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THE PHILIPPINES AND GUATEMALA: A TALE OF THREE TEXTILES

The subject of the Manila Galleons, linking Europe, Asia and South America, has a particular fascination as one of the forerunners of globalization so much discussed today. Some of the most important items to be traded were textiles and so it seems appropriate for this conference to consider three cases in which these regions of the world were linked culturally or technologically, as well as economically: *piña*, *ikat* and the so-called *mantón de Manila* or Manila shawl.

Piña

This is not the place to go into the trade history of Manila and the Philippines, nor the Manila galleon, subjects which have been admirably dealt with elsewhere. Antonio de Morga's work "Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas", published in Mexico in 1609¹ provides a fascinating insight into the early years of the Spaniards in the Philippines and their influence. Numerous more recent works include W.L. Schurz's classic [Schurz 1939], and the analysis of the trade between the islands and China, and the links with the New World and Spain, by Philippine scholar Serafin Quiason [Quiason 1966].

The wealth of Manila derived from its position as an *entrepôt*, rather than from its productivity. As the Jesuit Father Colín [Colín 1663] said in 1663, all the wonders of the world were to be found in that city. He set down a long list of the goods available there, including silks from Persia, carpets from Hormuz and Malabar, bedcovers and hangings from Bengal, many kinds of multicoloured cloth, including rare pieces from Japan and of course numerous types of Chinese silk. Everything from raw silk to velvet, damasks, taffetas and embroidered linens was to be found. The English were even trying hard — although

¹ A very good modern edition is available, published in Madrid in 1997 and there is also a translation by J.S. Cummins in the Hakluyt Series [Morga 1971].

rather unsuccessfully because of the climate — to find a market for Norfolk woollens.

Given that the people of Manila had the world's finest textiles easily available by this date, there was relatively little incentive for them to produce their own in any quantity, except for certain local fibres and village homespun, which, in common with much of East Asia, used a range of plant materials, often requiring complex processing², such as *ramie* (*Boehmeria nivea* or Chinese Nettle) and *abacá*, derived from the banana plant (*Musa textilis*)³.

Abacá is recorded in the Ryukyu Islands at least as early as the 13th century. It has been suggested that production in the Philippines was part of the cultural exchange between the two areas [Respicio] and it is probable that the technology spread north from there to the main islands of Japan. It has been convincingly suggested that its ultimate origin was South China [Hendrickx 2007].

The pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) is indigenous to southern Brazil and Paraguay, where the fibre seems to have been used for cord and, in particular, because of its resistance to water, fishing nets, but not for textiles. *Piña* fabric does not seem to have been produced in the New World until the 19th–20th centuries, when the manufacturing technique was imported from the Philippines and then, unlike *abacá*, only on a very small scale.

The plant had already spread to Central America and the West Indies before the arrival of Columbus, who saw the fruit for the first time on the island of Guadalupe in 1493; the Carib Indians are said to have placed them outside their dwellings as a sign of hospitality. The Portuguese introduced them into India about 1548 and into Africa at roughly the same time; pineapples were growing in China by 1594.

² In Japan, for example, before cotton was permitted to the working classes, farmers used wisteria (*fuiji*), mulberry (*kōzo*), nettles (*irakusa*), linden (*shina*), while the Ainu prepared cloth using elm bark (*ohyō*) See: [Dusenbury 2004: 228].

³ *Abacá* is particularly labour intensive with 100kg of leaves being required to produce some 13 kg of fibre. Until recently, the leaves were scraped by hand using a shell, broken plate or coconut scraper and a fast worker could process as many as 500 leaves a day, each one yielding 15–18 pieces of fibre about 60cm long [Heritage Arts and Crafts of the Philippines, personal communication 2007].

It is not clear how or where the complicated and very labour intensive technique of extracting pineapple fibre developed, but it seems likely given the connections between the two areas and the long tradition of working with a range of plant materials that it should have been in the Philippines. Weaving on backstrap looms was also well established there long before the arrival of the Spanish and the gauze-like material similar to fine linen and deliciously cool to wear in a hot climate produced from *piña* soon became the most prized local material.

About the year 1595, the Governor of the Philippines, Luis Pérez Dasmariñas, made a serious effort to stimulate the textile industry [Morga 1971] in order to take advantage of the growing demand for Philippine products abroad, in particular the fashion in the New World for *piña*. Ships to the New World were already carrying considerable quantities of cotton cloth — *lampotes* — from Cebú which were much prized in Mexico, household linen, such as sheets, tablecloths, bed hangings and bedspreads from Lubang and Luzón, stockings and petticoats from Manila, and hammocks from Ilocos and Lona.

