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## **Situating the American-China Trade within the *Longue Durée* of the Spice Trade**

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Before the 500 years of ocean-going trade with the Far East, trade was carried over a land route called the Spice Road. It was only after ocean-going vessels were developed, however, that global trade became possible. Spain and Portugal, both of which were searching for the shortest trade route to the East, were the first to extend their maritime empires overseas. The Dutch and the English, among others, soon followed. The United States, having only entered into the Spice Trade after the War of Independence, enjoyed a mere seven decades of trade before the country was embroiled in the Civil War. This chapter will attempt to provide a broad overview of the major players in the Spice Trade, as well as take a closer glimpse of the US – China trade. In doing so, it will not only discuss what commodities were imported into China and exported from it to the US, but will also explore how the China trade was related to several ancillary trades, thus painting a broader contextual picture for the changing dimensions of capitalism and consumerism over the *longue durée*.

### **Trade with the Far East before 1500**

Until the sixteenth century the Mediterranean was the major trading centre for Europe (Irwin 1991:1298-1299; Modelski 1978:218; Parry 1963:38). Although much of this trade consisted of raw materials, there were other more expensive luxury goods available to consumers, such as Far Eastern spices (Parry 1963:20, 39, 41). For centuries most of these luxury goods were carried from Far Eastern ports to the

Mediterranean through a combination of land and sea voyages, often referred to as the Silk Road (see Parry 1963:42-43). Trade in Far Eastern goods required high levels of investment, but yielded higher returns; however, a major, reoccurring issue was that very few European commodities were desired in the Far East (Braudel 1982:404-405; Parry 1963:43;). As such, merchants mostly paid for Far Eastern goods with silver bullion (Parry 1963:43-44).

Because European merchants lacked adequate ships and navigational skills for transoceanic trade, the Spice Trade continued to follow roughly the same land transportation route between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. After the fifteenth century, however, a convergence between Mediterranean and north-western European shipbuilding traditions, along with the appearance of heavy artillery on ships and improved navigation, soon provided a means for global expansion and transoceanic trade (Parry 1963:54-65). Around 1450, north-western European shipbuilders combined a lateen sail and carvel planking from the Mediterranean with a square keel, square sails and a rudder from north-western Europe. The result was a heavily built ocean-going vessel capable of sailing close to the wind: the caravel (Collinder 1954:115; Parry 1963:54-65; Rosenberg and Birdzell 1986:81-82). Furthermore, these ocean-going vessels were outfitted with cannons for protection in unknown and seemingly dangerous territories. Padfield (2002:7) explains, “Guns transformed sailing ships into mobile castles virtually impregnable to opponents who lacked equally powerful ordnance.” Paralleling the emergence of armed, ocean-going vessels, navigation also improved as a result of trade between the Mediterranean and north-western Europe, allowing for further expansion into uncharted territories (Collinder 1955:130-131, 139-140; Parry 1963:91; Rosenberg and Birdzell 1986:84). Rosenberg and Birdzell (1986:85) demonstrate clearly that these technological improvements in transoceanic transportation preceded the voyages of exploration, and were not responses to the growth of overseas trade. Given this assumption, the emergence of a mercantilist nation-state and the imperatives of gold and God provided the motives for global expansion (Parry 1963:19).

## **Portugal: A Race for God and Wealth**

During the fifteenth century a number of European nation-states, particularly Spain and Portugal, emerged from an agricultural-based feudal system and began seeking increasingly distant markets (Rosenberg and Birdzell 1986:63-66). At the same time,

the political and economic stability of Mediterranean trade was interrupted by a series of wars, which periodically interrupted trade along the Silk Road, in turn leading to uncomfortably substantial increases in prices of Far Eastern goods transported on the land route (Parry 1963:44-46; Modelski 1978:218, 225). These developments set a foundation for the balance of trade to tip from the Mediterranean towards north-western Europe. Both religious zeal, based on hundreds of years of religious persecution in north-western Europe, and acquisitiveness were the ultimate catalysts for global expansion (Parry 1963:19). The religious aspect of this crusader ideology was legitimised by a series of Papal Bulls (Modelski 1978:228). A new route to the Far East would provide a means to subdue and convert non-Christians once and for all (Parry 1963:21). Acquisitiveness, on the other hand, led merchants “to find sea routes to the East to outflank the traditional trade routes...” (Padfield 2002:8). This profit motive was further driven and defined by an emergent economic ideology: mercantilism.

Mercantilism is an economic theory contending that there is a fixed amount of bullion (gold and silver) in the world that is unchangeable, and in order for a nation-state to prosper it must create a positive balance of trade by encouraging exports and discouraging imports, kept in check through tariffs. In this way, nation-states played a protectionist role in the economy and encouraged taking money from other countries through trade (or plunder), or through producing products that could be exchanged for gold and silver bullion (Foucault 1974:177-180; Hamilton 1929:345; Irwin 1991:1297-1298). Armed with this mentality, Spain and Portugal sent conquistadors, mostly of noble descent, to seek a new route to the Far East. Following several conflicts between the Spanish and Portuguese fleets, the papacy ordered the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, which set a line of demarcation giving the western half of the world to Spain and the eastern half to Portugal (Davies 1967:337; Padfield 2002:7-8; Parry 1974:29). Thus, while Spain built a New World empire based on an economy of silver mining and sugar plantations, Portugal continued pushing south along the African coast, establishing a series of fortified trading stations (Padfield 2002:8; Wolf 1998:303-305). These voyages down the west coast of Africa eventually led to the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, Madagascar and a route to the Malabar Coast (Modelski 1978:218-219).

When Vasco de Gama arrived at the Indian port of Calicut in 1498, the local inhabitants realised that a new technological age in warfare had arrived. (Surahmanyam and Thomas 1991:300; Parry 1963:47, 141-142). De Gama utilised his guns on arrival to bombard his way into the port; his arrival demonstrates the

Portuguese explorers' success in imposing themselves on Indian Ocean traders, "whose naval technology could not compete with Western broadside artillery" (Padfield 2002:8; see also Scammell 2000:516). By the early sixteenth century Portugal had successfully established fortified naval bases throughout Asia, a permanent fleet in the Indian Ocean and extended their trade to China via Macao (Parry 1963:143-145; Scammell 2000:515). Padfield goes on to say that "they not only established trading bases (factories) and brought home spices and Eastern luxuries by the sea route around the Cape, making Lisbon a western market for these high-value commodities, but also exercised control over the native traders and exacted taxes for protection" (Padfield 2002:8).

The Portuguese set up an administrative hierarchy, which according to Subrahmanyam and Thomaz (1991:299), was quite complex and continued to evolve over time. At a superficial level it remained essentially a customs house operation (see also Diffie 1977; Disney 1977; Mancke 1999; Winius 1985; Wolf 1998:300-310), albeit one plagued with many problems. Mancke (1999:226) indicates that with continued trade along the Silk Road, Portugal remained a thalassocracy (or a sea empire) and never attained a true monopoly of the Spice Trade (Mancke 1999:226; see also Lane 1940:581; Parry 1963:46; Pouwells 2002:418; Scammell 2000:522; Wolf 1998:301). Furthermore, the Portuguese had few commodities to trade; rather, Portugal had to purchase cargo with bullion and rely on the profits from the voyage, which was quite risky (Parry 1963:48). Moreover, Parry (1963:244) suggests that the "crusading tradition of the Portuguese, and the uncompromising vigour of their missionaries, severely hampered their commercial and diplomatic endeavours [sic]" (see also Scammell 2000:528). Combined with political unrest on the home front, particularly the Spanish annexation (1580), Wars of Religious Sovereignty (1576) and Portugal's absorption into the Hapsburg Empire, the Portuguese world order deteriorated (Modelski 1978:219). Finally, at the beginning of the sixteenth century it was the "appearance in Eastern waters of an enemy who could defeat them at sea" that would damage their power and trade beyond repair (Parry 1963:249).

Even after the Portuguese empire's fall from pre-eminence in the East, Portuguese ships continued to ply Eastern waters in furtherance of this trade. The Western Australia Maritime Museum has found evidence of this in the shipwreck *Correio da Azia*, a small Portuguese dispatch ship wrecked in 1816 off the Australian coast while en route from Lisbon to Macao (Souter 2004). Although wrecked hundreds of years after the apex of the Portuguese trading empire in the East, the *Correio da Azia*

is representative of Portugal's continued trade with China via Macao, even after the dissolution of its empire in the Far East.

## **The Dutch and the Capitalistic Spirit**

At the onset of the sixteenth century, Spain was the only power that had the capital to compete with Portugal in the Far East, but by the end of the sixteenth century Spain had invested most of its gold and silver from the New World into ridding the Spanish Netherlands and England of Protestants (Spanish Wars 1579 - 1609) (Modelski 1978:225). It was even more concerned with protecting its galleon fleet and silver mines from interlopers and pirates. Thus, while the English and the Dutch were the first to meet the Portuguese in the east, it was actually the United Provinces of the Netherlands that emerged from this "embattled cockpit of religious and centrifugal struggle...as the first true maritime power of the modern age and progenitor of the Western democratic state" (Padfield 2002:19; see also Adams 1994:319, 325).

Most scholars recognise the rise of Dutch hegemony during the seventeenth century as paralleling the rise of a new capitalistic spirit, in which wealth was defined as meaning something more complex than simple land holdings or bloodline and in which new models and principles of business flourished (Hamilton 1929:343; see also Masselman 1961:456). Immanuel Wallerstein (1982:95) demonstrates that the Dutch Republic was the first true hegemonic power (see also Adams 1994:319). Hegemony "is a situation wherein the products of a given core state are produced so efficiently that they are by and large competitive even in other core states, and therefore the given core state will be the primary beneficiary of a maximally free world" (Wallerstein 1982:95). The seventeenth century became known as the Dutch Golden Age, and during this time the Dutch had possessions in nearly every continent and held a monopoly over the Baltic and East Indian trades. Moreover, they wielded influence in Venice, the receiver of Far Eastern goods via the combined land and sea routes (Masselman 1961:455; Modelski 1978:220; Adams 1994:320). The Dutch Republic achieved this through three sectors: agro-industrial productive efficiency, commercial distribution dominance and financial superiority (Wallerstein 1982:95).

