, furnishing items in particular, begin to appear in larger quantities in inventories taken from 1614 onwards. These silks include taffetas, velvets, damasks in various colours, and cushions and other items embroidered with birds, beasts and flowers.

The English continued with their indirect trade with China for years. Later in the eighteenth century trade was to be confined to the port cities of London and Canton. The silk trade was devised as a re-export enterprise in order to protect British manufacturers. According to British navigation laws and prohibition acts, all silk piece goods imported into London from Asia were to be re-exported to continental Europe, the West Indies, and the English colonies in the New World.

The trade in silk to Europe and the New World was not limited to raw silk, silk woven cloths and silk finished products made for both the Chinese domestic and export markets. By the mid-sixteenth century, it also included a variety of silks made to order in China for use in both religious and secular contexts in Europe, and the colonies in the New World and Asia. Material evidence is provided by a small number of extant woven silk cloths and finished silk products housed in public and private collections, which combine traditional Chinese weaving, embroidery or painting techniques and motifs, with European motifs. These silks, made specially for both the Portuguese and Spanish markets in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, give testimony of the ability of the Chinese silk producers to adapt to the specific requirements of their new European clientele. No silks from this period showing any signs of having been made to order in China for the Dutch or English markets were found during the present research.

Silk made to order for the Iberian market (2.3.1)

Portuguese textual sources suggest that woven silk cloths began to be made in China as special orders for the Portuguese shortly after the establishment of Macao in 1557. The earliest orders may have been intended for use in Catholic religious contexts in Asia. The Portuguese Jesuit Luís Fróis (1532–1597) in a letter to his brothers in Lisbon referring to the Jesuit festivities held from 1559 to 1560 at the Colégio de São Paulo Velho in Goa, writes ‘Something I will tell you very humorous about the Chinese [after] they were informed of the Portuguese processions in Goa and the way we worship God using images, as they are skilled men determined, de not to lose the opportunity to gain what is their last interest’.

The originat text in Portuguese reads: ‘Huma cousa lhe direy dos chinas muito gracyosa contrarão-lhe la od portugueses as proçissões que qua fazião em Goa e a maneyra de nosso culto divino e ymagens elles como são homens abilissymos determinarão, de não perder a ocasião de ganharem que he quasi seu ultimo fin pretenderão em tudo seu enteresse’.


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Fig. 2.3.1.1  Length of silk lampas
China, Ming dynasty, second half of the sixteenth century
Dimensions: 50.8 cm x 57.2 cm
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Opposite page

The symmetrical arrangement of the design, as noted by Digby, appears to derive from contemporary European textiles. It closely related arrangements appear on silks woven in both Spain and Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as seen in a fragment of a Spanish woven silk, housed in the same museum collection (Fig. 2.3.1.2). It has been suggested that the colour scheme of the silk lampas discussed here has a notable European character. The Spanish woven silk shows a somewhat similar colour scheme, with yellow and green on a red ground, but omitting the blue. It can be argued, however, that the colour scheme of yellow, green, and blue or black, on a red ground appear on Chinese silk of the early sixteenth century. The crowned double-headed eagle, a symbol of the Habsburg rulers of Spain and Portugal commonly used in painted maps and texts related to the Spanish Empire from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, indicates that this silk lampas was made to order for the Iberian market (Fig. 2.3.1.3). The pierced heart-shaped vase beneath the eagle suggests an association with the Mendicant Order of St. Augustine in the Philippines, which was granted the right to use the double-headed eagle as an emblem after 1565. The Chinese silks woven incorporated this distinct European motif into the design, but rendered the body and wing feathers of the eagles in a manner that recalls the depictions of phoenixes on rank badges of the late Ming, particularly the scale-like pattern of the body and the contrasting colours of the wings. Moreover, the interlocking floral scroll with pomegranate and blossoming flowers, and cusp-shaped leaves, are rendered in a manner that resembles those depicted in blue-and-white porcelains made at Jingdezhen for the imperial court during the reigns of Zhengde (1506–1521) and Jiajing (1522–1566). The design of this silk lampas relates closely to that seen on other extant lengths of finely woven silk in blue, yellow and white on a red satin ground, which incorporate flat threads of gold leaf on paper, also dating to the second half of the sixteenth century. A cope in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and two fragments that appear to have formed part of one or more priest’s chasubles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, demonstrate that such silks were cut and woven into ecclesiastical vestments for use in the liturgy and sacred festivities to support the missionary work of spreading Christianity in India.

A small number of the extant lengths of woven silk cloths and finished silk products mentioned above have been selected to illustrate the various types of silks that were made as special orders for the Iberian market. It appears that the earliesilk cloths made to order for the Iberians combined Chinese traditional weaving or embroidery techniques and motifs, with European motifs, as often occurred with the porcelain made to order that will be discussed in the following chapter.