However, although demand outstripped supply, Dasmariñas was quite unable to convince the people of Manila to put production on an industrial footing. The difficulties of working with *piña*, added to the fact that less than a centimetre a day was the usual weaving rate, goes a long way to explain this reluctance. It is also an important fact, often ignored, that people are frequently prepared to put much greater efforts into producing something for themselves, with complex social rewards, than when it is a matter of a simple commercial transaction, even if their skill is adequately remunerated. A similar reluctance was to occur later, incidentally, with Dasmariñas' projects for growing spices. This lack of interest in commercial productivity by the non-Chinese inhabitants of the Philippines, native and Spanish alike, was to be commented on frequently in the centuries to come.

The costume of the Philippines is relatively well documented. In about 1595, Dasmariñas commissioned an illuminated manuscript to show the King of Spain, Philip II, what his subjects there looked like. The 305 pages and 75 illustrations, which make up what is known today as the "Boxer Codex", include 15 different types of Filipino dress, as well as — less plausibly — the dress of neighbouring

countries⁴. Boxer has written a fascinating article on the history of the *Codex* [Boxer 1985].

A couple of centuries later, the expedition of Alejandro Malespina again recorded the costumes of the Philippines [Serrano 1982], while in 1815, the Archbishop of Cebú commissioned a set of watercolours, now in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, entitled “Tipos del País” and “Indumentaria Filipina” for the city of Cadiz.

Besides these collections, there are large numbers of genre paintings, often by known Filipino artists⁵, such as the Filipino-Chinese, Damian Domingo y Gabor (1790–1835), dating from the late 18th and 19th centuries, many of which show examples of clothing which it can be assumed from their diaphanous appearance were made of *piña* [Torres 1984]. Much appreciated by visitors, many of these paintings are in collections outside the Philippines.

Early examples of *piña*, particularly those made by locals for their own use, have not survived and it is unclear precisely what was exported to the New World in the first period of trade contact. A study of paintings might provide some clues⁶, as might research in Church sacristies, since the finest materials were often offered to the Church, in particular for dressing images of the Virgin, and hence were preserved as those in secular use were not; Islamic textiles at an earlier period being a case in point.

Some of the main types of *piña* work still made today, for example at Kalibo in Aklan Province are:

Sinuksuk — weaving using the floating weft technique, often with typical designs such as a five-petalled flower and butterfly

Ringgue — producing a lattice design

Sumbra — shadow stitch

Callado — drawn thread work [La Vera 1989]

⁴ “Boxer Codex”, Lilly Library, University of Indiana, USA. According to the library website (www.indiana.edu), the manuscript, together with the rest of the Boxer Collection, has remained unarranged and uncatalogued since 1994.

⁵ Among the earliest to engrave local scenes were Francisco Suarez (c.1690–1762) and Nicolas de la Cruz Bagay (1702–1765), who proudly added to their signatures “indio tagalo” to differentiate themselves from European or Chinese artists.

⁶ Again examining the numerous Peruvian and Mexican genre paintings, for example the naïf watercolours of Francisco Fierro (1807–1879), 78 of which are in the Kunstkamera at St. Petersburg.

Both the techniques and the designs indicate a combination of Philippine, European and Chinese influences. Because, as has been said, *piña* was used for articles that by their nature wore out, there are few examples earlier than the 19th century. A cap embroidered by nuns from one of the Manila convents, now in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney⁷ and a fine *pañuelo* can be dated to c.1800 and the motifs — scrolls and flowers — and stitches are, as might be expected, European.

The motifs used in many of these early pieces are essentially western in design, even when they represent something exotic, such as a palm tree. Particularly fine work, sometimes done in human hair⁸ is to be found on the *pañuelos* or *fichus*, worn in the interests of modesty, much insisted upon by the Church, at the neck of the low-cut dresses. Sir John Bowring, writing in the middle of the 19th century tells us of the *pañuelos*: "...prices which seem fabulous are being paid for the most elaborate specimens — one or two ounces of gold being frequently given for a small handkerchief" [Bowring 1859]⁹.