New technology, organisation and specialisation in the Dutch agro-industrial sector played a key role in the development of the republic and its subsequent expansion into the Far East (Wallerstein 1974:38). Because Holland is a low-lying country,

much land had been lost to the sea; however, Holland invested in land reclamation through harnessing water pumping power through windmills and poldering (Crone 1942:238). Farming was reorganised to support cities and fewer people were needed to produce food, allowing many to take up other occupations, particularly fishing and textiles, as well as merchant trading (Adams 1994:324; Crone 1942:238-240).

Technological advances in shipbuilding also occurred at this time that gave the Dutch merchants an upper hand in commercial distribution. With windmills harnessing a natural energy source, they were able to power sawmills and cranes that could stockpile pre-cut timbers for shipbuilding, reducing costs in manpower (Barbour 1930:275-282). Additionally, Adams 1994:324 asserts, “Improvements, such as the efficient flute ship (*fluytschip*) and the *rederij* system, in which commercial and shipping ventures were divided into small shares, dispersed risk and lowered interest rates, enabling Dutch merchants to cast a wide net for capital” (see also Barbour 1930:275-282; Braudel 1982:366-367).

The Dutch Republic’s financial superiority was evident both in their overseas expansion and on the home front. In 1602, the *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) attained a charter from the States General to form a joint-stock company (Adams 1994:332; Irwin 1991:1300; Masselman 1961:459; Parry 1974:87-88). Amsterdam was the centre for capital organisation of the VOC, and it was here that merchants could purchase insurance and exchange money with bills of exchange (Adams 1994:333; Braudel 1982:106-110). This increased capital led to sophisticated credit institutions, such as the Bank of Amsterdam (1609) and the Amsterdam *Beurs* (1609), or the stock exchange (Braudel 1982:100-103; Modelski 1978:220). These capital institutions meant that the government could float and increase in debt, which was budgeted through bonds. Because the banks were able to tap into an increased population through the sale of bonds, interest rates stayed low and merchants could borrow more money to invest in trade.

Facing increased competition, particularly from the English East India Company (EIC) and private traders, the VOC eventually lost its government charter because it could not sustain a monopoly in Eastern commodities (Adams 1994:344; see also Mancke 1999:230; Irwin 1991:1313). Encountering similar obstacles as the Portuguese, the Dutch found that few of their goods were desired in the East, forcing them to make most of their purchases with bullion (Parry 1974:93). Eventually this loss in revenue led to the Dutch state’s inability to muster sufficient naval funds to counter English naval forces in the Indian Ocean, as their navy was financially

dependent on trade (Adams 1994:347). A series of wars with England and France (1672 – 1678), as well as the English Civil War further hastened their decline from hegemonic power (Modelski 1978:221; 225).

C. S. Woodward (1974) has conducted a material culture study of Chinese export porcelain exhibiting the VOC monogram, while other material culture evidence has been found on the shipwrecks *Amsterdam* (1749) (Gawronski 1991) and *Kennemerland* (1664), wrecked off Scotland laden with specie and lead ingots (Forster and Higgs 1973; Price and Muckelroy 1974). Other archaeological evidence of this trade is related to the trade routes sailed by VOC ships. Before the seventeenth century, the Portuguese and later the Dutch had followed relatively the same route from Europe to the Indian Ocean – after rounding the Cape of Good Hope they turned north along the east coast of Africa or the east coast of Madagascar and crossed the Indian Ocean (Appleyard and Manford 1979:14; Henderson 1993:18). During such voyages, which could last as long as a year, many crewmembers died from scurvy (Appleyard and Manford 1979:14; Boggs 1938:180). In 1610, however, Hendrik Brouwer sailed a new route between the latitudes of 35 degrees and 40 degrees south (Appleyard and Manford 1979:14-15; Henderson 1993:18). At this latitude constant westerly winds blew all through the year, and, driven along by these winds, Brouwer reached his destination in just under six months (Henderson 1993:18). Hereafter, this route was tested, used and referred to as the Roaring 40's (Appleyard and Manford 1979:14-15; Henderson 1993:18). Because the route was quicker, fewer crewmembers died from scurvy.

This route was not without its disadvantages. In fact, it was quite dangerous to use, mainly due to the limited means of navigation (Appleyard and Manford 1979:14-15; Henderson 1993:18-19). To secure a safe journey a captain has be skilled in determining the position, course and speed of his ship. The position is given in eastern or western longitude and northern or southern latitude, the course in degrees and speed in miles. Seventeenth century navigators had sufficient instruments, such as the astrolabe to determine the latitude, but determining longitude was much more difficult. The seafarer had to rely on dead reckoning using compass and log (Gould 1921:253; Collinder 1955:130-131, 139-140; Rosenberg and Birdzell 1986:84; Thompson 1967:65). In dead reckoning, the course was determined with a compass and ship's speed with the log. The log consisted of a triangular bit of wood fixed to a line. The line was marked with knots at a certain distance from each other. The log was thrown into the sea from the stern and, while paying out the line, the number of knots were counted over a period of fifteen seconds. The time was kept with an

hourglass. Therefore, if seven knots passed, this meant that the ship covered seven miles per hour. The problem was that dead reckoning allowed considerable discrepancies as calculations were done in relation to water and not land, and wind and currents were not factored into the calculations. For instance, if seven knots were counted and there was a counter wind of two miles per hour and a current of three miles per hour, then the actual speed would be eight miles per hour.

The introduction of the Roaring 40's and the poor method of finding longitude made encounters with the west coast of Australia inevitable. Shortly after Brouwer's trip in 1610, Dirk Hartog left Holland in the *Eendracht* in 1616 (Appleyard and Manford 1979:15-16; Henderson 1993:19-20). After rounding the Cape, *Eendracht* became separated from the rest of the fleet, eventually discovering what Hartog called Eendrachtland or the Land of Eendracht, named after his ship (Appleyard and Manford 1979:15-16; Henderson 1993:19-20). Today, Eendrachtland is known as Australia.

The many close encounters with Australia, coupled with the difference between real and estimated longitude, meant that it was only a matter of time before a European ship foundered on the coast. Surprisingly, it was not a Dutch or Portuguese ship that first wrecked in Australian waters; it was in fact an English one, *Trial* (1622), which was soon followed by others (Henderson 1993:19; Henderson 1997:11-15).

Archaeological evidence of the shipwreck *Trial* (Henderson 1993:19; Henderson 1997:11-15), as well as several Dutch shipwrecks, including the VOC *Batavia* (1629) (Tyler 1970; Bolton 1977; Godard 1993; Green 2007; MacLeod 1990), *Vergulde Draeck* (1656) (Green 1974), *Zuytdorp* (1712) (McCarthy 1998), and *Zeewijk* (1727) (Ingelman-Sundberg, 1977), have all been well documented. Another VOC shipwreck, *Geldermalsen*, was wrecked in 1752 in the South China Sea. Items associated with the *Geldermalsen*'s crew, its gold and its cargo of Chinese porcelain were salvaged by Captain Michael Hatcher and sold as The Nanking Cargo in 1986 at Christies Auction House in Amsterdam (Jörg 1986).

## **The British Empire in the Far East**

The English preceded the Dutch to the Far East, but a lack of capital and competing interests in America limited British trade in the Far East until the eighteenth century (Masselman 1961:456). After the French wars (1688 – 1713), however, Britain increasingly exercised its power in the Far East and beyond as it asserted its place as



the next global power. Modelski (1978:221-222) believes that Britain's rise to global power was partly the result of indirect control of trade based on "the successful exploitation by the British of the established advantages of earlier world powers". Modelski (1978:222) succinctly states that through a series of treaties, "without assuming direct control over the colonial territories of earlier world powers England put in place the superstructure whereby the cream might be skimmed off the top and the whole fitted into a global economic pattern."

John Brewer (1988:xvii), however, argues that the emergence of a British fiscal-military state during the early eighteenth century was also an integral factor in its rise to global power. The fiscal-military state considered war as imminent, even during peacetime, and the consequent military expenditure by the state reverberated into the private sectors (Brewer 1988:33). The British Royal Navy typified this in its blue water strategy, in which the navy was funded through custom duties and tasked with guarding trade and opening new trade routes, creating a functional separation of military and commercial power that was mutually sustained (Brewer 1988:168). English pre-eminence in the Far East, Ferdinand Braudel (1982:443) explains, was through its naval prowess: "It was not that British warships were everywhere, but that there were no other warships in significant concentration anywhere." When British merchants and the Royal Navy encountered Dutch East Indiamen in the Far East, the British were able to assert control of the sea through its well-funded and powerful navy.

Similar to the Dutch Republic, the English economy sustained its growth through the creation of such financial institutions as the Bank of England, the sale of bonds, the embrace of public credit, the establishment of a national debt and the use of bills of exchange (Braudel 1982:451, 526). However, according to Mancke (Mancke 1999:231), the British system differed from the Dutch one in that, "Military expenses no longer had to be derived directly from and balanced with commercial revenues, a shift in costs that was probably critical for the territorial expansion of the British Empire in Asia." It also differed because the fiscal-military state was not founded on a mercantilist policy, and this "is in part explained by the absence of a coherent mercantile interest, capable of bringing uniform and sustained pressure to bear on those who made government policy" (Brewer 1988:168-169; see also Modelski 1978:221).

The appearance of England as a global power was also related to the rise of the English East India Company (EIC) (1600) as an Asian power (Modelski 1978:217).

