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Jesuits and Asian  
Goods in the Iberian  
Empires, 1580–1700

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## FOREWORD

You are about to read a very interesting contribution to the new direction of global history using new empirical evidence and a case study. The current generations of historians can make use of newly digitized repositories and sources which can be easily accessed from the computer without the need to travel to and work in international archives. This advantage has also become a real hazard for historians. The old and new generations of researchers are progressively losing the sensitivity, taste, knowledge, and curiosity for perusing the overwhelming high number of pages, catalogues, and volumes of old documents and manuscripts in historical archives and libraries. Curiosity should be the main feature of the historian in the quest to observe and analyse past cultures, polities, and socioeconomic ecosystems which have shaped our present society. Historical research cannot be done without undertaking research missions in international archives. Surely, the digital tools and rapid access to historical materials from our laptops are advantages, but they are insufficient when doing research. The use of western and eastern sources, skills in foreign languages, implementation of new methods, advancing new case studies, and the advantage of digital tools stand out as the new global historian's package.

The book and research by Dr. Omar Svriz has been developed within the framework of GECEM Project (*Global Encounters between China and Europe: Trade Networks, Consumption and Cultural Exchanges in Macau*

*and Marseille, 1680–1840*, [www.gecem.eu](http://www.gecem.eu).) funded by the ERC (European Research Council)-Starting Grant, under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. As Principal Investigator of this project, I have had the honour and pleasure to work with Dr. Svriz, including joint research in European and Chinese archives. The work at western and eastern historical archives and implementation of a new case study stand out as novel contribution in Dr. Svriz's book.

How were the Iberian and Chinese empires connected in the early modern period, and more specifically, how were the port cities of Macau and Buenos Aires integrated into the global economic market? The agency exerted by the Jesuits as non-state parties and the circulation of global goods such as exotic plants, porcelain, silk, tea, wines, liquors, and silver as global currency, among others, were the main catalysts of the connections between such distant areas. This is a pertinent question and topic presented in this book to apply connected and comparative historical methods through a new case study. Conventional studies of international relations and the triangular relations between China, the USA, and Mexico affirm that Latin America is the backyard of China's financial and trade exchanges with the West. Thus, what was the role of Spanish-American colonies in the socioeconomic relations between China and the West centuries ago? There is a lack of scholarly research that clearly presents a case study on early modern China and the Spanish American colonies. Dr. Svriz's study opens a new venue to further expand comparisons and connections between both regions. The chronology of this research encompasses the period that has been conventionally defined as early globalization when socioeconomic, cultural, and technological contacts among world regions intensified.

The agency of the Society of Jesus' members was expressed not only as cultural (religious) mediators, but also as merchants as they channelled the introduction and circulation of western goods in Asia and eastern goods in Europe and the Americas through the Jesuit missions. The fragmentation of the Chinese and Iberian empires and the long-distance negotiations between the elites close to the court and those located in peripheral regions makes it extremely important to implement the methodologies of social network analysis and a polycentric approach by which spatial and social factors are paramount to observe governance and state administration. Thus, the case study presented in this work on port cities, such as Macau and Buenos Aires, goes beyond reciprocal

comparisons but rather seeks to identify connections in the markets of South China and South America through social agents and goods.

The collection and catalogue of the Portuguese expansion in East Asia at the Historical Archive of Macau (HAM) as well as the rich documentation of the *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* [the Holy House of Mercy] and the *Leal Senado* [Municipal Council] stand out as important empirical evidence that documents a great deal of the interactions between the Iberian and Chinese communities in south China. Macau, as a special administrative region which was leased to Portugal in late Ming dynasty (circa 1557), was developed as a major settlement orientated to overseas trade in South China Sea. During last thirty years, I have read and scrutinized the rich documents of the HAM, the minutes of the Municipal Council, ships and cargoes registers, protocols and wills of the Holy House of Mercy, private letters of merchants, and the abundant records on overseas trade between the Portuguese empire and China via Macau. My interpretation on the particularities of Macau as the entry point to China and main linchpin to Western regions has been enhanced by networking with scholars within East Asian, American, and European historiographical traditions. The understanding of the singularity of Macau and the South China Sea market might be deeply grasped through the combination and use of Western and Chinese sources as well as the development of theories and methods from East Asian historiographies.

