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Seventeenth-Century Portuguese Faiança and Its Presence in Colonial America

Charlotte Wilcoxon

Nineteenth- and 20th-century writers deprecated Portugal's 17th-century ceramics, and some American archaeologists have not recognized the quantity or quality of the remains of these on east coast American colonial sites, or learned to identify the sherds. Civil War in England in the 1640s deprived that country's colonies of critical economic support during those years; the colonists were forced to build ships and engage in their own trade with European countries. Colony by colony, this is examined; Sephardic Jewish merchants from Portugal living here at times promoted the trade, as well as American factors living in Portugal or its islands. The trade in ceramics was an adjunct of the wine trade, the ceramics often not being listed on the ship's manifests. Portuguese tin-glazed faiança is described and illustrated. The time and reason for the ending of this ceramics trade is considered.

Les auteurs du XIXe et du XXe n'ont guère prisé la céramique portugaise du XVII^e siècle et certains archéologues américains n'ont pas reconnu la quantité ou la qualité de cette céramique présente sur les sites coloniaux américains de la côte est ou, encore, n'ont pas appris à en identifier les tessons. La guerre civile en Angleterre, dans l'année 1640, a privé les colonies du pays d'un soutien économique durant ces années. C'est ainsi que les colons ont dû construire des bateaux et voir à leur propre commerce avec les pays européens. L'article examine cette situation colonie après colonie; les marchands juifs sépharades du Portugal établis ici à certains temps s'occupèrent de ce commerce de même que les agents américains habitant au Portugal et dans les îles. Le commerce de la céramique s'ajoutait à celui du vin, la céramique souvent ne figurant pas sur le manifeste des bateaux. L'article décrit et illustre la faïence glacée à l'étain du Portugal. Il se penche sur la question du temps où ce commerce de céramique a pris fin et de la raison pour laquelle il a cessé.

Introduction

There is growing evidence that in the 17th century, Portuguese ceramics had a more important role than formerly suspected in the commerce and material culture of America's eastern seaboard settlements. Largely because of the escalation in historical archaeology that has occurred in the past 50 years, archaeologists are encountering increasing numbers of Portuguese ceramic artifacts in this region.

In view of the attractiveness of this 17th-century Portuguese tin-glazed pottery (*faiança*), it is surprising how long it has taken many American scholars to become aware of it. This may result partially from the lack of publicity accorded it in the earlier literature of ceramics, or to the inexplicable disdain with which some ceramics historians in the past have consigned it to oblivion.

Two instances of this, out of many, are typical: William Burton, an English ceramics authority of note, in his article on European wares for the 11th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, wrote: "The manufacture of a kind of debased majolica was also practiced in Portugal from the sixteenth century down to our own times; but the ware never attained to any distinction and is little known outside that country" (Burton 1911: 741).

Warren E. Cox, in 1944, published a two-volume work in which he made claim to exploring ceramic art "through the ages," and graciously acknowledged the help of a host of international ceramics authorities, among whom were Bernard Rackham, R. L. Hobson, Alice Wilson Frothingham, and Sir Percival David. In this ambitious work, however, he ignored 17th-century Portuguese ceramics

entirely, gave six lines only to two 18th-century Portuguese ceramic factories, and took care of tiles, for which Portugal is justly famous, in seven words: "and many were also made in Portugal" (Cox 1944: 330, 717).

American tourists have not visited the countries of the Iberian peninsula as avidly as they have other parts of Western Europe, and Portugal, even more so than Spain, is *terra incognita* to a great many Americans. Understandably, this has restricted our national interest in the ceramics as well as in the other decorative arts of these two countries.

Although Portuguese tiles have little relevancy to the Portuguese ceramics used in American colonial households, they are the most spectacular of Portuguese ceramics and cannot be ignored in any discussion of these. The Dutch are said to have originally inspired Portugal's immense production of tiles in the 17th century by sending them elaborate tile tableaux, and Dutch potters are known to have worked there (Calado and Baart 1989: 19). Yet, the decoration on Portuguese tiles reached a flamboyance beyond that found in those of the Dutch, and it may be that in the 17th century, Portuguese tile production was even greater than that of the Dutch.