Woven silks dating to the second half of the sixteenth century include a fragment of a silk lampas in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which is finely woven with a repeated design of a crowned, double-headed eagle grasping an arrow in each claw that pierce a heart-shaped vase amid interlocking floral scrolls in green, blue and yellow on a red ground (Fig. 2.3.1.1). The symmetrical arrangement of the design, as noted by Digby, appears to derive from contemporary European textiles. It closely related arrangements appear on silks woven in both Spain and Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as seen in a fragment of a Spanish woven silk, housed in the same museum collection (Fig. 2.3.1.2). It has been suggested that the colour scheme of the silk lampas discussed here has a notable European character. The Spanish woven silk shows a somewhat similar colour scheme, with yellow and green on a red ground, but omitting the blue. It can be argued, however, that the colour scheme of yellow, green, and blue or black, on a red ground appear on Chinese silk of the early sixteenth century. The crowned double-headed eagle, a symbol of the Habsburg rulers of Spain and Portugal commonly used in painted maps and texts related to the Spanish Empire from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, indicates that this silk lampas was made to order for the Iberian market (Fig. 2.3.1.3). The pierced heart-shaped vase beneath the eagle suggests an association with the Mendicant Order of St. Augustine in the Philippines, which was granted the right to use the double-headed eagle as an emblem after 1565. The Chinese silks woven incorporated this distinct European motif into the design, but rendered the body and wing feathers of the eagles in a manner that recalls the depictions of phoenixes on rank badges of the late Ming, particularly the scale-like pattern of the body and the contrasting colours of the wings. Moreover, the interlocking floral scroll with pomegranate and blossoming flowers, and cusp-shaped leaves, are rendered in a manner that resembles those depicted in blue-and-white porcelains made at Jingdezhen for the imperial court during the reigns of Zhengde (1506–1521) and Jiajing (1522–1566). The design of this silk lampas relates closely to that seen on other extant lengths of finely woven silk in blue, yellow and white on a red satin ground, which incorporate flat threads of gold leaf on paper, also dating to the second half of the sixteenth century. A cope in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and two fragments that appear to have formed part of one or more priest’s chasubles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, demonstrate that such silks were cut and woven into ecclesiastical vestments for use in the liturgy and sacred festivities to support the missionary work of spreading Christianity in India.

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woven with a repeated design of a double-headed crowned eagle grasping an arrow in each claw that pierce a heart-shaped vase amid scrolling leaves supported by two confronted Asian elephants with multiple tusks, alternating with large-scale lotus flowers growing from globular containers on stands, all in yellow-brown on a blue ground (Fig. 2.3.1.4). Although the symmetrical arrangement of this design most probably derives from contemporary European textiles, the colour scheme appears to be Chinese. Compare, for example, the colour scheme of a length of furnishing cloth made in silk satin weave, dating to c.1500–1600, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Fig. 2.3.1.5). In this design made to order, the Chinese weavers again combined the single European motif of the double-headed eagle with Chinese floral and animal motifs. The rendering of the petals of the lotus flowers and the scrolling leaves that surround the double-headed eagle are particularly close to those seen in the aforementioned silk satin weave. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the Asian elephant with multiple tusks, which probably represents the Buddhist six-tusked elephant described in a Chinese translation of a sutra of the fifth century as being resplendent and white and having lotuses, jade maidens, and other symbolic figures at the end of each tusk.640 It is well known that elephants were given as tribute to the emperor by rulers from South East Asia, and were also presented as diplomatic gifts to important foreign kings. Research by Jordan Gschwend has shown that elephants and other exotic animals were shipped from India and Ceylon to Lisbon. The first elephants were sent in 1510. Some were later offered as gifts by the Portuguese kings to the courts of Spain, Austria, France and England.641 However, it seems unlikely that the inclusion of the elephant motif was a specific request of the European customer who ordered the silk damask, who most probably did not understand its Buddhist connotation. The place of manufacture of this silk damask, like the silks discussed above, is still unknown.

One of the earliest extant embroidered silks made to order is an altar frontal, now housed in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga in Lisbon (Fig. 2.3.1.6).642 This altar
Fig. 2.3.1.6  Altar frontal
Blue silk satin embroidered with silk thread without noticeable tension, golden laminated paper thread and fillet, metallic thread, organic filament rolled in silk, paper roll filling, no lining.
China, Ming dynasty, second half of the sixteenth century.
Dimensions: Width x Height: 118cm x 168cm
Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (Inv. 612 Tec)
Fig. 2.3.1.7 Hanging
Kesi slit tapestry weaving
China, possibly Beijing
Ming dynasty, late sixteenth/seventeenth century
Dimensions: 138cm x 44.8cm
Provincial Museum of Liaoning, Shenyang

Fig. 2.3.1.8 Ewer
Porcelain decorated in underglaze cobalt blue
China, Jingdezhen kilns, Jiangxi province
Ming dynasty, Zhengde mark and of the period (1506–1521)
Height: 18.7cm
Photo courtesy of Museu de Artes Decorativas
Portuguesas - Fundação Ricardo de Sousa
Santo Silva, Lisbon (inv. 1430)