The light *piña* would have been much more comfortable in the climate of Manila than the heavy silk of Chinese shawls and it is probable that such pieces were exported to the New World, since low bulk and high value was always a major issue in the galleon trade. The Casa Manila Museum has some splendid examples of this embroidery, as does the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Madrid. The Victoria and Albert again has fine pieces, accurately dated to the mid-19th century, that were offered as gifts to members of the royal family [La piña 2005: 62–63]¹⁰. The best embroidery is to be found on handkerchiefs, on the wide bell-sleeves, typical of the elegant Manila dress, known as the *María Clara*¹¹, on baby clothes, in particular Christening robes, and again on men's dress shirts.

⁷ 135A, 133A and also a beautiful table centre, probably professional work and perhaps later — H3773.

⁸ For example one piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, embroidered "Memoria de Fernanda".

⁹ Gold c.£420 per ounce (2008).

¹⁰ See also [Montinola 1991], unfortunately not available while writing this paper.

¹¹ Named after the heroine of the Philippine patriot José Rizal's novel "Noli Me Tangere" (1887).

Piña was, and indeed still is, used for the shirts which have come to be part of Philippine men's national dress, the *barong tagalog*, 19th century examples of which were often very elaborately worked. The garment has been much discussed and it has been claimed as the origin of the very similar shirt made in a variety of fabrics worn across South America: the *guayabera*. In the 19th century these shirts were known there as *filipinas*, which might support the argument, although Cuba has firmly laid claim to their invention and this style is still worn, particularly by older men, in Andalucia, where it is known as *cubana*. There is, as always, the possibility of similar shaped garments having evolved in different places in reaction to similar needs, cultural or climatic, but the debate as to the origin of this particular piece of clothing continues and it may in fact go back to the *kurta* and have been introduced by Indian merchants trading textiles throughout the archipelago.

Piña production in general declined from the 1870s, partly because of the availability of much cheaper cottons, gauzes, etc. and partly in response to mass demand for exotic merchandise for a less critical clientele. The Catalogue of the "Exposición General de la Isles Filipinas" celebrated in Madrid in 1887, provides a very complete record of Philippine crafts at that date [La piña 2005]. There are hundreds of examples of local weaving, many using exotic fibres such as *abacá* and *piña*¹².

The examples of *piña* most commonly found in Europe and North America today are the tablecloths and other items of household linen manufactured for the Western market in the period 1880–1920. They were clearly mass-produced, probably to a large extent by Chinese workers and have motifs perceived by the west as typically Chinese such as flowers, good-luck characters and dragons — theoretically forbidden for general use in China until after 1905 and the end of the Empire. They are embroidered in the range of stitches used for Manila shawls, in addition to the elaborate drawn thread work found on the older *pañuelos*. Although extremely competently executed and in

¹² There is surprisingly little embroidery, apart from one or two scarves and a few liturgical vestments, such as catalogue item N^o.18 in group 51, which is described as: "An embroidered alb and amice. They were worked in Manila by twelve Indian women, who spent two months on them and were each paid between 10 and 16 *reales fuertes* per day."

themselves attractive, they have none of the originality nor the wonderfully fine embroidery found on the pieces made in the Philippines for local consumption.

Some such items must have found their way to South and Central America, although I am not aware of any, but independence from Spain, the ceding of the Philippines to the United States after the Treaty of Paris, as well as changing commercial patterns, had broken the centuries' long connection between the two areas by the end of the 19th century.

Mantones de Manila

Today, the so-called *mantón de Manila* is an item of traditional dress emblematic of Andalucía and indeed of Spain and few pieces of clothing could better symbolize the interchange, cultural and economic, between the Hispanic world, Asia and the Americas.

The Spanish conquests in South and Central America — “New Spain” — were largely complete by 1543 and were quickly followed by the annexing of the Philippines in 1559, the islands being placed under the jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of Mexico. Because of the difficulties of establishing factories in China, Manila soon became an important emporium. Luxury goods, especially silks and porcelain from China, as well as chintzes from India and other merchandise, were brought to Manila and re-exported both to Spain and to the Spanish colonies in the New World. Because of the concern with bullion flowing east and being “lost”, and the extremely restrictive economic policies of the Hapsburgs, the Spanish Crown generally limited the number of galleons with permission to sail between Manila and Acapulco to four a year and finally to only one. The extremely valuable cargo was transported between Acapulco and Vera Cruz, and from there forwarded to Spain.