One of the reasons for suspecting this is that while the Dutch used tiles with great artistry in the decoration of interior surfaces, the Portuguese went further, using these prodigally on the exteriors as well as the interiors of important structures, both secular and religious. Because of this employment of tiles in their architecture, the Portuguese are said to have produced tiles in sizes larger than those of any other European country—in itself, a difficult technical achievement. Aesthetically, Portuguese tiles, and the manner of their use as a decorative medium, are impressive—and, at times, completely charming. An example of the latter is the spectacular blue-and-white tile decoration of the walls and ceilings of the refectory in the Convent of Jesus, in Aveiro, Portugal (Riley 1987: 85), and the Bacalhoa Palace in Lisbon (Tarboroff 1987: 159, 181–185, 206–208). There appears to be no evidence, however, that Portuguese tiles were used in America in colonial times.

The Portuguese appear to have been the first Europeans to send merchant vessels regularly to China to bring back porcelains and silks, then the most costly of China's arts and coveted in Western countries. A recent book on Chinese ceramics, issued by the People's Republic in both Chinese and English editions, credits the Portuguese with being the first Europeans to travel "to the East" to obtain Chinese porcelain (Zhiyan and Wen 1984: 104). In 1517, Fernao Pires de Andrade, a Portuguese navigator, arrived in Canton to open trade with China; by 1557, Portugal had established a trading post in Macao (Burton 1911: 22).

Chinese porcelain, however, must have been known to the Western world long before the 16th century, through the Venetian trade with the Middle East, which, for centuries, had maintained a trading relationship with China. But it was the 16th-century cargoes of the large Portuguese *carracas* that revealed the seductive charm of the blue-and-white Chinese porcelain to the well-to-do European householder.

The Portuguese, too, were the first to inaugurate the custom now known as *chine de commande*, by which special orders could be placed with Chinese merchants for porcelains to be made in European designs, both religious and secular. This practice was maintained throughout the centuries of European and American trade with China.

In answering the question of when the Portuguese first made *faiança*, Rafael Salinas Calado (with Baart 1989: 10), a modern Portuguese ceramics authority, wrote: "Though it is not possible accurately to determine the precise moment at which the manufacture of *faience* in Portugal began, the evidence is that it was being produced in Lisbon in the first decade of the second half of the sixteenth century" [i.e., 1550–1560].

The cost of the imported Chinese porcelain was extremely high, and it was this that prompted the Portuguese potters to copy it in tin-glazed earthenware, just as the Dutch were to do some years later. The experts on Portuguese ceramics appear to agree that this switch from European designs to those on Chinese porcelain occurred sometime prior to

1582. In that year, Philip II, then in Portugal on an official visit, wrote to his daughters describing *faiança* made by the Portuguese, apparently in the Chinese designs (Calado and Baart 1989: 10).

There are usually two grades of quality within a given type of ceramic ware—one of these being often referred to as "museum quality," the other as "common ware." In his article on the Portuguese dishes found in Amsterdam, "Portuguese Faience from Amsterdam Soil," Jan Baart (with Calado 1989: 27) describes this ceramic dichotomy thus:

the two sources, the museum one and the archaeological one, are different in character. The museum collection in Portugal consists mainly of large show pieces. The archaeological collections illustrate the daily use of the Portuguese faïence. In this way both sources complement each other, so that a good understanding of the total production of the factories that make the faïence can be obtained.

Not all of the tin-glazed Portuguese *faiança* that reached early colonial American settlements was of the finest workmanship that the potters of that country were capable of producing. Yet the patterns found here are a varied and aesthetically satisfying lot, and many are the same as those present in the collections of the finest of Portugal's museums.

The words *faïence* or *fayence* as used in this article refer to a ceramic form with a tin glaze on both surfaces, front and back (obverse and reverse). The word *majolica*, as used here, refers to a ceramic form with a tin glaze on the obverse side and a lead glaze on the reverse. The use of these terms varies, however, among the European countries.

Portuguese *Faiança*—Its Decoration and Techniques

Although Portugal appears to have been the first European nation to establish a maritime trade directly with China, the first tin-glazed pottery the Portuguese made did not follow Chinese decorative traditions. Instead, they chose to adapt Spanish and Italian motifs.