Fig. 2.3.1.9 Title page of Leitura Nova, Livro 2 de Místicos, book 31
Published in 1511
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frontal, dating to the second half of the sixteenth century, is formed by three cloths of silk embroidery, each embroidered with silk thread, golden laminated paper thread and fillet, and metallic thread, which are joined together without showing any continuity of the design, most probably due to a reduction of the overall width. Here the Chinese embroiderers combined a representation of the Virgin with the Infant Christ in her arms standing on a crescent moon circumscribed by a rosary supported on each side by four angels, which is most probably Our Lady of the Rosary, with a dense composition of Chinese floral and animal motifs, some of which are rendered in very large-scale. Although the folds of the Virgin’s tunic are embroidered realistically according to contemporary images of the Virgin made throughout Portuguese India, including Sinhalese territories (present-day Sri Lanka), the facial features of the Virgin and angels are distinctly Asian. The place of manufacture of this altar frontal, unknown, is the identity of the person who ordered it. It is unclear how it came to be part of the collection of the ancient convent of Nossa Senhora da Conceição in Beja. In presence was first recorded in 1843 at a reception offered to Queen Mary II (r. 1689–1694) and her son Dom Pedro (future King Pedro V) during their visit to Beja in November of that year.

Of particular interest to this study is a hanging made in kesi tapestry weaving in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century in the Provincial Museum of Lounging, Shenyang (Fig. 2.3.1.7). This kesi hanging is woven in gold and polychrome wools depicting clouds and bats grasping an armillary sphere resting on a stand and a variety of astronomical objects, all on a yellow ground. It has been suggested that the yellow ground may indicate that it was used at court. If so, it would most probably have been made at the imperial silk workshops of Beijing. The dense composition and decorative motifs of the hanging are wholly Chinese with the exception of the armillary sphere, which could be after a Chinese or European astronomical instrument. The armillary sphere – from the Latin armilla, meaning ‘bracelet’ – was a device used since ancient times both in China and Europe as an aid to understand the movement of the stars around the earth. Armillary spheres, as will be shown in Chapter III, appeared on porcelain made to order at private kilns in Jingdezhen for the Portuguese market during the reigns of Zhengde and early Jiajing (Fig. 2.3.1.8). Although Ricci never met the Emperor in person, he saw a massive armillary sphere supported by columns with a relief decoration in the manner in which they work tapestry fabrics, showing the pattern from both the front and the back. An that design was of various fantastic animals, birds, and flowers, in which last those regions abound and which are esteemed more for the sight of them than for their odor, just as in Europe today they are appreciated for their beauty. And they have a similar decoration of foliage, but all very natural. And because Your Highnesses’ arms were embroidered on the canopy of those curtains, the Zealanders who stole them from me along with all the other goods did not dare to sell them, but sent them as a gift to the Most Serene Queen of France, Maria de’ Medici, together with the porcelain and various other curious things that I was bringing to present to Your Highnesses. This is the earliest textual reference of an order of silk bearing a European coat of arms, which was that of Fernando de’ Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Both documentary and material evidence demonstrate that special orders of velvet and finished silk products for religious use were made for both the Spanish
and Portuguese markets in the early decades of the seventeenth century. In 1615, for instance, Captain Francisco de Medina sent from Manila to Alonso Maldonado de Torres, priest of Philip III in Madrid, a consignment that included 2 pieces of raw silk and 16 velvet repousse from China. The following year he sent him all the cloths that a priest needed to conduct a mass, all of silk. According to the documentation, these specific orders of finished silk products made by his nephew.  

There is an interesting set of ecclesiastical vestments made of silk brocade, dating to about 1600, which reflects European influence in the Padrão Ex-voto Museum in Salem. A priest’s robe from this set serves to illustrate a striking combination of Chinese to about 1600, which reflects European influence in the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. According to the documentation, these specific orders of finished silk products made by his nephew.  

The following year he sent him of all the cloths that a priest needed to conduct a mass, all of silk. According to the documentation, these specific orders of finished silk products made by his nephew.  

Fig. 2.3.1.11. Chasuble and stole from a set of liturgical vestments.  

**Left** Fig. 2.3.1.12. Chasuble. Silk satin, embroidered with silk and gilded paper-wrapped thread. China, seventeenth century. Dimensions: 213 cm x 160 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Amy Greene, 1969 (Acc. no. 69.246)  

**Right** Fig. 2.3.1.13. Silk and metallic-thread (kesi) tapestry weaving. China, Ming dynasty, late sixteenth/seventeenth century. Dimensions: 205 cm x 240 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Vassar College, 2004 (Acc. no. 2004.198)  


380On the nature of the embroidery that formed this set, see Costa Ortiga, 2000, p. 133. Mentioned in Levenson, 2009, p. 326. The emblem of the brotherhood, a Calvary cross, is embroidered on the front and on the back of the cope. For a discussion and images of the cope, see Costa Ortiga, 2000, p. 133.  

381I am grateful to Luis Rufo, President of the Brotherhood of Santa Cruz, for providing me with information and images of the chasuble and stole for research purposes.  