In Spain, *mantones de Manila* are still often believed to have originated in Manila, but this is not the case except, perhaps, for a small number in a very distinctive style. These are worked using a different range of stitches, including *callado* — drawn thread — a technique introduced into the Philippines, probably by Spanish nuns, which became typical of local embroidery. Most of the shawls were in fact made in Canton (Guangzhou and Guangdong province) and

forwarded on via Manila, although it is possible that the Chinese in the Philippines also set up workshops there to meet demand, since they would have had access to a skilled labour force. A fascinating account of the trade is given, incidentally, in Pérez Galdós' novel "Fortunata y Jacinta"¹³.

South America was extremely rich, but there was little to buy and the limitation on imports of luxury goods was much resented and circumvented whenever possible. Mugaburu, in his diary 1640–1697, "Crónica de la Lima colonial" [Mugaburu 1935], mentions a ship sent by the Conde de Lemos in September 1671, which was supposed in theory to be carrying arms to Mexico. In fact, it "returned to Callao eight months later bearing an enormous quantity of clothing from China as well as other textiles."

Legally or illegally imported, the quantity of Chinese textiles in the New World was considerable. The English Dominican, Thomas Gage [Gage 1655; Gage 1985], who spent the years 1625–1637 in Mexico and Guatemala repeatedly mentions the use of Chinese materials, linen as well as silk, and Roderigo de Vivero¹⁴, writing at about the same date exhorted the King of Spain to liberate the Indians of Mexico from forced labour and allow them to work freely at textile production, since he was convinced their work was of fine enough quality to make Chinese and other Far Eastern imports unnecessary. Such goods would all have reached the New World via the Philippines.

Embroideries from the early period are rare, since personal and household items tend to wear out and be destroyed; the surviving examples are in church treasuries where a few examples of vestments and adornments for the altar originating in China, Macao and, possibly, the Philippines have been lovingly preserved. It is also worth mentioning, as evidence of the influence of these textiles, that painted robes on figures of the Virgin and Saints, particularly in Guatemala¹⁵

¹³ Galdós Pérez, Benito. *Fortunata y Jacinta*. Madrid, 1887. On-line at Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org.

¹⁴ Rodrigo de Vivero, "Abisoy proyectos para el buen gobierno de la Monarchia española", text in: [Vivero 1972: 77–131].

¹⁵ The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a number of examples dating from the 18th century, particularly of nativity figures, from both Guatemala and Ecuador, that show the influence of Chinese silks in the painting of the robes.

show a familiarity with Chinese motifs, presumably copied from vanished silk originals. There was also an export from the Philippines to the New World of complete figures, as well as carved heads and hands, which explain the distinctive oriental colouring and physical traits of a number of the smaller religious statues found in South and Central America.

Chinese embroideries, then, entered Spain via the Americas. They reached the Casa de la Contratación in Seville and, after the “Free Trade Agreement”, Cádiz. The Royal Company of the Philippines was originally founded in 1785 and soon after Spain was able to enter into direct relations with its easternmost colony. In 1821, the port of Seville once more opened to ships from Manila and, interestingly, it was about this time that the shawls known as *mantones de Manila* began to make their appearance as a key element in Andalusian and, more generally, Spanish dress.

It is difficult to date the appearance of these shawls in Central and South America. Although there are numerous descriptions of women’s costume in Lima, Cuzco, Arequipa and Valparaíso from the 17th century on, there is no mention of *mantones de Manila* — even by Mugaburu, who comments on everything — although references to local forms of shawl and wrap, such as the *rebozo*, are frequent. It has been suggested, although not to my mind very convincingly, that the *rebozo* used as a shoulder cloth was not part of the pre-Columbian or European tradition and was therefore likely to have been introduced from Asia in imitation of the *slendang* or *selendang*, a common element of costume across South East Asia and Indonesia and in certain areas of the Philippines [King 1979]. Interestingly, the elegant way to wear a *mantón de Manila* on formal occasions in Spain today is folded in a strip so as to show off the embroidery to best advantage and draped like a *slendang* over the left shoulder, something very uncommon in European dress.