When the Portuguese did begin to copy the Chinese porcelain designs, the transition was

made in *faïence*, not in the earlier *majolica* technique. That is, they covered all surfaces—back and front—with the opaque tin glaze, and, instead of firing plates and large dishes stacked one upon another on triangular cockspurs, for the most part they fired them in protective cylindrical ceramic saggars. Here, the plates, bowls, and serving dishes rested on ceramic pins set horizontally into the sides of the saggars. Evidence of these pins usually can be detected on the reverse of the plates, in a triangular pattern of three scars. Now and then, however, one finds a dish that appears to have the sagger marks on the obverse side.

In the 1980s, Jan Baart, then city archaeologist of Amsterdam, directed an extensive archaeological project in the Waterlooplein (Vlooyenburg) district of that city. Here, where Sephardic Jewish refugees from Portugal had settled, the archaeologists found a large amount of Portuguese tin-glazed pottery (FIG. 1). At first it was thought that this was particular to that area, but later, Portuguese sherds were excavated in North Holland and other areas of the Netherlands, indicating a Dutch trade in ceramics with Portugal in the 17th century.

Baart's interest was so stirred by the discovery of this Portuguese ware that he traveled to Lisbon to investigate it further. Here he encountered in Portuguese museums exact duplicates of the pottery found in Amsterdam. He also met a Portuguese authority on ceramics, Rafael Salinas Calado, who was enthusiastic about the Amsterdam findings, and the two became collaborators in a preliminary study of Portuguese 17th-century export *faiança* (Calado and Baart 1989: 19). Their book, with text in both Dutch and Portuguese, fine illustrations, and a notable monograph on Portuguese *faiança* by each writer, is a valuable step toward clarifying the nature and development of this pottery.

The earliest examples of Portuguese ceramics recovered from the Vlooyenburg area fall within a 1600–1625 context. Most of these do not have a Chinese-influenced decoration, but one of relatively simple designs in blue and white that are based on European tradition. There are plates that have narrow Italianate rim borders in a geometric pattern, with no decoration in the cavetto or the well area

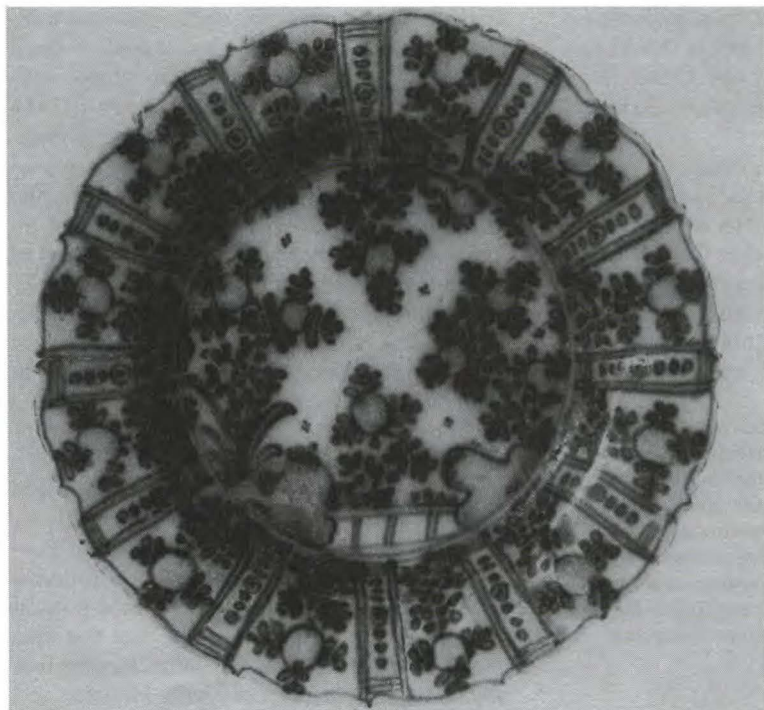


Figure 1. Blue and white *faiança* Portuguese plate recovered from Amsterdam's Waterloopein (Vlooyenburg) district (1620–1675). (Courtesy of the Archaeological Research Division, Amsterdam, Holland.)

surrounding it. In the center of these plates, enclosed within a circular line, there is either a geometric figure, a stiffly stylized floral motif, or a bird or animal. There are small bowls with similar decorations.

In the second quarter of the 17th century the Portuguese produced copies of the Chinese Wan-li pattern porcelain, later used and copied by the English and the Dutch and called *kraakporselein* by the latter. The Portuguese copies depart sufficiently from the English and Dutch tin-glazed versions of this Chinese design to supply a pleasant new aspect of freshness and liveliness.