382The chasuble is similarly embroidered in a canopy dating to the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).
decorated with scrolling tendrils, with the central area of red velvet embroidered with a
colourful flowers were already being made in

expansion. It seems likely that the set of hangings would have been ordered by
or for Dom Francisco de Mascarenhas, a fidalgo of the King's household, who was
appointed in 1623 as Captain-General and 1st Governor of Macao, a post he held
until 1626 (Fig. 2.3.1.15). Errors in the execution of European coat of arms, as will
be shown in the following chapter were common in porcelain made to order for
the Portuguese market in Jingdezhen from as early as the Zhengde and Jiajing
reigns. Three pieces of porcelain dating to the Tuning reign (1621–1627) bear a coat of
arms that appears to be another erroneous rendering of the Mascarenhas family
arms, which has been attributed to Dom Francisco de Mascarenhas (Figs. 3.4.1.1.15a) and
b). Thus it is possible that Dom Francisco de Mascarenhas not only ordered this
set of silk hangings, but also porcelains with his coat of arms, during the time he was
serving as Captain-General and Governor of Macao. This set of hangings, combining
Chinese materials and embroidering techniques, painting techniques and pigments
introduced by the Jesuits into both Japan and China, with European iconography,
is accounted for about half of the governos or viceroys of the Estado da India. Nevertheless
in 1550, the Governor of Macao, António de Albuquerque, requested a hanging
for the Portuguese market in Jingdezhen from as early as the Zhengde and Jiajing
reigns. Three pieces of porcelain dating to the Tuning reign (1621–1627) bear a coat of
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Fig. 2.3.1.14a. The Rape of Helen from a set of armorial hangings of The Story of Troy. Cotton embroidered with silk and gilt-paper-wrapped thread, pigment. China, probably first half of the seventeenth century.
Dimensions: 362.6cm x 480.1cm.

Fig. 2.3.1.14b. Detail of Fig. 2.3.1.14a.

Fig. 2.3.1.15. Portrait of D. Francisco de Mascarenhas (15th Viceroy of the Estado da Índia). Anonymous, Goa, sixteenth century.
Oil on wood.
Dimensions: 180cm x 110cm.
Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon (inv. no. 2166-Pnt).
It has been shown in this study that sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century Chinese silk lampas finely woven with a repeated design of a crowned, double-headed eagle, a symbol of the Habsburg rulers of Spain and Portugal, in combination with interlocking floral scrolls that are undoubtedly Chinese in style, were cut and sawn into ecclesiastical vestments for the Catholic Church. The use of Chinese silks made to order with a mix of cultural references at the time is attested by a cope in the Royal Ontario Museum and two finely woven silk fragments that appear to have formed part of one or more priest’schasubles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which relate closely to the woven silk lampas fragment in the Metropolitan Museum illustrated in Fig. 2.3.1.1. By the turn of the century, the motifs of woven silks made to order for the Iberian market and sewn up as ecclesiastical vestments, acquired an even more distinctive Chinese character. Such a mixture of two very different and distant cultures, one Asian and the other European, is evident in the Chinese woven silk brocade of a priest’s robe from the set of ecclesiastical vestments in the Peabody Essex Museum, dating to about 1600 (Fig. 2.3.1.10). This silk brocade was made to order with a repeated large-scale heraldic-style design, but instead of depicting a pair of lions, the only animal figures represented are confronted, each other in front of a brocaded ball among floral scrolls that are purely Chinese in style. Thus, priests from the Catholic Church wore ecclesiastical vestments during the celebration of the liturgy that had been cut and sawn from silks made to order even though they had Buddhist motifs, and therefore did not conform at all to Christian iconography. We still don’t know for whom the set of vestments was made. If the set was intended for use by the clergy in the Iberian Peninsula, the Catholic people attending church services or festivities probably would have considered it as an exotic material testimony of the missionary work in Asia. On the other hand, if it was intended for use in one of the multi-cultural and multi-religious settlements of the Portuguese or Spanish in Asia, such as Macao, Goa or Manila, it may have been seen by the Christian converts and/or worshippers as an expression of the Asian and European cultural and religious elements that coexisted in their daily lives.

Discussion [2.4]
Europe and the Spanish colonies in the New World were in some ways similar, but in posts. It has become clear, however, that the distribution, consumer reception and use who brought them to Bantam, Patani or Batavia, where they had established trading Spanish ships, as well as Chinese junks, or were purchased from Chinese junk traders and English they were either acquired through privateering against Portuguese and or Portuguese merchants that brought them to Manila, and in the case of the Dutch traders who brought them to Macao, and by the Spanish from Chinese junk traders these silks were purchased by the Portuguese directly at Canton or from Chinese junk traders and woven silk cloths began to reach Lisbon via Goa, and continued to do so even

From the information provided by the various primary and secondary sources discussed in this Chapter, although limited in the case of the Dutch and English, it is possible to elaborate some general conclusions in regards to the trade of Chinese silk to Western Europe and the New World in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As has been shown, the Iberians, as well as the Dutch and English, were trading similar types of raw silks, woven silk cloths and finished silk products. This is actually not surprising since all these silks were purchased by the Portuguese directly at Canton or from Chinese junk traders who brought them to Macao, and by the Spanish from Chinese junk traders or Portuguese merchants that brought them to Manila, and in the case of the Dutch and English they were either acquired through privateering against Portuguese and Spanish ships, as well as Chinese junks, or were purchased from Chinese junk traders who brought them to Bantam, Patani or Batavia, where they had established trading posts. It has become clear, however, that the distribution, consumer reception and use of the various types of silks imported into their respective home countries in Western Europe and the Spanish colonies in the New World were in some ways similar, but in others quite different. These similarities and differences, closely related to their individual political, mercantile, religious and social policies, will be summarized in the following pages.

