A Report on recent conferences on maritime Asia and China in a global context

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In recent years, a growing number of scholars have shown renewed interest in the maritime history of Asia and the workings of the Canton System in global perspective.

This past October 2017, the Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau (Macau Scientific and Cultural Center; http://www.cccm.pt/) in Lisbon, headed by Prof. Filipe Barreto (University of Lisbon), hosted two conferences related to these themes.

The first was entitled “China / Macau: Sailing Routes, Sea Straits, Global Oceans” (October 9-11, 2017), and included some presentations closely related to late imperial maritime issues:

- “Sailing routes as mental constructs: Their semantic dimensions and assumed functions”; Roderich Ptak (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München)
- “Pearl trade during the Ming and Qing Dynasty: from Guangdong and Macau into the world”; Jiehua Cai (Institut für Sinologie - Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München)
- “The scholarly dissemination of sailing route descriptions during the Ming and early Qing”; Elke Papelitzky (Universität Salzburg)
- “Maritime trade expansion in late Ming and early Qing’s China: long lasting trade organizations”; François Gipouloux (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris)
- “Where the land joins with ocean. A Global view of Macau trade in the Ming dynasty”; Viviane Zhang (Macau Polytechnic Institute)
- “Representing the global space: some reflections about maritime and terrestrial routes in the 16th century missionary sources”; Antonella Romano (EHESS – Centre Alexandre Koyré, Paris)
- “Sailing to China: The Maritime Journey of Catholic Missionaries”; Eugenio Menegon (Department of History, Boston University)
- “The Jesuit projects for routes to the Asian missions, alternative to the Carreira da India”; Ugo Baldini (Università di Padova)
- “Approvisionnement urbain et réseaux de commerce: denrées et marchandises sur le marché de Chaozhou au début du XVIIe siècle”; Pascale Girard (Université Paris-Est Marne-la-Vallée)
- “The Portuguese routes in the South China Sea between Malacca and Macau in the 16th and 17th centuries”; Jorge Semedo de Matos (Escola Naval, Centro de Investigação Naval, Lisboa).
The second meeting at CCCM was the Fifth EurasiaTrajeco Conference (October 13-14, 2017), titled “Commercial Partnerships and Financial Arrangements across the Eurasian Continent (1300-2000).” Two sessions focused on late imperial China:

Session 1: “Trading Networks, Consumer Behavior and Management Culture”

- “Consumption of Chinese goods in Western Europe: a multi-relational database and the Vicarious Consumption Theory as alternative model to the Industrious Revolution (18th century)”; Manuel Perez Garcia (Renmin University)

- “The commercial network and management culture of Chinese merchants in the 19th century: the “Zhanyanwen” (詹彦文) Ink Shop as an example”; Wang Zhenzhong (Fudan University)

Session 2: “Commercial partnerships”

- “Chinese business correspondence: a collection of letters sent by the Yang Hang of Xiamen”; Léonard Blussé (Leiden University)

- “Huizhou merchants and commercial partnership”; Joe McDermott (Cambridge University)

More information on the EurasiaTrajeco Research Project (“Comparison between developmental trajectories of economic institutions and business practices in Europe and Asia”), coordinated by Prof. François Gipoulux (CNRS, Paris) can be found at the blog http://gdri.hypotheses.org/

Prof. Manuel Perez Garcia (Renmin University, Beijing) has recently started an extensive research project, “Global Encounters between China and Europe: Trade Networks, Consumption and Cultural Exchanges in Macau and Marseille, 1680-1840” funded by the European Research Council; more information at: http://www.gecem.eu/