The remnant of the large, deep dish and the smaller plate in Figures 2 and 3 have rim border designs typical of this group. Here, the four Chinese emblems common to this pattern are a fruit, an artemesia leaf, a tassel, and a scholar's scroll. In examples of this border, the fruit is sometimes a litchi, sometimes a peach. Now and then, both the artemesia leaf and the scroll appear on the plate or dish; sometimes, only one of these does. In this Portuguese ver-

sion of the basic Ming pattern, the artemesia leaf motif and its surrounding tendrils give the bizarre suggestion of an over-size multiplied insect.

A fragmented bowl with this standard rim border is shown in Figure 2 (Cotter 1958: 184). It is similar to the Dutch *kraakporselein* border, but there are stylistic touches that differentiate the two. For one thing, the larger panels of the Portuguese forms are simpler and rarely have ogival medallions. When these do occur in the Portuguese examples, the manner of treatment is different. A comparison with illustrations of the Dutch borders will make this clear.

Other plates in this 1625–1650 period have a border of flower-filled medallions and a center design that may be a combination of flowers, birds, and animals (Calado and Baart 1989: 47). A plate excavated at the Pettit site on Governor's Land, in Virginia, has a crouching hare as its central design; deer, too, often decorate the centers of the Portuguese plates. These birds and animals contribute a light, naturalistic effect.



Figure 2. Portuguese *faiança* bowl fragment (1625–1650) with the *kraakporselein* rim border. (Courtesy of National Park Service, Colonial National Historic Park, Jamestown, VA.)



Figure 3. Blue-and-white *faiança* plate with the *kraakporselein* rim border. This plate is a typical example of the Portuguese dishes found in Amsterdam, Holland between 1625–1650. (Courtesy of the Archaeological Research Division, Amsterdam, Holland.)



Figure 4. Left, blue-and-white sherd of *faiança* from Plymouth, Massachusetts; right, blue and manganese *faiança* sherd from the cellar fill of the first building erected at Harvard College in 1642. (Courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, photograph by Hillel Burger.)

Museum examples of *faiança* plates and bowls with Chinese-inspired designs are illustrated in the works of Reynaldo dos Santos and José Queirós, two eminent Portuguese ceramics authorities, and they appear in a number of illustrations in the Calado-Baart study (dos Santos 1960a: 63; Queirós 1948b: 51). Sherds having this pattern have been recovered from several locations in the Boston-Cambridge area. Figure 4 shows a sherd from the Plymouth area with this design.

Other objects in this 1625–1650 period in non-Chinese designs are illustrated in the Calado-Baart book; these are from both the Lisbon museums and the Amsterdam Vlooyenburg examples. Among the most interesting of those from Amsterdam are several blue-and-white plates with a complex geometric design in a Muslim decorative style, in recognition of that cultural influence from Portugal's past (Calado and Baart 1989: 79–80). In addition, there are plates and bowls with armorial devices, decorative jars, *albarelli*, and other attractive objects in the round. Throughout this group the blue and white color generally prevails; however, manganese (purple) is often added to the decoration, and

for the more ambitious forms, yellow (Calado and Baart 1989: 39).

Portuguese sherds in an all-over design of blue vertical stripes, from a circa 1630–1645 context, have been found recently by the Rediscovery Project at Jamestown, Virginia, under the direction of William M. Kelso (Bly Straube, personal communication, 1997). Sherds of a plate in this striped pattern were found at Martin's Hundred by Noël Hume (1991: 99–101), although there have been differences of opinion concerning the origin of this striped ware—whether it is English or Dutch. Recent archaeological evidence indicates a Portuguese provenance. In the 1950s, a similar plate was excavated at Jamestown by Cotter (1958: 184). In the shallow drawers filled with Portuguese sherds from Jamestown at Colonial National Historical Park on Jamestown Island, there are many of these striped sherds, and Jan Baart has informed the author of finding pieces of these on the island of St. Martin, West Indies (personal communication, 1998).