The East India Company, known as the United Company of Merchants of England after a merger with another private English company in 1709, was a joint-stock company similar to that of the VOC that held a monopoly in English trade east of the Cape of Good Hope (Sutton 2000:7). Its main difference to the VOC was that it was a private firm centrally owned and operated by a group of London merchants, “with no government stake or involvement beyond granting the monopoly charter” (Irwin 1991:1307; see also Parry 1974:88). Jean Sutton provides probably one of the best accounts of the EIC in *Lords of the East* (2000), detailing the commercial organisation, day-to-day workings of the owners, officers, and servants, as well as technical construction details of the East Indiamen and its private navy, the Bombay Marine (see also Parry 1974:84-94; Sutton 200:7).

Similar to commodities produced by the Portuguese and the Dutch, manufactured goods produced in England were not readily desired in the Far East. The EIC attempted with little success to market woollen textiles to reduce their exports of bullion (Cain and Hopkins 1980:470). As another way of reducing bullion exports, the EIC resorted to a strategy known as the country trade (Gough 1989:216; Parry 1974:95). Parry best describes this as:

A tramping trade, from port to port, wherever a profit could be made... Europeans were to be found conveying pilgrims from north India to Jeddah; shipping piece goods from Surat and Bombay to the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, from Madras and the Hugli to the many harbours of the archipelago; horses from Arabia to western India; copper from Japan to Surat, Coromandel and Bengal; raw cotton from Bengal, pepper from Sumatra, sandalwood from Timor, to Macao. They took advantage of local gluts and shortages to enter the inter-island trade in rice. They speculated in bullion. They bought gold in Malaya, in Sumatra and in China (where gold was produced but not coined) and carried it to Manila, where Mexican silver was plentiful and cheap, or to India ... (Parry 1974:95)

Unlike the Dutch VOC, who strictly prohibited company individuals or other private Dutch merchants from participating in this trade, the EIC actually encouraged it by chartering their vessels to individuals involved in the EIC and private merchants operating independently (Braudel 1982:223; Parry 1974:95). Until the discovery of a demand for opium in China during the end of the eighteenth century, England paid for most trade goods with bullion or through the country trades (Headrick 1981:44-45; Parry 1974:93-94). With the discovery of opium, however, a triangular trade arose in which “India produced the opium, the Chinese exchanged the opium for tea, and the British drank the tea” (Headrick 1981:44).

Although the EIC had established factories throughout India, built up a foothold in Canton and developed a system whereby profits could be supplemented through the country trades, its independence could not continue indefinitely. The British government, according to Sutton (2000:13-14), could not tolerate a company governing an empire with an annual revenue many times greater than that of its home country. As such, Parliament imposed a series of statutes establishing its sovereignty over the company. The Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833 relinquished the EIC monopolies in India, though the company still remained in control of the administration in India and had an indirect control of trade with China through opium sales (Headrick 1981:44). Allen explains that it was then that “a three-cornered trade came into being – exports of manufactured goods and of services from Europe to India, exports of cotton and opium from India to China, and exports of silk and tea from China to Europe” (Allen 1954:296). The Chinese government soon became embroiled not only with this drug trafficking but also with the conduct of British merchants. Following conflict between Chinese government officials and British merchants, England went to war with China in the first Opium War (1839-1841), in order to ensure that its markets for opium remained open (Headrick 1981:45). The ensuing treaty, the Treaty of Nanking (1842), opened up several mainland Chinese ports to foreign trade (Allen 1954:295; Headrick 1981:54; Labaree et al. 1998:283). Following the Second Opium War (1856-1860) and the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the EIC customs house was demolished in 1861 and in 1874 the company charter was allowed to expire (Headrick 1981:45; Sutton 2000:14).

Evidence of England’s earliest interest in the Far Eastern trades includes the EIC shipwreck *Trial* (1622), mentioned previously. Other evidence of the British Empire’s trade with British colonies can be seen in the *Sydney Cove* shipwreck (Nash 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; Staniforth and Nash 1998; Strachan 1986a, 1986b). *Sydney Cove* wrecked during February 1797 on Preservation Island, Tasmania, while en route from Calcutta to Port Jackson. The survivors of the *Sydney Cove* wreck spent nearly twelve months on the island before being rescued. Staniforth and Nash (1998) have shown that the *Sydney Cove* was particularly significant because its cargo consisted mostly of blue-and-white Chinese export porcelain decorated for the

Western market, reflecting forms and decorative types, such as Canton and Nanking, which are most often found archaeologically on terrestrial household sites.<sup>3</sup>

## The US – China Trade

Prior to the American Revolution, the Navigation Acts impeded colonial commerce on an international scale (Hill 1893:40; Toussaint-Samat 1992:600). The Navigation Acts, a series of statutes passed by British Parliament, proclaimed that only British ships with British crews could import and export commodities to and from the colonies and that certain colonial products could only be exported to British ports (Hill 1893:40; Toussaint-Samat 1992:600). Thus, international commodities such as tea, silk and porcelain from China, were carried to the American colonies aboard EIC ships, although illicit trade with other countries, such as Holland and France, did occur (Labaree et al. 1998:114).

American colonials relied heavily on England for their tea (Hao 1986b:11). Tea was not only the English national drink because by the late eighteenth century tea drinking had also become a widespread mark of gentility in America (Hao 1986b:11). In 1773, British Parliament passed the Tea Act, which was just one in a series of restrictions leading up to the American Revolution. The Tea Act allowed the EIC to sell tea tax-free to the American colonies, giving the company a monopoly on tea sales there (Walett 1949:614). Americans were so irritated with inflated tea prices that a group of protesters boarded the EIC ships *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor* and *Beaver* and proceeded to throw the ships' cargo of tea chests into Boston Harbour, an event known as the Boston Tea Party (Walett 1949:616; Labaree et al. 1998:115; Toussaint-Samat 1992:600). Additionally, other American colonials

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<sup>3</sup> The shipwreck was untouched until 1977, when the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, in conjunction with the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, carried out a series of surveys and excavations on the wreck. Work on the survivors' camp, however, was not carried out until November 2002, when staff from the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and students and staff of the Department of Archaeology at Flinders University relocated and tested the site. I was involved in a revisit to the Sydney Cove shipwreck survivors' camp, which involved a total excavation of the remaining area during November 2006.

abstained from drinking tea altogether (Hao 1986b:12). Parliament responded with the Coercive Acts, which declared the port of Boston closed to all commerce until the EIC was reimbursed for its lost tea, required the culprits involved to be brought to justice, and required that the town reassure the mother country that Bostonians would henceforth be on good behaviour (Labaree et al. 1998:119). The Coercive Acts also moved the seat of Parliament to Salem, changed the Massachusetts Bay Charter and made changes in the justice system (Labaree et al. 1998:119). Sympathy from the other colonies for the Port of Boston united the colonies, inspiring the meeting of the first Continental Congress in Philadelphia (Labaree et al. 1998:119). Soon thereafter, war broke out with the Battle of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, sparking the War of American Independence, which would continue until the Treaty of Paris in 1783 (Labaree et al. 1998:119).

Following the American Revolution, American merchants were no longer restricted under the British crown and so were free to trade anywhere in the world (Albion et al. 1994:56). At the same time, however, American merchants no longer had the benefits of monopolistic markets, English bounties and the protection of the English fleet (Albion et al. 1994:56). Despite this, American ports and shipping overseas grew tremendously, as American merchants were free to trade around the world (Reinoehl 1959:85).

The newly formed US had an excess of ex-privateer vessels, experienced sailors, a domestic market for Chinese tea and at least one locally grown product that the Chinese markets desired: ginseng (Hao 1986b:12). Ginseng was mostly found in New England and “was a roughly phallic-shaped root highly prized in China when steeped to make a supposedly restorative potion” (Hao 1986b:12). Hao has described the use of ginseng in China as “the Geritol of its day” (Hao 1986b:12).

The Boston sloop *Harriet*, loaded with a cargo of ginseng, was the first ship to attempt a trading venture to Canton (Labaree et al. 1998:158). While en-route to Canton the Captain stopped at the Cape of Good Hope, where agents of the EIC purchased the cargo of ginseng in order to prevent the crew from initiating trade at Canton (Labaree et al. 1998:158). Thus, *Harriet* never made it to Canton. Instead, it was the 55-ton sloop *Empress of China* that became the first American vessel to complete the trans-oceanic trade with China. Outfitted by Robert Morris of Philadelphia and Daniel Park & Co. of New York and commanded by Captain John Green with Samuel Shaw sailing as supercargo, the *Empress of China* set sail on 22

February 1784 loaded with a cargo of ginseng and other speculative commodities (Phillip 1984; Shaw 1847:134). Shaw wrote in his journal, “The inhabitants of America must have tea, -- the consumption of which will necessarily increase with the increasing population of our country...” (Shaw 1847:231). The *Empress of China* rounded the Cape of Good Hope and arrived in China on 28 August, where Captain Green was able to procure a cargo of 3,000 piculs of Hyson and Bohea tea (Hao 1986b:12). As for the Chinese reception, Shaw remarks:

Our being the first American ship that had ever visited China, it was some time before the Chinese could fully comprehend the distinction between Englishmen and us. They styled us the *New People*, and when, by the map, we conveyed to them an idea of the extent of our country, with its present and increasing population, they were not a little pleased at the prospect of so considerable a market for the productions of their own empire (Shaw 1847:183).

News of the successful voyage of *Empress of China* sparked interest among other American traders. By 1787, five American ships had already visited Canton: *Experiment*, *Canton*, *Empress of China*, *Hope* and *Grand Turk* (Shaw 1847:228). Also in 1787, five more American ships, *Alliance*, *General Washington*, *Jenny*, *Eleonora*, and *Astrea*, departed the east coast of America for Canton (Hao 1986b:13). By 1805 over thirty American ships were engaged in the US – China trade (Reinoehl 1959:103). Most of these ocean-going trading vessels were only between thirty-five and fifty tons, so small that they were often mistaken in Eastern ports for the tenders of larger ships like the 1500-ton English East Indiamen (Downs 1941a:92; Kuo 1930:420).