The French traveller, Amadée Frézier, has left us such detailed descriptions of the various articles of clothing of the women of Peru and Chile in the early years of the 18th century, that it is very surprising that they should have come from the pen of a military man, in fact a sailor. Frézier describes the passion the women had for lace (a number of pieces of Philippine *piña* are obvious imitations of European

lace, incidentally) and he describes both the *mantilla* and the *haque* — an Arabic word (*haik*), clearly imported from Andalusia — preferred in Chile, with its gold and silver ribbons and panels of lace; but not a single mention of an embroidered shawl [Frézier 1714; Frézier 1718]. This form of dress, ultimately Islamic in origin, spread also to the Philippines and to Macao, where it was worn in imitation of the Spanish *tapadas* rather than by the Muslim population. The fashion is recorded in a number of paintings and drawings, both *tipos filipinos*¹⁶ and in the case of Macao, the drawings of George Chinnery [Hutcheon 1989].

The first reference I have found to a *mantón de Manila*, is in the “Mémoires et pérégrinations d’une paria”, 1833–1834, by Flora Tristan [Tristan 1838; Tristan 2004], grandmother of the painter Gauguin. She reached the city of Lima in 1833, while trying to trace her father’s family and on the way mentions — unflatteringly — the dress of the ladies in Cabo Verde, one of whom wore “...a vast *mantón* in sky blue *crêpe-de-chine*, embroidered with very beautiful white roses, [which] served her sometimes as a *mantilla* and sometimes as a shawl. This enormous *mantón* covered the whole of the back of her head and the general effect was most extravagant...” She mentions another equally spectacular example worn, very much *à contre cœur*, since she preferred male dress, by the political and military leader, Sra. Pencha de Gamarra, whom she met at Callao in Peru on her way into exile.

It is clear that at the time of Flora Tristán’s travels, Manila shawls were already a standard article of elegant dress, not an exotic rarity. Frances Calderón de la Barca writing in Mexico a few years later, mentions them frequently as being worn by women of the more prosperous working class, both rural and urban [Calderón de la Barca 1987[1842]]. Clearly they were already being mass-produced in China, which must have reacted quickly to changes in Western demand as regards fashion and also the changes in Latin America which, with Independence — 1821 in the case of both Mexico and Peru — was free to make its own trading arrangements with the East instead of being dominated by the policies of Spain.

¹⁶ See, for example: [La piña 2005: 47].

Natalie Robinson, in her article, has suggested that the designs of the very elaborate shawls, heavily embroidered with highly coloured flowers, originated in South America [Robinson 1987]. Certainly, they were extremely fashionable in Mexico and the fashion caught on in Spain in the latter part of the 19th century. She mentions a shawl she saw in Manila, perhaps made for the Mexican market, although the border of parakeets and the centre filled with highly coloured parrots and other tropical birds could equally well be of Philippine inspiration. Among the *tipos filipinos* previously mentioned, I have not found any figures wearing a *mantón de Manila*, but this may well be for reasons of climate which would have made the heavy silk uncomfortable at all times of the year.

This very flamboyant style rarely reached Europe, but in South America the motifs embroidered on the *mantones de Manila* seem to have influenced local dress. Even today, the blouses worn by the women of Quito are worked with large brilliantly coloured “roses”, stylized in much the same way as the peonies so much in evidence in Chinese embroidery. Echoes of Chinese shawls also seem to appear in the rustic wool on wool embroideries decorating bed-covers and hangings in Mexico and even up into New Mexico.

The similarities are even more striking in the magnificent and much studied *china poblana* costume of the Puebla region of Southern Mexico or again the festival Tehuana costume from Oaxaca¹⁷. Frances Calderón de la Barca, a close observer of dress, who mentions the *china poblana* — and, in her day, its somewhat dubious social connotations — a number of times, describes it as it was worn in Mexico City on Good Friday 1840 [1987: 137]: “And above all, here and there, a flashing Poblana, with a dress of real value and much taste, and often with a face and figure of extraordinary beauty, especially the figure....the petticoat of her dress frequently fringed and embroidered in real massive gold, and *reboso* either shot with gold or a bright-coloured China crape shawl, coquettishly thrown over her head. We saw several whose dresses could not have cost less than five hundred dollars”¹⁸.

¹⁷ A spectacular example is illustrated in: [Sayer 1985: 171].

¹⁸ If FCB was referring to US \$\$ this would be in the order of \$11 500 today (2008).

What is of particular interest about many of these descriptions and drawings is the evidence they provide that working women, both in the New World and the Philippines, had access to luxury clothing, imported as well as locally made, implying a certain level of purchasing power.