Soon the Portuguese, the first Europeans to arrive in Asia and to establish direct trade relations with China, recognized the unprecedented opportunity of economic profit if they participated in a large-scale trade of silk via Canton and Malacca. The profits of the trade in silk must have been so high, that private individuals traded not only woven silk cloths but also finished silk products in defiance of the royal monopoly over trade extended to silk in 1520. A relatively small quantity of raw silk and woven silk cloths began to reach Lisbon via Goa, and continued to do so even when commercial relations with China were prohibited from 1522 to 1544. Once the Portuguese settled in Macao in 1557, and thus gained regular access to the biannual fair of Canton, raw silk together with Japanese and New World silver, became the main commodities traded by them. At the Canton fair, the Chinese merchants sold the various silks by weight, with their sell price varying not only according to the type and quality but also to the demand at the time of purchase. The raw silks purchased by the Portuguese were mostly spun silk in white and colours, and white twisted silk (retros or retro). They purchased a variety of fine woven silks, including damasks, satins, velvets (both wefted and plain), taffetas (both black and colours), and brocades, some of which were embroidered or painted in bright colours with flowers, animals, mythical animals and deities. Other woven silk cloths were also embroidered with gold thread. In addition, the Portuguese purchased some finished silk products made for both the Chinese domestic and export markets. The Portuguese used most of these silks for their inter-Asian trade, mainly distributing them to India, Japan (by both Portuguese merchants and Jesuits until 1639) and Manila (after 1571) in exchange for silver and gold. The giant Portuguese merchant ships used in the Macao-Malacca/Goa-Lisbon trade route served to supply silk and other Asian goods to Portugal and the rest of Europe. Chinese silks, however, represented only about 5–6 percent of all the Asian textiles imported by the Portuguese into Lisbon in the early sixteenth century. The limited quantities of woven silk cloths and finished silk products imported appear to have been intended almost exclusively royal court, high-ranking nobility and clergy. The main reasons for this were most probably the high purchase price of the silks, and the sumptuary laws against luxury dress and ornamentation first passed by successive kings of the royal House of Avis-Beja and then of the royal House of Austria (Habsburg). Chinese silks were held in high esteem and thus eagerly sought after by the royalty, high-ranking nobility and clergy, who were all exempted from sumptuary laws, for use in both secular and religious contexts not only because of the novelty of their exotic Chinese decorative motifs and bright colours, but also for their associations with the Portuguese expansion to Asia, still unknown to most Europeans. For the Lisbon court silks served as symbols of both political authority and social status, and thus were given as diplomatic gifts to represent the power of Portugal’s seaborne empire at the time. The ecclesiastical institutions, especially the Society of Jesus, used embroidered, painted and woven silk cloths with exotic and colourful motifs to make Catholic liturgical vestments or as furnishings to decorate the churches, even though they did not conform at all to Christian iconography. The trade in silk must have brought considerable revenues for the Portuguese Crown in the first seventy or so years of trade in Asia. This is suggested by the fact that following the union of Spain and Portugal in 1580, the Crown allowed freedom of trade, but continued to reserve for itself the trade in silk, pepper and cinnamon. By this time, considerable quantities of a variety of silk cloths (especially white woven silk) and finished silk products were integrated regularly in sumptuous festivities of sacred-profane context organized by the Jesuits and some of the Mendicant Orders throughout Portugal. These silks were used to make garments worn by the participants, such as robes, shawls and tunics, as well as liturgical ornaments, including arias frontais, wall hangings, curtains, velances, canopied pavilions, to adorn the interior and exterior ecclesiastical spaces, and the streets of the cities. Even rank badges, the woven or embroidered insignia worn by Chinese civil and military officials on their robes, were imported and used as liturgical ornaments

Conclusions [2.5]
for the churches. The silk used for these public displays, most probably given to the Church as royal gifts or acquired through the Jesuits in Japan (from 1578 until the expulsion in 1639), served not only as material testimonies of the Portuguese expansion to China and the missionary activity there, but also had cultural, economic and political symbolic meanings. At about this time, there was a small quantity of finished silk products, including furnishings for both secular and religious use, imported into Lisbon as private consignments or as gifts to relatives by many different individuals. But it was not until the early seventeenth century, with the influx of larger quantities of silks imported from China and after about 1614 also from Persia, that woven silk cloths and finished silk products became more widely available to people from different social groups in the capital Lisbon, Oporto and other cities involved in commerce. Chinese silks were much sought after by both men and women of the middle classes of these urban societies, who were now able to incorporate them into clothing for daily use and religious festivities, as well as into their households.