The vast majority of American trading voyages to the Far East departed from Philadelphia, New York, Boston and other burgeoning New England ports, such as Newport, New Bedford, Nantucket, Barnstable, Plymouth, Salem, New Haven and Stonington (Albion et al. 1994:45-50; Mudge 1962:82). Albion et al. (1994:105) argue that the Old China Trade “has been publicized far beyond its quantitative importance. Only a small group of New England aristocrats held control over it and made generous fortunes from this business” (see also Mudge 1962:82). Certainly, American involvement in trading in the Far East was never as extravagant as that of the Portuguese, Dutch or English, since a monopolistic company was never formed. Most ships involved in the trade were part of small private firms or belonged to individual merchants who acted almost as interlopers on speculative and experimental trading voyages (Furber 1938:236). As Howard and Ayers (1978:41) state, “The Americans did not trade as a national company like those from Europe

but in the early days each ship drove the best bargain it could, and later, companies from several of the maritime provinces of the Eastern seaboard had offices in Canton.”

Despite the initial success of American merchant activities at Canton, other global powers were still driven by mercantilist policies, particularly Britain. This created an environment where, as early as 1789, the US Congress saw fit to transfer the power to regulate trade to the federal government as part of the Tariff Act, considered a policy of retaliation with much reluctance (Hill 1893:30, 75). This policy environment also led to nearly all of the American states passing a series of acts to encourage home manufacture, increase revenue and gain a favourable balance of trade (Hill 1893:43). Goods imported from the Far East, however, were nearly always exempt, reflecting a desire by policy makers in the United States to encourage trade in the Far East, particularly trade in tea (Hill 1893:55). These *laissez-faire* trade policies in the Far East allowed American trading activities at Canton to continue unimpeded.

During the turn of the century, the US – China trade remained unscathed, despite conflict with the British in India. The EIC had no policy against American trade in the Far East, and their policy towards Americans “before the negotiation of the Jay Treaty was one of friendly toleration” (Furber 1938:238-240). The British, however, were concerned that American ships were trading at Indian ports and then turning around and trading the Indian goods to the French at Mauritius (Furber 1938:243). The Jay Treaty (1794) aimed to make American trade in British Indian ports a direct trade, “confined solely to supplying a strictly American demand for India goods” (Furber 1938:243). Although this did not affect those American merchants who traded directly at Canton, those involved in a circuitous trade with India were met with some resistance.

Jefferson’s embargo of 1807, on the other hand, which ironically protected the EIC’s monopoly in India against American traders, “crippled the American East India trade, which could not regain the ground it then lost, before the outbreak of war in 1812” (Furber 1938:263). American trade in China, in contrast, was unaffected by the embargo. Furthermore, since the EIC’s trade in China was ancillary to trade in India, American trade with China was out of the control of the English because China was an independent state (Furber 1938:240). For this reason, American trade with China, “pursued its course virtually unhampered by political regulation” (Furber 1938:264). The trade instead experienced a more natural decline, or rearrangement,

partly due to a scarcity of goods available to American merchants for exchange in return for Chinese commodities, and partly due to an overall shift in the pattern of American commerce as attention turned to settling western North America.

## Commodities to China

Similar to Portuguese, Dutch and English merchants who travelled to the Far East for trade, American merchants faced the problem of finding a commodity with which to trade in return for cargoes of teas, silk and porcelain (Albion et al. 1994:57; May and Fairbank 1986:3). Only one American staple – ginseng (*Panax schinseng*) – proved to be a viable trade commodity at Canton (Albion et al. 1994:57; Wace and Lovett 1973:5). Ginseng, according to the *Canton Register* (23 August 1836:139), was thought to help disorders of the lungs or stomach, cure asthma, strengthen eyesight, as well as renew “a worn-out constitution, and delay [sic] the approach of old age, thus rivalling the professions of the most fearless quacks of the present day.” Ginseng was not in sufficient demand that it could be exchanged for the quantity of Chinese goods demanded in America (Albion et al. 1994:57), and, as such, gold and silver specie continued to constitute the largest cargo carried to China aboard American ships (Allen 1954:296; Larkin 1988:38).

One archaeological example of the vast amounts of specie that Americans exported to China was found on the shipwreck *Rapid* (1811). *Rapid* was built in Braintree, Massachusetts, and was inbound to China from Boston carrying 280,000 silver dollars when it struck Ningaloo Reef off the western coast of Australia in 1811 (Henderson 1981, 1983:333-334, 1997:100-105, 2007:64-75). Rediscovered in 1973 by spearfishermen, and subsequently excavated by staff from the Western Australia Maritime Museum, the shipwreck *Rapid* yielded just under 19,000 Spanish silver dollars intended to pay for commodities at Canton. Other artifacts recovered included several items associated with the officers and crew, including several sherds of Chinese export porcelain teawares and Staffordshire produced dinnerwares, glassware, a salt-glazed stoneware jug stamped with ‘Boston’ and a wooden barrel stamped ‘mess beef Boston Mass.’ (Henderson 1997:100). One interesting aspect of the *Rapid* shipwreck was that, since the vessel was inbound to Canton, most of the material culture, including the Chinese porcelain, must have been for the personal use of the crew, rather than being part of the cargo, which consisted mainly of specie. Thus, *Rapid*’s artifact assemblage provides an excellent comparative basis for



contrasting different types of consumer goods used by other ships' crews also involved in the US – China trade (see Chapter 9).

The search for other commodities that would be valuable in Canton extended across the entire Pacific Basin. It was soon discovered that Chinese mandarins would pay an immense amount of money for a hat, a gown or a cape embellished with fur (Albion et al. 1994:57; Downs 1941a:92; Dulles 1938:11; Gough 1989:216; Youngman 1908:350). Thus, the fur trade was inextricably linked to trade at Canton (Wace and Lovett 1973:1). Captain James Cook first discovered sea otters (*Enhyruru lutris*) on the north-west coast of America during his circumnavigation of the globe. Connecticut seaman John Ledyard, who was on this historic voyage, published a report about the Russian sea otter fishery along the north-west coast of America (Albion et al. 1994:57; Dulles 1938:11; Gough 1989:216; Labaree et al. 1998:158). This quickly sparked the interest of New England merchants, among others, and sealing expeditions began to frequent the northwest coast of America to collect skins for trade at Canton (Albion et al. 1994:57, Gibson 1999). American fur traders exchanged glass beads, cloth, guns, axes, knives, awls, hoes, brass and copper kettles and liquor with Native Americans for fur pelts at trading posts scattered along rivers and coastlines (Axtell 1999:90). According to Foster Dulles (1938:15),

The value of the articles bartered for furs was almost infinitesimal in comparison with that of the tea and silks and chinaware for which the skins could be exchanged in Canton, and when a cargo of China goods was in turn sold in the United States many a shrewd Yankee trader found that his voyage had netted him a tidy fortune.

Although American fur traders faced competition from other nations, including Russia, Spain and England, as well as India-based English traders, the north-west fur trade provided a lucrative source for commodities valued at Canton for the first part of the nineteenth century (Dulles 1938:11; Gibson 1999; Gough 1989:217; Jones and Mehnert 1940:362).

In addition to the otter fishery of the north-west coast, fur seal (*Arctocephalus spp.*) rookeries were discovered off the coast of South America and in the South Seas (Wace and Lovett 1973:9). Fur sealers were hunting seals in the Falkland Islands by 1785 (Wace and Lovett 1973:9). New Haven crews frequented sealing grounds off Chile and Peru, and the nearby strip of coastal land used for drying skins became known as the New Haven Green (Albion et al. 1994:57). Other sealing activities were centred in Bass Strait, located along the southern coast of Australia, and most American sealing ships calling at the port towns of Australia at this time were

involved in the trade at Canton (Wace and Lovett 1973:4-9). For example, New England vessels such as *Union*, *Pilgrim* and *Perseverance* voyaged to Australia and New Zealand in pursuit of sealskins for exchange at Canton (Greenwood 1944:67, 92-96; Dunbabin 1950).

The voyage of the American brig *Union* and the construction of the schooner *Independence* near American River, Kangaroo Island, are excellent examples of American sealing activities in Australia during the early nineteenth century, as well as early examples of the triangular trade between the US, Australia and China (Dappert and Moffat 2007; Wace and Lovett 1973:9; Nunn 1989:19-20).

*Independence*, which was the first non-indigenous vessel constructed in South Australia, was built in 1803 by the crew of US brig *Union*. *Union* was outfitted by Fanning & Co. of New York in 1802 for a sealing expedition to the southeast coast of New Holland (Fanning 1989:230). Edmund Fanning (1989:230-231), who owned a part share in the vessel, remarked,

Never, perhaps, was a voyage entered upon with brighter, and never did a vessel sail with more encouraging prospects than this brig. Her commander (Captain Isaac Pendleton) was ...left unrestricted, and at perfect liberty to act on all occasions as his judgment should direct, to make the most profitable voyage he could of it for his owners.