There are also more subtle suggestions of Chinese influence dating back to before the advent of the Manila shawl. A very fine 18th century Mexican *rebozo* in the Parham Park collection is embroidered in silk with little genre scenes reminiscent of those found on Chinese robes and hangings, and later on the borders of the finest shawls. The actual scenes are typical of Colonial Mexico, but the arrangement and stylization have a very definite Chinese flavour¹⁹.

Shawls, or perhaps Chinese embroideries in general, have also had a certain influence in Guatemala. The *huipiles* — in this case much heavier woven blouses than those of Mexico — of some regions, such as Chichicastenango or Comalapa, are worked with large brightly coloured flowers, with “roses” or orchids predominating, which have no connection with the indigenous tradition. Other designs very clearly come from the European embroidery pattern books given away with certain makes of thread such as DMC and, curiously, for this reason there are motifs that find close parallels with mid–20th century dresses from Palestine, another area where European embroidery cotton and silk was widely sold [Stone 2011].

Other designs, again particularly from Comalapa, are related to much older European silk brocades, imported by the Spaniards, often for Church vestments [Sierra de la Calle 1991]. Here again, the subject is complex, since European silks in their turn show a wide range of stylistic influences. Pauline Johnstone mentions a church vestment, probably from 14th century Lucca, made of a silk that shows strong Chinese influence both in the exotic beasts portrayed and the form of stylization [Johnstone 2002: 35, fig. 25].

Another group of *huipiles*, for example from San Francisco el Alto or Quetzaltenango, have an appliqué at the neck, embroidered on velvet, cotton or occasionally silk, predominantly in satin stitch, with flowers and butterflies, motifs repeatedly found on shawls. Another

¹⁹ Illustrated in: [Sayer1985: 51, 107].

source of Chinese influence were undoubtedly the woven and embroidered ribbons, which seem to have found their way even to the Guatemalan Highlands and to have been copied, for example at Jacatenango [Altman and West 1992: 109].

These ribbons were probably introduced by the Chinese peddlers described by Renée Méndez Capote [Méndez Capote 1964] in Cuba, while Lilly de Jongh Osborne [Kelsey and Jongh Osborne 1948] mentions them as having been active in the 19th century in Guatemala, at which date they would probably have reached the area from the Philippines. Chinese trade goods, in limited quantities, would, of course, have been available in cities such as La Habana and La Antigua from a much earlier date, although not on the scale of Mexico or Lima. Another very comparable geographical area where Chinese pedlars established themselves, as soon as it was opened up to outside influence, was the High Desert in Oregon²⁰. These embroidered Chinese ribbons play an interesting role in the dissemination of Chinese embroidery and embroidery motifs along the west coast of India, as well as in the New World [Gill 2003]²¹.

Ikat

There is always much discussion as to whether inventions happened once and spread from a single centre, or whether there were multiple points at which similar circumstances led to similar solutions. The back strap loom, for example, has been a subject of this debate, so too has *ikat* [King 1979].

While it is generally considered that the technique developed in India, and paintings at Ajanta dating from the 7th century seem to indicate striped *ikat* textiles, the pattern of dissemination becomes unclear beyond the countries lying within the area of Indian cultural influence or contact, which included present-day Indonesia and South East Asia, Yemen, and the lands along the Silk Road, following the spread of Buddhism north [Crill 1998: 16–18]. The idea of the

²⁰ www.highdesertmuseum.org — photographic records and exhibits of the Chinese traders in the area in the second half of the 19th century.

²¹ See online at www.embroidery-embroiderersguild.com.

technique evolving independently at various points should therefore be borne in mind [Wong 2005: 105–108].

Among the earliest surviving examples of *ikat* are the pieces used as Buddhist banners from the Shōsōin at Nara. Their place of manufacture is uncertain, but they probably date to the 7th century, although it was not until 756 A.D. that they were among the some 600 treasures, many with exotic provenances, that the Empress Kōmyō dedicated in memory of her husband, the late Emperor Shōmu. Curiously, although the bold and strongly coloured design of at least one example is reminiscent of the *ikat* known to have been produced in Central Asia from the 19th century [Fitz Gibbon and Hale 1997: 31–33], there is no evidence of its manufacture in the region during the intervening period.