The Portuguese monopoly on the trade in silk to Europe lasted until 1571. That year, the Spanish founded Manila as a colony in the Philippines following the discovery of a return route to Acapulco across the Pacific, and began to trade regularly in silk. Chinese junks from ports all over south China, extending from Ningbo to Canton, came to Manila every year to exchange the New World silver for silk and a variety of other Chinese goods (including porcelain). Beginning in 1573, large quantities of various types of silks and other Asian goods were exported from Manila to the New World, but only a small amount of them were subsequently re-exported via Veracruz to Seville, in Spain.

Chinese silks, most probably from Canton and Zhangzhou, brought to Manila a variety of raw silks of various qualities (white and coloured untwisted silks), and woven silk cloths, including plain and embroidered velvets in various colours and some with gold, patterned satins, brocades, black and coloured damasks and other silks embroidered with gold or silver, like those traded by the Portuguese, which were highly esteemed and of high value. Patterned silks, either woven or painted, were also brought but sold at low prices. The Chinese merchants in Manila, as those in Canton, sold all the silks by weight. As has been shown, the great demand of silks and other Chinese goods by the Spanish, together with the taxes (aduanas and municipal taxes) levied upon the Chinese, began to affect the sale price of silks only a decade after the Spanish founded Manila. This resulted in that silks and other Chinese goods almost disappeared from the market, and that the few available were sold at very high prices. In 1583, for example, the price of satin increased from 12 to 40 or 45, and still could not be found. The silk-for-silver trade was very important for the Chinese merchants, as some of them smuggled part of the silk they brought to Manila for sale in order to avoid paying the taxes.

The supply of silk to Manila was not solely in the hands of the Chinese junk traders. After King Philip II's accession to the throne in 1580, a regular supply of silk came by way of Portuguese merchants from Macao, in exchange of the much sought after New World silver, and Spanish merchants went occasionally to Macao to acquire cargoes of silk intended for private trade. In 1593, the year the Crown forbade the Manila merchants to travel to Macao, the Portuguese began to extract higher prices for silks from the Spanish than those customarily charged by the Chinese junk traders. At about this time, some of the Portuguese New Christian merchants residing in Manila began to compete with the Spanish in the trade of silk to the New World. After the 1620s, when fewer junks came to Manila due to the civil wars in China, the Spanish came to be increasingly dependent upon Macao to supply silk and other Chinese goods for the Manila galleons bound to the New World. Undoubtedly, this trade with Manila was very profitable for the Portuguese, who during the royal decree of 1636 prohibiting trade between Macao and Manila, continued to make regular trips clandestinely until 1640, when Macao regained its independence from Spain.

Unlike the Portuguese, the Spanish were familiar with the production and consumption of silk, as sericulture and silk weaving had spread via the Arab conquest to Andalusia in southern Spain, the first half of the eighteenth century. Although a few Chinese and other Asian silks had reached Spain in the mid-fifteenth century, imported silks were still considered a luxury available only to the royal court, nobility, clergy and wealthy merchant class in the following centuries. Despite the sumptuary laws in relation to luxury and external appearance passed repeatedly by the kings of Spain, and after 1580 also of Portugal, a small quantity of Chinese silks were re-exported from New Spain to Seville in the motherland Spain, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These included silks sent especially for King Philip II and other members of the royal court in the early 1570s, probably including Archduke Albert of Austria who jointly governed the Southern Netherlands with his wife Isabella Clara, as well as woven silk cloths ordered by individuals working for the court in the early 1590s. For the years between 1600 and 1640, various types of Chinese raw silk, including thrown silks, kossilk, and longhaired silk, amounted 96 percent of all the Asian textiles re-exported from New Spain to Seville; Chinese woven silk cloths amounted only to 4 percent, and finished silk clothing to 0 percent. Although these silks were not being resold in Seville, raw silk was imported into Granada and other silk production centres as early as the 1580s. It is possible that the greater importation of raw silk than woven silk into Seville was due to the fact that the Spanish elites were less willing to purchase Chinese woven silks with bright colours and exotic motifs because of the strict enforcement of the sumptuary laws in relation to luxury and external appearance passed repeatedly by the Habsburg kings.

Consumer demand for silks appears to have increased among the elites of Spain in the early 1600s, when New Spanish merchants looked for new markets in Europe, but most retail shops were still not offering such Asian imported goods for sale. It was precisely at this time that Toledo became one of the main cities where silks, mostly raw silk, were imported from New Spain. It has become clear that the growing demand by both the Spanish and the Atlantic countries for raw silk was due to the fact that the Spanish elites were less willing to purchase Chinese woven silks with bright colours and exotic motifs because of the strict enforcement of the sumptuary laws in relation to luxury and external appearance passed repeatedly by the Habsburg kings. The supply of silk to Manila was not solely in the hands of the Chinese junk traders.