On February 18, 1803, the vessel arrived at Seal Island in King George III Sound. The crew then went ashore to procuring seal skins, but because the chief part of the season had already passed, they only obtained a small amount (Fanning 1989:231-232). Two days later, Pendleton happened upon on the French explorer Nicolas Baudin of *Le Géographe* who was surveying the coast of New Holland. Baudin recorded the details of their rendezvous:

And before seating ourselves he begged me to give him, if possible, a chart of the coast of New Holland, not possessing any information to guide him in the course he desired to take in the search for the places frequented by seals, nor for the direction of the coast nor of the dangers to be met with there. I gave him two charts...as well as the position of King Island. (Peron 1809:153-154, cited in Cumpston 1970:26)

Baudin and his officers reassured Pendleton that he would find enough seals to complete his cargo at Kangaroo Island, and he proceeded to tell him the best place for anchorage and to procure sealskins. Before this encounter, Baudin and his corvette *Le Géographe* had sailed around Kangaroo Island. Baudin had lost a

longboat, and his carpenters had combed the island for suitable timber. It was only when they reached the area near what is now called American River that the carpenters were able to procure suitable timber and build a small boat aboard Baudin's vessel (Baudin 1974). Although not historically documented, it is possible that Baudin shared this information with Pendleton.

Pendleton set sail for Kangaroo Island, and decided to winter at American River, where they constructed the 30 ton schooner *Independence* (*Sydney Gazette* 8 January 1804). Here the crew "found both the hair and fur seals, extensive forests, good water, and much game; fowls and birds of various kinds in abundance; and also excellent fish and oysters in great plenty" (Fanning 1989:231-232). They stayed for almost four months, during which time they "set about and built a small vessel, 30 tons burthen, named the *Independence*" (Fanning 1989:232; *Sydney Gazette* 8 January 1804).

The timbers utilised to construct *Independence* have been debated. Edmund Fanning's historical narrative and the *Sydney Gazette* reported that the scantlings used to construct *Independence* were hewn and sawn from the local pine tree, which resembles Swedish timber and contains turpentine (Fanning 1989:232; *Sydney Gazette* 1 July 1826). Nunn, on the other hand, writes,

The first officer, D. Wright, a man of mechanical ingenuity, the carpenter and armourer directed preparation of the native pine, eucalypt and casuarina timber. With this and spare sails, rigging and other materials from the Union they were able to launch the *Independence* early in 1804. (Nunn 1989:20)

Upon completing the vessel, Pendleton and the crew of *Union* parted company with the newly appointed crew of *Independence*, while *Union* got underway to Port Jackson. Isaiah Townsend, a seaman aboard *Union*, wrote to his brother Samuel in New York:

We have been cruising on the Southwest Coast of New Holland but to little advantage. We have built a fine schooner of about 30 tons. We call her the *Independence* which...our crew is now cruising in Bass's Straits... Captain Pendleton myself and the remainder of the crew is in here with the ship for supplies (Letter from I. Townsend to S. Townsend, 7 March 1804).

The *Union* left Sydney during April 1804 to rendezvous with the *Independence* at Kangaroo Island (HRA 1915:122). They both arrived back in Sydney during June 1804 (HRA 1915:120). At this time Captain Pendleton sold a part share of

*Independence* to the prominent Sydney trader Simeon Lord. The Articles of Agreement listed Isaiah Townsend as master of the vessel (Fowler 1980:72). Pendleton also sold his cargo of seal skins to Simeon Lord, for which he was to procure payment from the sale of the sandalwood in China. He was to obtain the sandalwood at a secret location in Fiji.

The presence of American vessels in port Jackson had the Governor of the Colony, Phillip King, worried. He wrote to the Secretary of the State for the Colonies, asking him how far he would be “justified in preventing the American intrusion and the resultant intercourse with them” (HRA 1915:92-93). King issued a General Order on August 11, 1804 stating:

...no vessel under foreign colours, or belonging to any foreigner, be cleared from this port for any sealing voyage within the limits of this Territory or its dependencies, and for the purpose of returning hither, but that all such vessels after their necessities are relieved, be cleared out from this Port to any other Port of Discharge. (HRA 1915:92-93)

Pendleton, rather than reveal his true destination, cleared Port Jackson for China. John Boston, sailing as supercargo, was to take *Union* to Fiji to procure sandalwood for the China markets, which was to be the first attempt at trading sandalwood in Canton. While stopping at Tonga for supplies, Pendleton and six other crewmen were murdered by the natives. Daniel Wright, who became acting captain, returned to Sydney to report the news and to procure provisions (*Sydney Gazette* 28 October 1804). Then, he continued the expedition to Fiji. *Union* struck a reef along the coast of Fiji near Sandalwood Bay, and the native inhabitants massacred those who had not drowned.

*Independence*, on the other hand, did not have to clear Port Jackson for a foreign port because Simeon Lord owned a part share of the vessel. Townsend sailed the vessel to Antipodes Island, located south of New Zealand, where they procured 59,000 skins. As Captain Isaiah wrote to his brother in New York:

I take this opportunity to inform you...that I have been very successful since I left the *Union*. On a sealing expedition I have at present several vessels and a large number of men under my direction in this business. Besides my little schooner the *Independence* which I command and have now mated with Captain Jonathan Paddock in the ship *Favorite* of Nantucket (Letter from I. Townsend to S. Townsend, 25 May 1805).

*Independence* and *Favorite* set sail on another sealing expedition on the 15 June 1805. The two vessels parted company at New Zealand, planning to rendezvous again at the Antipodes Islands. The crew of *Favorite* arrived, procured skins and sailed back to Port Jackson. *Independence* was never heard of again. Captain Paddock (*Sydney Gazette* 15 May 1806) stated:

We are sorry to report the probable loss of the American schooner *Independence*, which...was for some time conjectured to be travelling [sic] on discovery of advantageous situations for procuring seal; but has unfortunately never since been seen or heard of.

Paddock continues, “He had not more than six or seven weeks provisions on board of the schooner...I think from every circumstance we have reason but to think he was lost” (Letter from J. Paddock to I. Townsend, n.d. 1807). Simeon Lord had in his hands everything that Isaiah had obtained during his sealing expeditions, which amounted to about 18,000 skins. Paddock did not know what share was Isaiah’s or Lord’s (Letter from J. Paddock to I. Townsend, n.d. 1807).

The *Independence* wrecksite remains unknown, but the shipbuilding activities are described in various historical documents, and, as such an expedition was mounted in order to locate it. An archaeological and magnetometer survey of the inter-tidal zone was deemed the most effective method in relocating the shipbuilding site, and this was undertaken during July 2006 by students and staff of the Program in Maritime Archaeology at Flinders University (see Dappert 2006; Dappert and McKinnon 2006; Dappert and Moffat 2007). No tangible evidence of American shipbuilding activities on Kangaroo Island was found. Even though the *Independence* construction site remains unknown, the legend of the vessel being constructed near American River plays a significant role in the Maritime Heritage of Kangaroo Island and South Australia. As the first non-indigenous vessel constructed in South Australia, the American schooner *Independence* represents an important aspect of Australian history. This is exemplified in the construction of a monument dedicated to its construction. It also has international significance, as the era of sealing in the Pacific represented an important component of the globalisation of US trade during the nineteenth century.

Another example of Americans involved in the triangular trade between America, Australia and China involves the 1804 sealing activities of Amasa Delano and his brothers, Samuel and William (Delano 1817; Greenwood 1944:73). The Delanos grew up working in their father’s shipyard near Duxbury, Massachusetts, where they launched the ship *Perseverance* and the schooner *Pilgrim* with the intention of

sailing to the southern coast of Australia on a sealing expedition (Seagraves 1994:206, 307). They left Boston on 25 September 1803 and reached King's Island on 20 February 1804. Amasa eventually anchored *Perseverance* off the coast of Cape Barren Island at Kent's Bay, while he used *Pilgrim* as a tender for procuring sealskins (Delano 1817). After losing one of their small boats, they salvaged timber from the nearby *Sydney Cove* shipwreck to construct another one. When Governor Philip King heard of these activities he ordered one of his Lieutenants to proceed to Kent's Bay and put the Queen's mark on the timbers of the vessel (HRA 1915:7, 23). By the time Patterson arrived in Kent's Bay, however, the Delano brothers had already completed construction of their boat and taken their leave to trade their sealskins at Canton.

Archaeological evidence of the Delano's activities along with other sealing activities at Kent's Bay were observed during three pre-disturbance archaeological surveys of Kent's Bay during 1989, 1992 and 2006 (Nash 1989; Sim and Gait 1992). I was involved in the 2006 Kent's Bay survey along with other students and staff of the Department of Archaeology at Flinders University as well as the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. This survey was undertaken as a side project to the *Sydney Cove* shipwreck survivors' camp excavations on nearby Preservation Island. The Kent's Bay survey was carried out under excellent visibility, as this particular part of Cape Barren Island had recently been burnt by a bushfire. Artifacts observed included black glass, a variety of Staffordshire ceramics, as well as Chinese export porcelain identical to that excavated from *Sydney Cove*. This archaeological evidence informs us that in addition to salvaging timbers from the *Sydney Cove*, it is highly likely that consumer goods including Chinese export porcelain were also salvaged from the shipwreck and used in the Kent's Bay sealing camp.

Despite the gain in returns that sealskins and other commodities provided American merchants, they still usually had to depart with some valuable specie in exchange for Chinese goods (Albion et al. 1994:58). By the 1830s and 1840s, the fur trade had atrophied nearly to the point of non-existence (Labaree et al. 1998:284; Brown 1947:25), so alternative commodities were constantly sought. Sandalwood (*santalum spp.*), native to several Pacific tropical islands, such as Fiji and Hawaii, was also a short-lived commodity carried by American merchants to China (Hill and Snyder 1937:365; Jones and Mehnert 1940:360; Shineberg 1967; Wace and Lovett 1973:5). As Jones and Mehnert (1940:360) write of the Hawaiian Islands, "Fur-trading vessels found them a convenient halting place en route to the American northwest coast or on the trade-wind run to the Canton market." In general, trading at these tropical

islands was done with caution, as many captains found the local inhabitants dishonest. Captain Hill of *Ophelia*, for example, on remarking on the degenerated character of the Sandwich Islanders since the arrival of European and American traders, relates:

At present both the males and females give themselves up to an immoderate use of ardent spirits and make a practice of getting intoxicated whenever they can obtain a sufficient quantity of liquor. Some of the common people, however, especially among the farmers, are not addicted to this shocking practice. They also make use of an immense quantity of tobacco and all ages and sexes smoke the pipe at all hours of the day and night. The females will rise three or four times in the course of the night and each in turn take a few whiffs of the same pipe. This is particularly the case with the chiefs or all people of distinction, and it is common to see boys and girls of six years smoking their pipes of tobacco frequently... They also indulge in stealing much more than formerly, but this is not a new vice lately introduced, for they certainly did not learn the art or trade of stealing from Europeans or civilized Americans. They were well acquainted with that science before they knew the white men (Hill 1815, cited in Hill and Snyder 1937:366-367).