Similarly, complex *ikat* techniques do not appear to have been adopted in Japan until a much later period. From the 14th century, *kasuri* was made in both *ramie* and *abacá* in the Ryukyus (Okinawa), but it is not clear where the technique came from, but probably from China or Taiwan rather than the Philippines. In any case, indigo and white *ikat*, seems to have been produced in Japan only for the past two centuries [Tomita and Tomita 1982: 4–5] and being quite different in style is certainly unconnected to anything found in Central America.

Simple warp *ikat* designs, particularly in red and white, and perhaps an evolution from *plangi*, or tie-dye, were produced in Peru in the Pre-Columbian period, and there are occasional examples of brown and white *ikat* retrieved archaeologically from the coast of Ecuador. There is no evidence to suggest that either of these were the origin of the much later *ikat* found in Guatemala, although some comparable designs are produced — or were until very recently — in the region today, notably for shawls [Miller 1996]²².

The traditional dress of a number of Guatemalan villages, particularly in the highlands and especially that of men, shows a clear affinity to the peasant costume of 16th–19th century Spain and is unrelated to the pre-Conquest mode [Altman and West 1992: 36–50]. As early as 1630, clothes from the Mixco region were described by

²² See also the illustration of the striped *rebozo* made for Sabina Mendoza in: [Miller 1996: 334].

Thomas Gage [Gage 1946: 219] and remained in essence unchanged until the 20th century. It would be very interesting to see whether there are any similarities between these introductions in Guatemala and those in certain regions of the Philippines, for example the costume of the Atitlán region and that of the Bagobo, in highland Mindanao, both curiously reminiscent of the matador's *traje de luces*, which itself dates from the 17th–18th centuries.

Textile techniques, such as the use of the foot-loom and certain forms of embroidery, were again introduced by the Spaniards, but complex *ikat* designs and double *ikat* certainly did not reach Central America from Europe. Is it possible that it arrived from the Far East with the Manila galleons? The Philippines and New Spain were, of course, in regular contact — in 1608–9, for example, Roderigo de Vivero [Vivero 1972], a Spaniard from Mexico, was interim Governor of the Philippines — and small numbers of Asians reached New Spain from an early date.

Nevertheless, it is hard to visualise how the introduction would have taken place, given that the Philippine and Indonesian styles of *ikat* are not known to have been an export trade item of any importance, if at all. Admittedly, as far back as 1738, Fr. Juan Francisco de San Antonio mentions that the Caraga region of Mandaya “...pay their annual feudal dues in *guinaras* and *madriñaques* in order to be defended from the moros” ([San Antonio 1903], cited in: [Reyes 1992: 71]). These particular textiles, were plain gauze-type *abacá* and were certainly traded, as de Morga tells us [Morga 1971: 263], and may thus have reached the New World; possibly some *ikat* went with them. They were perhaps for use as mosquito netting, something exported from China across the Indian Ocean from at least the early 15th century. There are several mentions in Arabic sources, as Paul Lunde points out: “The Anonymous Rasulid Chronicle”, under the date of 31 January, 1423 tells us, in relation to the Sixth of the Ming Voyages, of the arrival of “...splendid China ware and textiles and carpets and extremely fine mosquito nets...”²³.

²³ See [Lunde 2007] for Arabic text and translation. Lunde also points out that mosquito nets were also among the gifts sent by the Yongle emperor to the king of Borneo in 1412.

Something more might be learned by studying the bills of lading for the galleons, although generally not enough information is given to make identification possible. Unfortunately detailed textile history does not go back in Guatemala beyond the 19th — 20th centuries, apart from a few luxury textiles in church treasuries, and a large debt is owed to Lily de Jongh Osborne [Kelsey and Jongh Osborne 1939] without whom much of the information that we do have would have vanished. The type of *ikat* most similar to the pre-Columbian examples is found on *perrajes* or *rebozos*.

Fashion, of course, changes in Guatemala as elsewhere. The *perrajes* worn, for example, at Santiago Atitlán, have evolved over fifty years from indigo cotton woven on a backstrap loom with white stripes, to indigo (generally synthetic) and white with stripes of other colours some of which are enriched with very simple *ikat*, to all over *ikat* patterning giving a check or arrow-head effect, to factory produced synthetic material with checks, generally in purple or dark blue and white.

Far more complex and worked in elaborate designs with narrow highly decorated stripes, is the *jaspe* which provides the standard material for women's skirts in numerous areas of Guatemala and in the past was also used for shawls, particularly in the highlands, although this is rarer today. Generally the skirts are of the tubular or sarong type, not dissimilar to those of South East Asia and the Philippines, although in other regions, probably indicative of Spanish influence, they are full, gathered in with a drawstring at the waist.