A small quantity of Chinese silks also reached the Habsburg territories of the Southern Netherlands in the early 1520s. Textual sources attest to the presence of woven silk cloths, such as velvet, satin and damask, in Antwerp as early as 1520–1521.
Visual sources, on the other hand, attest to the use of clothing items made of Chinese silk by Archduke Albert VII of Austria after his marriage to Isabella Clara Eugenia, the eldest daughter of King Philip II, in 1598. Such woven silks would most probably have arrived at the archducal court in Brussels through the Habsburg familial relationship. The distribution, appreciation and use of silks in the Spanish colonies in the New World were all quite different than in Spain. There are a few reasons for these differences. Firstly, that the sumptuary laws issued in the viceregalities of New Spain and Peru were not as strictly enforced as in Spain. Secondly, that the large quantities of silks imported via the Pacific trade route into the viceregalies, and their low sell price in comparison with those imported from Spain, prompted that silk changed much earlier from being a luxury good into a common good accessible to people of almost all social classes, than in Spain. Thirdly, that the raw silk, woven silk cloths and finished silk products were all offered for sale in the street markets and shops, second-hand markets, and by peddlers, and distributed through both wholesale merchant and family networks as early as the late sixteenth century. It is clear that woven silk cloths and finished silk products were highly appreciated by both the secular and religious elites of both viceroyal capitals. The secular elites used them for ostentatious public displays of their wealth and social status, incorporating them in their everyday clothing and carriages, and in the private and common spaces of their households. The ecclesiastical institutions of New Spain, including the Franciscans who served in the missions of New Mexico, used silk ceremonial vestments as well as woven silk cloths for clothing and church ornaments, which were both imported from China or finished in the viceroyalty's workshops. In the viceroyalty of Peru, even though the sell prices of raw silk and woven silk cloths were ten times higher than in Manila (in the years 1620 and 1621), the large quantities of silks that arrived through official and clandestine trade were purchased by a multi-ethnic clientele from almost all the colonial social classes who could afford them to be used in both secular and religious contexts. Woven silk cloths were used to decorate the interior of the churches of the indigenous inhabitants, and were purchased by Indians, African slaves, their descendants and other poor inhabitants of Lima and other cities of northern Peru to make clothing items, mostly adopting the everyday dress styles of the Spanish elites. Fourth, but not least, the colonial textile industries of both viceregalities came to be heavily dependent on the trade of raw silks imported from Manila. This was mainly due to their better quality and as mentioned above, their low sell prices in comparison with those imported from Spain. In New Spain, for example, Gauí y Montalbán declared in 1637 that more that 14,000 people in Mexico City, Puebla and Antequera supported themselves by this trade.296 In addition, immigrants from Spain participated in the wholesale of silk and in the manufacture of silk clothing in the early seventeenth century, while chinos immigrants who came from Manila participated in a small-scale trade of raw silk and woven silk cloths as early as the sixteenth century. The Dutch began to import Chinese silks into the Northern Netherlands at the turn of the sixteenth century. Jacob van Neck on his return to Amsterdam in 1599, brought raw silk and woven silk cloths, which he most probably purchased from Chinese junk traders that came to Bantam. The successful auction of the raw silk, woven silk cloths and silk finished products of the richly laden Portuguese carrack Sanne Catherina captured off Patani which took place five years earlier, in 1604, prompted the VOC to begin importing Chinese silk. The auction of these silks came to influence the development of the Dutch silk industry, as it gave an incentive to a number of individuals, including Portuguese-Jewish merchants, engaged in the silk trade in Amsterdam to set up mills for the throwing of Chinese and other imported silks. This industry in turn was to enable many people to earn a living. By 1608, the Dutch were acquiring considerable quantities of raw silk as Bantam. Some of the raw silk and woven silk cloths imported into the Northern Netherlands that after 1609 became the Dutch Republic, however, were acquired through privatizing against Portuguese and Spanish ships, as well as Chinese junks in Asia, rather than being acquired through trade. Clearly this was a very profitable trading activity for the Dutch, who would subsequently re-exported some of the captured raw silk to Spain to be sold at a high price. After 1624, the Dutch were able to acquire silks from the Chinese merchants that frequented their trading post at Formosa, but only in small quantities. It was not until 1633, however, that the VOC began to purchase large quantities of silk after coming to a trade agreement with the Chinese merchant-pirate Zheng Zhilong, who became the sole supplier of silk and other Chinese goods (including porcelain) to the Dutch in Formosa. This agreement enabled the VOC to increase considerably its participation in the silk trade to Japan after 1635, and once the Portuguese and the Jesuits were expelled from Japan in 1639, their competitors were reduced only to the Chinese silk merchants. From 1636 onwards, the trade in silk to the Dutch Republic included not only silk from China but also from Bengal. By the early 1640s, the VOC was presenting woven silk cloths from Canton as diplomatic gifts. Although the past and current literature published in English consulted for this study does not discuss the use of woven silk cloths or silk finished products among the urban societies of the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the documented importation of silks indicates that there was already an interest for silks at the time. Future research in Dutch textual sources may shed new information into this aspect of the tastes and fashions of the Dutch society.