Under-rim decorations, some quite attractive, are usually present on *faiança* plates. The most common one of these in Amsterdam's

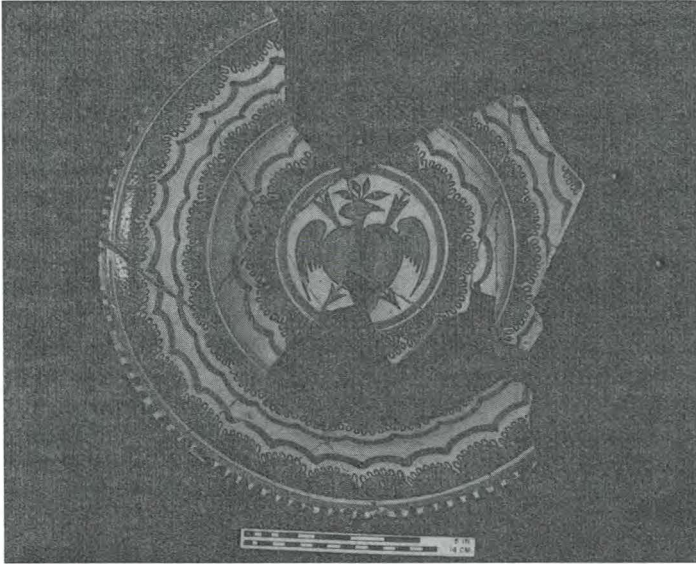


Figure 5. Blue-and-manganese *faiança* bowl with the Portuguese lace pattern, 1650–1670. (Courtesy of the Department of Historic Resources, Commonwealth of Virginia, Richmond.)

Vlooyenburg 1625–1650 group is a line forming a half-circle around a small, stylized floral device (Calado and Baart 1989: 48). This design alternates with a vertical line, to encircle the under-rim of the plate. Family names of owners frequently appear on the bases of plates. Such potter's marks as occur on Dutch *faience* and that of several other European countries, however, are not common to Portuguese *faiança*. The Portuguese plates have footings.

The third quarter of the 17th century (1650–1675) brought further variety to Portuguese *faiança*, when a new motif was added, a striking simulation of lace. This lace design appears sometimes in blue decoration only, at other times in blue and manganese; it appears, too, on both small and large objects and in a formal and informal context. The sherd shown on the right of Figure 4 was found on the site of the first building of Harvard College (John Stubbs, personal communication, 1997). Its design is identical to the one on a shallow bowl with straight vertical sides among the dishes recovered from Amsterdam's Zwanenburgerstraat (Calado and Baart 1989: 85).

The large dish with three rows of lace and a winged heart pierced by two arrows (FIG. 5)

was excavated at the Pettit plantation site, only a little more than one mile from Jamestown, on Governor's Land. From classical times, the arrow has represented Cupid, and a heart pierced by one is symbolic of love. In this case, however, the design may have a religious symbolism.

A similar dish was found by Cotter at Jamestown, at a spot close to the James River—a point mentioned in his report. Half of the center motif of this dish is broken away, but comparison with a similar pristine piece in a Portuguese museum indicates that this is a plain, stylized floral decoration. Among the trays of sherds from Jamestown at Colonial National Historical Park, there is a large sherd in the lace pattern, from what must have been a very handsome molded lobed dish.

At times, it has been suggested that these sherds excavated in Virginia are Spanish, not Portuguese. And indeed, a lace motif was used at Talavera de la Reina, in Spain, in the 17th century. Frothingham, in her book on the tin-glazed Talavera ware, shows a plate decorated "in bobbin lace painted in purplish black" (possibly manganese, or, more likely, a combination of iron and manganese oxides) (Frothingham 1944: 33, 39). The pattern in the

Virginia lace-decorated artifacts, however, is different in concept from the Talavera dish shown by Frothingham (Frothingham 1944: 33, 39).

Although during the course of this study three heavily illustrated works on Talavera ware were searched carefully, nothing significantly resembling the Virginia or Massachusetts examples of lace decoration was discovered (Caviro 1944, 1978; Frothingham 1944). On the other hand, books by Portuguese ceramic authorities, Queirós and Santos, produced almost exact images of the two Virginia pieces (Queirós 1948: 58; dos Santos 1960: 122).

The late John Goggin wrote that the potteries of Puebla, Mexico, had produced a lace design in the 17th century (Goggin 1968). By this he may have meant Puebla Polychrome, which is somewhat lace-like, though not like the Portuguese example.