While traditionally the *huipil*, or blouse, was homemade on a backstrap loom and an important indicator of the owner's skill — this is still often the case — *jaspe* involved a different and complex expertise. It is normally produced on a foot-loom by male professionals, especially from the Quetzaltenango region, with the finest and sharpest designs coming from San Cristóbal Totonicapán. Interestingly, the villages and towns particularly associated with fine *jaspe* production were settled in the early days of the Conquest by people brought from Mexico by Pedro de Alvarado. There is no trace of such *ikat* being produced in Mexico in the pre-Conquest period, so this is another coincidence well worth exploring.

The most traditional colour combination was indigo and white, although a number of villages, such as San Cristobal, prefer a range of very brilliant colours, echoed in the *perraje*, which is finished off with large pompoms or tassels, as at Zunil and Almolonga. The general tendency has been for designs to become increasingly elaborate and colours to become brighter — in recent years young women have generally chosen not to wear indigo and white, perceived as “elderly” and old-fashioned and an admixture of tinsel thread has become very popular. This means the *ikat* that first reached Guatemala may have looked very different from the examples seen in the markets today, with the technique being borrowed rather than the design.

It is still not established how the technique involved in these elaborate *ikats*, single and double, reached Guatemala and became so widespread. Merely importing the cloth might have introduced the designs, as in the case of Chinese style embroidery (see the section on *mantones de Manila*), but would not have transmitted the skill. It is tempting to think of it arriving with immigrants from the Asia, but there is simply no evidence for this and, as far as I know, not even legends, of the kind associated with the *china poblana* costume of Mexico, exist.

Finding a close parallel to *jaspe* designs is not easy. Altman points out analogies between certain *ikats* from Eastern Thailand or Laos and those of Totonicapán [Altman and West 1992: 92], but it could be argued that in general lay-out and intention some of the *ikat* from the Philippines provides a closer parallel. This is particularly true of Mandaya skirt pieces, woven of hemp with narrow, elaborately patterned stripes, the motifs — stylized men, crocodiles, etc. — having great ritual significance. The colours are generally in the red-black-brown range, rather than indigo and white [Reyes 1992]. However, aesthetic coincidence should never be ruled out: a fine shoulder cloth from Pha Chet in Laos [Mis and Mis 2001: 146], for example, is similar in colour choice and general design to the more rustic *cintas* and *fajas* of the Ixil region of Guatemala, especially Chajul, but it is extremely unlikely that there is any connection.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to visit the main *jaspe* producing centres on my last visits to Guatemala and the explanations of the

designs given by the women selling the pieces tend to be rather random, different names being given to what is clearly the same motif: tree, lyre, snake, etc. Whether this is because they have real significance and it is not felt appropriate to discuss it with an outsider, or whether the sellers do not know is hard to establish. Certainly it contrasts with the weavers and embroiderers of *huipils*, who are quite often happy to tell the stories associated with their designs. More work would need to be done on the symbolism of Guatemalan *jaspe*, speaking to the men who actually make it. It should also be remembered that a number of favourite embroidery designs in the region were taken recently from European pattern books and so any symbolism attributed to them is clearly *ex post facto*; the same may be true of some of the *jaspe* motifs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the route of the *mantones de Manila* and their influence is fairly straightforward and clear.

The rapid exploitation of what would appear to be an unpromising raw material — the leaves of the *Ananas comosus* — so soon after its introduction is surprising, but perhaps less so when the textile tradition of the Philippines and indeed South East Asia and East Asia is considered. It would be nice to establish exactly how and where the technical breakthrough was first made, but it is quite likely we will never know.

The *jaspe* of the Totoncapán and Quetzaltenango region has technical and aesthetic similarities to that of the Mandaya of the Philippines, and textiles from the area were both traded locally and given to the Spaniards in lieu of tax. However, it is hard to imagine any scheme of things that would have led people of Highland Mindanao to teach their skill to the people of Highland Guatemala. Did examples of Asian *ikat* reach the area, which is perfectly possible? And were the local weavers, already highly skilled in numerous other techniques, inspired to imitate it? Or was it a complete independent development and the similarities nothing but coincidence? As we have seen in the case of the Chinese-style embroideries, contact and influence can be proven, but work still remains to be done to untie the *ikat* threads and discover their pattern.

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