On this basis, in 2016, I started to lead and develop the GECEM Project, whose main focus is to analyse global trade, consumption, and socio-cultural exchanges between China and Europe within the case study of Macau and Marseille. Global conjunctures, market integration, circulation of goods, and state capacity comparing and/or connecting two port cities in South China and South Europe are the main features to analyse locally and trace the footsteps of the great divergence. Such a local approach to the great divergence might renew the debate and prolific scholarship of the last twenty years on this topic.

Using new empirical evidence, introducing new case studies, and boldly presenting new methodologies and questions should be the directions of the so-called new global history. In the GECEM Project during the past six years, we have published a considerable volume of publications (monographs, edited books, articles in prestigious peer review journals, book chapters, newsletters) and designed a newly database, GECEM Project Database ([www.gecemdatabase.eu](http://www.gecemdatabase.eu)), in which we have recorded more than 40,000 registers on global trade between China and the West

for the early modern period. The database is not a mere repository of data, but instead has been designed through a query system, which is published as Open Access, and researchers can introduce ad hoc queries depending on their research topic and interest.

Dr. Svriz has actively participated in the design, development, and input of historical information in GECCEM Database. He answered the call of GECCEM Project goals and missions to open a new line of research in global history studies by mining new empirical evidence and cross-referencing European, American, and Chinese sources, mainly those from the *Archivo General de Indias* in Spain, National Archive of Argentina, and the HAM. This type of research seeks to establish new methodologies, mainly using digital humanities tools as well as interdisciplinary scope, and approaches beyond the conventional micro-history studies and exhausting theoretical works comparing China and Europe without a delineated geographical and chronological foundation.

Traditional research is tied to local and national narratives without specific research questions, theories, and methodologies and often entails transcribing the historical sources without a profound analysis to ask how, why, and who wrote a given source and why some data are omitted or biased. The absence of some information in the sources is good information in itself, as one might ask if such omission has been made intentionally, why, and by whom when the source was produced. This will not always produce meaningful conclusions, but it might help to definitively contextualize the historical information in order to understand the interactions and potentially seek connections and differences between regions and polities in East Asia, the Americas, and Europe through the circulation of global goods, networks, agency of social groups, and the role of both state and non-state institutions. These forces shaped not only the specific features of major port cities, such as the case study of Macau and Buenos Aires and their historical singularities presented in this book, but also the expansion of the Iberian empires and the global connection of the social agents, institutions, and business forms and practices through the project of expansion and agenda of policymakers settled in the courts of Beijing and Madrid.

The reader is about to explore these issues through Dr. Svriz's excellent decision to analyse the circulation of goods and the implications and role of the Jesuits in the integration of East Asian and European markets



through the Americas. How these social agents and goods transformed cultural habits and adapted to complex local economies are relevant questions for understanding the so-called early globalization and are central in Dr. Svriz's book.

Spring 2023

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Spain
AHM	Arquivo Historico de Macao, Macao
AHN	Archivo Histórico Nacional, Spain
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Portugal
ANA	Archivo Nacional de Asunción, Paraguay
CU	Conselho Ultramarino
B	Bahia
BA	Biblioteca de Ajúda, Portugal
BNE	Biblioteca Nacional de España, Spain
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, France
BNP	Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Portugal
BNRJ	Biblioteca Nacional de Río de Janeiro, Brazil
CAPJP	Cartas Anuas de la Provincia Jesuítica del Paraguay
DA	<i>Diccionario de Autoridades</i> (1726–1739)
DLE, RAE	<i>Diccionario de la Lengua Española, Real Academia Española</i>
MNAA	Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Portugal
MP	Mapas y Planos
Mss.	Manuscritos
R.C.	Real Cédula
SEIC	Swedish East Indian Company
SH	Sección Historia
SNE	Sección Nueva Encuadernación

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