Despite merchants' distrust for the islanders, trade in sandalwood remained lucrative for nearly thirty years. By 1829, however, exploitation of sandalwood had nearly depleted the supply and the islands had little else to offer in the way of commodities desired by the Chinese (Jones and Mehnert 1940:361).

In addition to ginseng, furs and sandalwood, American traders brought Turkish opium from Smyrna to Canton. Opium was smoked as an hallucinogen and chewed for its medicinal qualities (Dyke 2005:120-121). By the latter part of the mid-eighteenth century, the opium trade was well defined between Macao and Canton, and, even though it was illegal, many officials could be bribed to turn a blind eye (Dyke 2005:120-140). This commodity, however, only amounted to about one-tenth of the Anglo-Indian imports to China. This was partly because US merchants could not compete with the EIC's standardised production of opium for the China market (May and Fairbank 1986:5). When Chinese officials cracked down on the trade, smugglers simply shifted their positions and points of infiltration to other places in the delta and used fast ships, or opium clippers, to penetrate the inland waters quickly (Dyke 2005:132).

The Clipper Ship Era is one aspect of the American-China trade that has been well explored (see Campbell 1974; Clark 1910; Crothers 2000; Cutler 1984; Jennings

1952; Lubbock 1948, 1968; MacGregor 1979, 1983, 1988, 1993; Matheson 1984; Neale 2007; Shaw 2001). Built for speed instead of carrying capacity (Lubbock 1968:1), clipper ships exemplified changes in the US – China trade, whereby the quantity of goods shipped declined and the nature of the trade increasingly, though not exclusively, ventured into marginal realms like opium smuggling. Clippers enabled the opium to arrive faster and more regularly (Dyke 2005:133). Opium clippers were smaller than their counterparts used to ship tea, more manageable, and fast enough to elude the intrusion of Chinese, other authorities, as well as the monsoons common to the trade route (Lubbock 1968:1-22).

Smugglers, after penetrating the Pearl River delta in clipper ships and selling opium to domestic buyers, commonly purchased rice in order for their ships to be admitted into Canton as rice boats, which attracted lower import fees (Dyke 2005:135). The rice was then unloaded and they could purchase return cargoes, such as tea, silk, and porcelain (Dyke 2005:135). Oftentimes they purchased more than could fit into the hold of the ship, and stored the excess in storeships (Dyke 2005:136). Chinese officials began to crackdown on the contraband trade by the early 1830s because they were concerned with the outflow of silver bullion (Dyke 2005:138).

Despite the First Opium War, American trade continued to flourish (Brown 1947:34). After the first Opium War, the signing of the Treaty of Nanking (1842) marked the end of the Canton system and opened up several mainland Chinese ports to British trade (Allen 1954:295; Labaree et al. 1998:283; Dyke 2005). US President John Tyler, recognising an economic opportunity opened up by the treaty, sent the New England lawyer and politician Caleb Cushing in 1843 to arrange for similar trading rights to those of the British (Labaree et al. 1998:283). This ultimately resulted in the Treaty of Wanghia (1844), which opened up five more ports in China to American merchants and gave them equal trading terms to that of the British (Mudge 1962:124; Palmer 1976:25). After the Opium War, American trade at Shanghai and Hong Kong began to supersede that of Canton (Labaree et al. 1998:283).

In addition to ginseng, furs, sandalwood and opium, American ships carried a variety of speculative cargoes (Wace and Lovett 1973:6). Domestic goods other than ginseng included cotton goods and raw cotton to China, while opium, flour, whale oil, candles, timber, lumber and tobacco were shipped as part of the triangular trade to the East Indies (Losse 1944:175). Other commodities collected as part of indirect



voyages to Canton included *bêche-de-mer* (*Holothuris spp.*), blackwood, ebony, pepper and tin (Reinoehl 1959:103; Wace and Lovett 1973:5).

## **Commodities from China to the US**

In contrast to the difficulties faced by American merchants in securing commodities in demand in China, tea, silk, and Chinese porcelain found ready markets in America. Historically, we know the most about tea, silk and porcelain production. Tea was probably the most important commodity shipped from Canton to America (Kuo 1930:421). There were many varieties of tea, including Bohea, Hyson, Hyson skin, Souchong, Green, Imperial, and Gunpowder (Kuo 1930:422; Hao 1986a, 1986b, Gardella 1986). It was desirable in the United States and other Western countries as a social drink because tea provided a replacement for hard liquors (Kuo 1930:424). Stowage of teas in a ship's hold was done with great care. Teas were usually shipped in boxes or chests, and they were never placed directly onto the ballast (Loureiro 1858:50-51). They were also kept well away from wet sails that had been brought below and barrels of provisions, which could potentially leak (Loureiro 1858:50-51).

The introduction of Chinese export porcelain in Western consumer society coincided with the adoption of drinking tea (see Chapter 1) (Beaudry 1984:13). This was also accompanied by “new social customs and elaborate etiquette” for tea drinking (Beaudry 1984:13). At first, tea drinking was restricted to the upper classes, but gradually became more of a common commodity adopted as a social ritual throughout the middle and lower classes (Beaudry 1984:13). According to Larkin (1988:174), by 1800 at least half of American households owned a teapot, and over the next four decades this nearly doubled. By the second half of the nineteenth century, tea was a common, daily-consumed beverage (Larkin 1988:174).

Drinking tea was undertaken in both public places and households and was associated with “domesticity and respectable family life” (Weatherill 1994:216; Wills 1994:142). Most home visits were associated with an offer of refreshment such as tea (Weatherill 1994:216). Tea drinking appealed to all sorts of people, in particular women because it was socially acceptable, unlike alcohol, and provided light refreshment that could be consumed during any time of the day (Weatherill 1994:216). It was not scandalous behaviour for a woman to visit a tea shop (Wills 1994:143), and children, girls in particular, learned tea-drinking rituals at an early

age. For example, during 1844 William H. Aspinwall wrote to his agent in China, Samuel Comstock, “Would you send me...three small sets of teacups and saucers ‘for little girls four or five years old’. Being playthings they need be only shiny, not expensive” (Aspinwall 1844, cited in Labaree et al. 1998:284).

American tea clippers, like their opium shipping counterparts, were built for speed, since their speed was essential for getting tea to America before it spoiled (Campbell 1974; MacGregor 1988:13, 123; Matheson 1984:20). Downs (1941a:92, 94) writes: “In the 1830’s the demand for even faster ships to bring home the new crops of tea produced the Yankee clippers, and many and thrilling were the races in which these sharpened hulls and clouds of sail engaged.” The tea trade is probably best presented in a series of articles in the *Canton Register* (e.g. *Canton Register* 3 May 1836, 31 October 1837, 14 November 1837, 21 November 1837, 23 January 1838), as well as through a series of paintings on display at the Peabody Essex Museum by an unknown artist, both of which depict extensive information on harvesting, drying, packing, transporting and selling different types of tea. Unfortunately, although American interest in trading at Canton was centred on this drink, tea rarely survives archaeologically.

Like tea, silk also rarely survives archaeologically. Chinese export silk was similarly in high demand by American consumers, especially the wealthy, who fashioned what was considered to be the finest clothing from it (Larkin 1988:184). There were several different types of silk, each of which was harvested at a different time of the year (e.g. *Canton Register* 10 May 1828). Cheaper fabrics, however, were also imported into America and made available to those with a smaller income. A nankin, for example, was a brownish-yellow cloth that derived its name from the city of Nanking, China (Reinoehl 1959:102). First carried home by sailors as curios to their families, nankins were soon available in the American consumer market on such a scale as if they were a necessity (Kuo 1930:426). Consumers commonly had the most fashionable jackets and trousers made from this cloth, as well as children’s clothing, particularly boys’ suits (Kuo 1930:426-434). Another cloth imported from Canton was *crêpe de chine*, which was a silk cloth that was smooth and relatively transparent (Kuo 1930:427). Additionally, a less expensive cloth called gingham was “[m]ade of cotton and usually woven in intercrossing white and blue stripes” (Kuo 1930:428). The less fashionable, or those who could not afford nankin or *crêpe de chine*, purchased gingham to make their clothes (Kuo 1930:428).

Prior to the American Revolution, Chinese porcelain was carried to the Americas by European ships, but it was not until American merchants directly traded with the Chinese that Chinese porcelain was imported to the Americas in large quantities (Kuo 1930:429; Mudge 1962:70; Petersen 1985:6). Although Chinese porcelain was produced in other parts of China, Ching-tê Chên was China's chief production centre for porcelain (Mudge 1962:45; Petersen 1985:17). There are many sources which discuss the production of Chinese porcelain (e.g. Mudge 1962; Palmer 1976; Howard and Ayers 1978; Petersen 1985; Rawson 1992; Staniforth and Nash 1998), but most simply it was produced by pounding, kneading and mixing petuntse and kaolin clay, which was then shaped, painted, glazed and baked in kilns at a very high temperature so that its body became vitrified and semi-translucent (Mudge 1962:47; Fisher 1970:7). The most common type of export porcelain was blue underglaze, often referred to as blue-and-white, but porcelain was also decorated in a variety of polychrome or enamelled colours painted over the glaze (Mudge 1962:139).