The English began to trade in Chinese silks in the early years of the seventeenth century. They purchased a wide variety of silks brought by Chinese junks to Bantam, where the EIC established its first Asian trading post in 1603. Silks, especially raw silk, were coveted for both the EIC’s inter-Asian trade and home markets. Although, King James I endorsed a domestic silk industry to compete with imported silk in 1607, the import of Chinese raw silks appear to have continued in the following years. That same year, the EIC began to make requirements for specific types of silks, including raw silk, twisted silk and sawing silk, to be imported into England. By the following decade, the EIC was even acquiring some woven silk cloths as special commissions for private individuals and nobility. The English also purchased silk brought by Chinese junks to Patani, where they were competing to do so with the Dutch. Only a small quantity of silk appears to have been imported into England during the first years after the establishment of the EIC. Woven silk cloths and finished silk products, including taffetas, velvets, damasks in various colours, and cushions and other items embroidered with birds, beasts and flowers, begin to appear listed in larger quantities in inventories of the belongings of the wealthy nobility drawn up from 1614 onwards. The English continued to conduct indirect trade with China until the eighteenth century, when trade was confined to London and Canton. To protect its trade, the English also acquired considerable quantities of raw silks imported into London from Asia were to be re-exported to continental Europe, the West Indies, and the English colonies in the New World.

The most important material evidence of the trade in silk to Western Europe and the New World is provided by a small number of extant woven silk cloths and finished silk products of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries housed in public and private collections in China and the rest of the world, which combine traditional Chinese weaving, embroidery or painting techniques and motifs, with European motifs. This group of silks, not only fascinating for their rarity but also for the role they played in the intercultural exchange between the East and West that occurred in the early modern period, demonstrate that the trade in silk to Western Europe and the New World was not limited to raw silk, woven silk cloths and finished silk products made for both the Chinese domestic and export markets. These silks were made as special orders for the Portuguese and Spanish markets for use in both religious and secular contexts in their respective Iberian countries in Western Europe, the Spanish colonies in the New World, as well as the Portuguese and Spanish colonies in Asia. They give tangible testimony of the ability of the Chinese silk producers to adapt to specific requirements of their new European clientele.

From the analysis of the stylistic characteristics of a selection of these silks it can be concluded that the European influence on them was quite limited. Although the Chinese silk producers were most likely provided with a European textile or printed source as model for the woven or embroidered silk ordered, they always took the liberty to create a hybrid design, incorporating European motifs with motifs that are undoubtedly Chinese in style. They even rendered some of the European decorative elements in a manner that recalls the depictions of certain floral or animal motifs seen on embroidered or woven silks made for the domestic market. Although the symmetrical arrangement of the design of some of these silks appears to derive from European textiles, the design of others like those dominated by a central roundel, is distinctly Chinese. Even the colour schemes used by the silk producers seem to have been taken from silks made earlier for the domestic market. Although the exact place of manufacture of these silks is still unknown, the fact that scholars have suggested Beijing and Macao as possible places of origin for some of them, would indicate that European influence not only affected the silk producers that could have worked closely with Iberian customers, but also those that were in mainland China and thus were less likely to have contact with any Europeans.

As shown the use of silks made to order for the Iberian market with a mix of cultural references, both Asian and European, is attested by a few extant ecclesiastical vestments and woven silks that appear to have formed part of other such vestments. Although many questions still remain unanswered, one can confidently say that priests of the Catholic Church living in the Iberian Peninsula, and/or in the Portuguese and Spanish settlements in Asia, wore ecclesiastical vestments sewn up from Chinese silks with exotic and colourful motifs, such as Buddhist lions, which did not conform at all to Christian iconography. Such ecclesiastical vestments seem to be in sharp contrast to the sumptuary laws passed in the Iberian Peninsula at the time.

Textual sources have shown, however, that special orders were also made for private individuals from other European countries present in Asia as early as the late sixteenth century. Perhaps the most important order we know of is that placed by the Italian Francesco Carletti for the curtains and all the accessories and furnishings for a room, which combined Chinese traditional weaving and embroidering techniques and motifs, with European motifs and forms. These pieces of silk were most probably woven in kesi tapestry with a design of various fantastic animals, birds and flowers. According to Carletti, the canopy of the curtains was embroidered with the coat of arms of Fernando de’ Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany. This is the earliest textual reference of silk made to order bearing a European coat of arms. Silks bearing European coat of arms continued to be made to order in the early seventeenth century. These include the velvet reposteros (decorative cloths patterned with a coat of arms) sent from Manila to the priest of King Philip III in Madrid, Alonso Maldonado de Torres, in 1615; and the magnificent set of seven known hangings embroidered with silk and gilt-paper-wrapped thread, and with details painted with pigments, bearing a coat of arms that may be an erroneous rendering of the arms of the Portuguese family Machacenas. Future research may provide further material and textual evidence of orders of silks made specifically for European customers at the time.