Chinese porcelain was a desirable commodity in the West because it was thin yet strong, it could withstand high heat and it was simple to clean (Jörg and Flecker 2001:16; Kuo 1930:429). Going back to the beginnings of the Dutch and English trade at Canton, Chinese potters produced porcelain in a variety of decorations and forms suitable for European tastes and traditions (Palmer 1976:19). These included "beakers, barber bowls, chalices, flowerpots, oil and vinegar sets, wine coolers, caudle cups, and chamber pots," and dairy sets with strainers and spoons, to name a few (Palmer 1976:19-20). Foreign merchants, though, had to provide Chinese potters with detailed instructions and, sometimes, even models, because Western forms like those mentioned above were alien to Chinese society (Palmer 1976:20). The most common Chinese porcelain exported to the Americas consisted of services for the table, including "breakfast, dinner, dessert, and evening services as well as tea and coffee sets" (Mudge 1962:128). Other forms consisted of mantel garnitures and urns, used for flower pots or hearth jars, chamber pots and covers, shaving bowls, wash basins and pitchers, bathing bowls and tureens (Mudge 1962:130-133). The variety of forms and decorative types available at Canton is illustrated in Figure 6, a painting of a Chinese porcelain shop (circa 1820-1830).

Chinese export porcelain was valuable to ships' captains because it could be used as ballast, "stowed low in the holds without risk of spoiling or of contaminating other goods and was excellent for trimming the vessel's cargo" (Howard and Ayers 1978:18; Mudge 1962:80). Most other Chinese cargoes, such as teas and silks, were lightweight, and did not act as ballast to stabilise the vessel. For this reason porcelain

was the first commodity loaded into a ship's hold (Dyke 2005:31). Porcelain as ballast, on the other hand, protected perishable goods like teas and silks, as they could be placed on top of the boxes, keeping them away from the dampness of the bilge and leaky hulls (Mudge 1962:80).



**Figure 6.** Interior of a porcelain shop, one of a set of thirteen in the making of porcelain, (circa 1820-1830) gouache on paper by an unknown artist (from the Peabody Essex Museum; reproduced from Crossman 1991:178).

Whether purchasing blue-and-white or enamelled ware, the quality of porcelain depended upon production and type of decoration, and varied in the ratio of kaolin and petuntse (Mudge 1962:75). The best wares contained almost an equal amount of kaolin and petuntse, while lower quality wares had less kaolin than petuntse, sometimes as low as a ratio of 3 to 1 (Mudge 1962:75). Types of decoration also influenced quality. It seems that the most common Chinese export porcelain exported into America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the common blue-and-white porcelain decorated in the Canton style, while Nanking wares and enamelled wares were considered to be of the highest quality (see Chapter 2) (Mudge 1963:74; e.g. Petersen 1985). These decorative types were similar to those found on the *Sydney Cove* shipwreck (Nash 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006; Staniforth 199, 2003; Staniforth and Nash 1989). The quality of ware also determined the price, with enamelled wares as the most expensive, followed by Nanking pieces and then common blue-and-white, predominantly decorated in the Canton style (Mudge

1962:78). The standardisation of blue-and-white wares “ranged in quality depending on the wealth and sophistication of the recipients” (Howard and Ayers 1978:45). With the exception of special ordered pieces, Chinese export porcelain was relatively cheap to the American consumers by the nineteenth century, though its price increased and decreased with demand (Mudge 1962:77-78).

PT Tuban Oceanic Research and Recovery (TORR), an Indonesian-based salvage company discovered and subsequently salvaged Chinese export porcelain decorated in the Canton and Nanking style from the American China trader *Ontario* (1799) in 1995 (TORR 2003). *Ontario* had made at least two trading ventures to Canton before it was wrecked on a reef off the Indonesian coast in 1799. After the first voyage, the counting house of Franklin, Robinson & Co., owners of *Ontario*'s cargo advertised in the New York *Daily Advertiser* on 12 May 1797:

Imported by Franklin, Robinson and Co. In the ships Ontario and Hunter from Canton, and for sale by the hundred chests or smaller quantity, Bohea Teas of superior quality in chests, and half and quarter chests. Also Hyson and Young Hyson teas of superior quality. Nankeens, china ware, well chosen and assorted, including some handsome blue and white table sets, rhubarb in chests, quick silver, Excellent sugar in boxes and bags, sugar candy, etc

As Miller (1968:115) indicates, though this advertisement ran until 3 February 1798, it seems that the unloading of *Ontario*'s cargo of tea was a bit problematic, as evidenced by a specially ordered Liverpool type Staffordshire creamware pitcher (see Figure 7). One side of the pitcher is adorned with a stylised seal of the US, while the other depicts a poem concerning a customs dispute over tea duties that occurred after *Ontario*'s 1797 trip to Canton. The poem reads:

It's Franklin, Robinson and Co.  
Imported in the Ship *Ontario* [sic];  
Twelve hundred Chests of Bohea Tea,  
The best that e'er was in America.

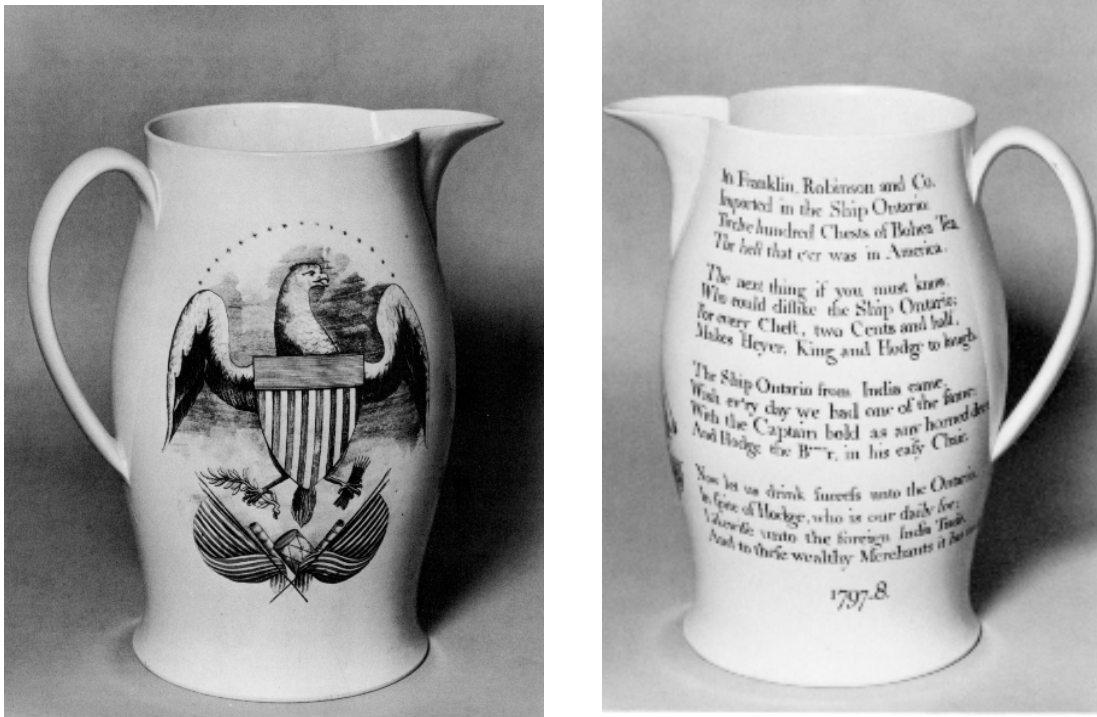
The next thing if you must know,  
Who could dislike the Ship *Ontario* [sic];  
For every Chest, two Cents and half,  
Makes Heyer, King and Hodge to laugh.

The Ship *Ontario* [sic] from India came,  
Wish ev'ry day we had one of the same;  
With the Captain bold as any horned deer,  
And Hodge the Be\*\*\*r, in his easy Chair.

Now let us drink success unto the *Ontario* [sic],  
In spite of Hodge, who is our daily foe;  
Likewise unto the foreign India Trade,  
And to these wealthy Merchants it has made.

Among some of the characters mentioned in this poem include: the counting house of Franklin, Robinson & Company, located at 279 Pearl Street in New York and the owners of *Ontario*'s cargo; Ralph Hodge who was inspector of the customs; and John King and Walter Heyer who were both revenue officers working directly under Hodges (Miller 1968:114-116). Despite the customs dispute this pitcher encapsulates, it seems that *Ontario*'s cargo was eventually unloaded and the ship was sent to Canton again later that year.

During *Ontario*'s second trip to Canton, *Ontario* was en route from Canton to New York when during a gale it struck an uncharted reef off the coast of Indonesia, during 1799. The site was discovered in 1995 by Paul Martino and subsequently salvaged by (TORR). TORR's website ([http://www.torr.co.id/eng/projects\\_ontarioHome.php](http://www.torr.co.id/eng/projects_ontarioHome.php)) depicts photographs of some of these artifacts before they were salvaged and demonstrates that much of the cultural material was still in pristine condition, with whole Chinese porcelain dishes stacked together. They recovered dishes, glasses, bowls, jars and earthenware jugs, to name a few (TORR 2003). Samples of Chinese export porcelain from the *Ontario* shipwreck were published in the *Southeast Asian Ceramics Museum Newsletter* (Brown and Thammapreechakorn 2005:4). These images clearly depict blue-and-white Chinese export porcelain plates and bowls decorated in Canton and Nanking styles (see Figure 2 in Chapter 2).



**Figure 7.** Liverpool type Staffordshire creamware pitcher adorned with a stylised seal of the US (left) and a poem concerning a customs dispute over tea duties that occurred after Ontario's 1797 trip to Canton (right) (from a private collection; reproduced from Miller 1968:115-116).

Like other ceramics, Chinese export porcelain conformed to specific designs and fashions of the time. According to Howard and Ayers (1978:485), armorial porcelain, or wares decorated with coats of arms, were popular in England, but were very rare in the US, “for the victors of the recent struggle had no immediate interest in copying the distinctively class-conscious commercial realities of a business which was meeting increasing competition and duties in Europe” (see also Palmer 1976:24). However, in the few sets of Chinese export porcelain that were specially ordered, scholars have argued that patriotic fervour is evident in their design. Of these, also according to Howard and Ayers (1978:41, 488), Americans ordered “a great variety of American eagles, the arms of New York, or the badge of the society of Cincinnati, which became the hallmark of the first two decades of the American

trade.” At least twenty different eagle designs were copied from the Great Seal of the United States, from coins and from shipping insurance documents (Howard and Ayers 1978:41). By 1810, however, it was no longer fashionable to eat and drink from armorial porcelain decorated with patriotic fervour, and “taste reverted to ‘oriental’ subjects...executed in the ‘mandarin’ palate,” which included rose-pink, blue, orange-red, purple and green enamels (Howard and Ayers 1978:41; see also Feller 1982). Many of the highly prized pieces purchased by captains and supercargoes were specially ordered enamelled wares, rather than the more common blue-and-white porcelains (Palmer 1976:21).

Palmer describes the special ordering process in more detail:

Many orders were filled from stock in Canton, but if new shapes or special underglaze designs were desired, models and patterns had to be sent to Ching-te Chen. The order might be delivered the following season; even then, two years would elapse before the client in Europe or America received his goods. By the end of the eighteenth century, some china merchants in Europe and America had in their shops “sample” pieces illustrating a variety of stock border patterns from which customers could choose (Palmer 1976:12).

The Peabody Essex Museum has one of these sample pieces in its Asian Export Art Collection storage facility. The piece is a large punch bowl with several different borders outlining its rim. Ideally, a merchant could look at this type of sample piece and pick which border he wanted for a dinner or tea set. Chinese painters working in Canton would then apply the decoration to plain porcelain wares, and bake them in a kiln at a temperature just hot enough to set the glaze.

Maritime seascape designs were very popular between 1790 and 1810, with many tea-services and mugs produced and decorated with ships painted according to a common template with no particular identity, though these templates could be personalised by adding the name of a ship or a national flag (Howard and Ayers 1978:216; Mudge 1962:217; Palmer 1976:26). Examples of ships depicted on such pieces include *George Washington*, *Grand Turk*, *Friendship*, *Defender*, *United States*, *Macedonian*, *Enterprise* and *Boxer* (see Mudge 1962). Mudge suggests that the popularity of seascape designs relates to the nature of the livelihood of merchants who purchased these pieces; their economic stability depended on successful, sea-borne trade (Mudge 1962:217; Palmer 1976:26). Howard and Ayers, on the other hand, suggest that these “ships used as pseudo-crests, were to satisfy a souvenir



demand and perhaps to prove that the owner had been to China” (Howard and Ayers 1978:216).

Odyssey Marine Explorations (2009) discovered the ‘Blue China Wreck’ off the coast of Florida nearly a quarter of a mile below the surface during 2003. Named the Blue China Wreck because of the presence of a large amount of Chinese porcelain, the shipwreck’s identity remains unknown. Its country of origin is also unknown, but Odyssey believes that it was American owned. As Odyssey contends, “The ‘*Blue China*’ shipwreck is likely the remains of a modest American coastal trader conducting business along the Atlantic Seaboard in the years preceding the American Civil War” (Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009). Its port of origin was most likely a New England port city, where most English and Chinese ceramics were imported, and was destined for coastal markets along the eastern seaboard, or even markets in the Caribbean Islands.

During a subsequent visit in 2005, Odyssey reported that the site exhibited “substantial and ongoing modern damage, the apparent impact of modern trawl nets dragged across the ocean bottom displacing and smashing artifacts,” concluding that the site was “clearly in imminent danger” (Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009). As a result, Odyssey mounted a “rescue” operation, recovering as many as 400 artifacts (Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009). Today, the artifacts are on display in Odyssey’s travelling exhibit, while others are in Odyssey’s storage facility, “where they are maintained for further study, publication and sale” (Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).

The Odyssey website (<http://shipwreck.net/bluechina.php>) contains photographs of the wreck that clearly shows stacks of ceramic bowls, plates, platters and ginger jars outlining the remains of the cargo hold, as well as black glass bottles (see Figure 8). Odyssey maintains that most of the ceramics were English produced, but some Chinese-made porcelain wares were intermixed with the English ceramics. The largest concentration of ceramics consisted of shell-edged flatware – soup bowls, plates and platters (see Figure 9), but a large amount of slip-decorated earthenware, or mocha ware was also recovered. The Chinese porcelain consisted of ginger jars decorated in the Canton pattern (see Figure 10) and tea sets, mainly sugar bowls and milk jugs, decorated with an unidentified polychrome floral motif (see Figure 11). Other artifacts recovered included French cologne bottles, bar tumblers and condiment bottles (Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).



**Figure 8.** Photograph of Blue China Wreck site showing stacks of intact Chinese porcelain, black glass bottles and English-produced ceramics (reproduced from Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).



**Figure 9.** Photograph of three blue shell-edged sided platters recovered from the Blue China Wreck (reproduced from Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).



**Figure 10.** Photograph of Ginger jars decorated in the Canton pattern recovered from the Blue China Wreck (reproduced from Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).



**Figure 11.** Photograph of Chinese porcelain milk jug and sugar bowl decorated with a polychrome floral motif recovered from the Blue China Wreck (reproduced from Odyssey Marine Explorations 2009).

In addition to tea, silk and porcelain, however, a variety of other Chinese export items were imported, including furniture like camphor desks, trunks, chairs, as well as lacquer boxes, desks, tea caddies and dressing tables (Kuo 1930:432-433). Smaller items, commonly referred to as ‘chow-chow,’ included ivory card-cases, snuff-boxes, shaving kits, lacquer and ivory fans, game counters, children’s toys, fans, and jewellery (Kuo 1930:432-433).

### **Changing Dimensions of the US – China Trade**

In contrast to the US – China trade as a whole, trade in tea continued to flourish, and even increased after the 1840s with the opening of new Chinese ports as a result of the Opium War (Lubbock 1968:23). The US – China trade continued until the Civil War, “but did not resume afterwards, partly because of the growing interest in westward migration” (Mudge 1962:124; see also Palmer 1976). Field (1978:13) speculates that the US – China trade also declined because trade with Europe had increased, resulting in a lack of Asiatic investment opportunity. Perhaps most importantly, Fields (1978:13) writes,

In commercial and political geography ... the United States had suffered a considerable setback with the opening of the Suez Canal. Prior to 1869, when the route to the Far East was by way of the Cape of Good Hope, New York and Liverpool had been roughly equidistant from China, but now the Europeans were closer by the length of the Atlantic crossing.

American investment was also turning inward, to opportunities in the western interior of the American continent. Until the Civil War, “shipowning was one of the

principal forms of capital investment...Increasingly, though, investors found other outlets for their surplus wealth in government funds, in bank and insurance stocks, in railroads, and in factories” (Albion 1941:1; see also Field 1978:13). As the oceanic trade’s importance to American commerce on the whole had declined in relation to other activities, so too did shipowning, which reached its peak on the eve of the Civil War and then declined sharply (Albion 1941:1), in part due to blockades during the war. For instance, Charles Morgan, who had business connections with Cornelius Vanderbilt and was the largest shipowner in the US after the Civil War, invested in the steamship and railroad lines that became part of the Southern Pacific system (Albion 1932:680). Though the US still trades with China today, the dimensions of this trade are quite different to what they were at the start of the US – China trade, when merchants acting as interlopers sailed on prospect for a cargo of tea, silks, Chinese export porcelain and other merchandise.

## **Conclusion**

Global expansion after the fifteenth century became possible only after a merger between north-eastern European and Mediterranean shipbuilding techniques, and was pursued by the Spanish and Portuguese with acquisitiveness and religious zeal. While Spain became preoccupied with establishing an empire in the New World, Portugal focused its efforts on circumnavigating Africa, establishing a trading route to the Far East and setting up trading forts along the way. Eventually, the Portuguese thalassocracy could not compete with the financial savvy of Dutch merchants, who under the guise of the VOC, challenged the Portuguese for hegemony in the Far Eastern trade. The VOC, replete with the financial and agro-industrial superiority of the Dutch state and armed with a mercantilist mentality, remained the hegemonic power in the Far East until overseas trade’s net cost in bullion drained the Dutch state of sufficient funds to counter the rising British sea power at the end of the seventeenth century. The British fiscal-military state, a public-private approach to partnership and trade, was embodied by the EIC, which constituted Britain’s commercial presence in the Far East. The British Empire remained the hegemonic power in the Far East until the nineteenth century, when the British state let the EIC company charter expire with its adoption of free trade. Prior to this, traders from the newly founded United States had initiated trade at Canton, though never on such a scale as any of the past hegemonic powers. Similar to the Portuguese, Dutch and English traders, though, American traders at Canton were faced with the problem of

having very few commodities that the Chinese desired, and instead had to part with valuable specie to pay for Chinese goods.

The Americans participated in many ancillary trades, including the country trade, the fur trade, and the sandalwood trade, amongst others, in an attempt to alleviate this problem, though none of these were fruitful enough to completely cover the costs of obtaining a full cargo of teas, silks, Chinese export porcelain and other merchandise for the home market. Despite this, American traders continued to trade at Canton alongside other Portuguese, Dutch and English traders, and with the fall of the Canton system in the 1840s, expanded this trade to include four other Chinese ports. After the mid- nineteenth century the dimensions of this trade changed again, as American investment focused inward and migrations of people moved westward across the United States, and thus the American – China, and by extension the Spice trade, was never the same as it had been during its formative years.