The *faiança* of the third quarter of the 17th century is represented in the Calado-Baart work by a small bowl with the design shown here in Figure 5, several plates, and a handsome armorial jar, all decorated in a color combination of blue and manganese. There is a strange mixture here of Chinese and European motifs on the same pieces. Ming border symbols are still to be seen, but the prevailing decorative influence in the designs is the Chinese Transitional Period, with its motifs of flowers, human figures, animals, and birds (Butler, Medley, and Little 1990).

From a ceramic point of view, the so-called Transitional Period was from the death of the Wan-li emperor, in 1620, until the early 1680s, when a new director of a new dynasty took over the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen. These had been neglected during the bitter Manchu wars of that period, and nearly destroyed.

Some of these Portuguese plates from the third quarter of the 17th century are over-decorated, with patterns that are unattractively bizarre. One, an octagonal plate, has a plethora of European border designs and vignettes, and for the center well decoration, a grotesque male figure in a long Chinese robe; he carries a parasol and a cane (Calado and Baart 1989: 86). The plates with these fantastical, quasi-Chinese designs, however, have under-rim designs that are well executed and much more aesthetically pleasing than those

from the second quarter of the century (Calado and Baart 1989: 46, 91).

The Trade That Brought It Here

Portugal in 1640 revolted against Spanish rule, and the Duke of Braganza became its king. Immediately, Charles I of England recognized him as such, for Spain was England's enemy. Living Englishmen remembered Mary Tudor's hated marriage to Philip of Spain; they remembered also the Armada. Spain's enemies were England's friends. The subsequent marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza, daughter of the new king of Portugal, cemented the friendship and reconfirmed Portugal as England's most-favored nation in trade. Among those to benefit from this were the American colonists.

During the Civil War in the 1640s, England could not supply its colonies with all the luxury items they desired, and a trade developed between certain of these colonies and Portugal. From America, Portugal needed fish, timber, pipe staves (for making the large casks used for its wine), wheat, and tobacco. What America needed from Portugal were the luxuries that England could not supply, and wine and brandy were foremost among these; so was *faiança*.

That Portuguese tin-glazed pottery was in use in American colonial settlements in the first half of the 17th century is well established, but there are questions: How did it get here? Were Portuguese ships trading directly with the American colonies, or were English or Dutch ships responsible for these Portuguese imports? The complete answers to these and other relevant questions about this early trade remain elusive, but it is known that by the 1630s Portuguese wares were coming into the American colonies. The catalogue of an exhibition in 1982 in Boston confirms that 17th-century inventories of estates in New England list "Lisborne ware" (Fairbanks and Trent 1982: 277-279). The author believes that American or Portuguese ships brought this here.

Maine

In the 17th century, the present state of Maine was a territory with an uncertain

future. Both the French and the English claimed it, and both made settlements there. Gradually, the French withdrew to Canada, leaving it to the English.

This area possessed two native products that the Portuguese desired—timber and fish. During the 16th and 17th centuries Portugal's fishing fleet made regular voyages to the Grand Banks and to its adjacent waters. Just to the south were the virgin pine forests of Maine, and it was there that they could get the staves to make the casks they needed for holding their wine. But the Portuguese, too, had something that the settlers of Maine needed—salt for preserving their fish. Then there were also the dishes of clear white ground with blue and purple and sometimes yellow decoration. The frontier colonists had never seen such dishes, and wanted them.

There is documentary evidence that in 1638 earthenwares came from Portugal to Richmond Island, off Cape Elizabeth in Maine (Fairbanks and Trent 1982: 277–279), but these wares were there much before that, one suspects. Within recent years, at least two archaeological projects at 17th-century sites in Maine—Pemaquid and Arrowsic—have produced sherds of Portuguese tin-glazed pottery dating from that period. Reports from each of these projects show sherds with typical Portuguese design elements (Camp 1975: 28–29; Baker 1985: 29) (FIG. 6).

Massachusetts

The 1640s were critical years for the colonists of Massachusetts. As members of the first generation of English people to settle in this country, they were attempting to work out and solidify an economic system that would provide them with security. In the midst of this, England, which had nurtured them and on whom they had depended for continuing economic support, exploded into civil war. The monarchy was overthrown; the king was dead—killed at the order of his people, through questionable parliamentary procedures.

For the Boston merchants, most of whom had familial and commercial ties with London, the shock from these violent changes was somewhat lessened because many sympa-

thized with their new Cromwellian masters. But there was no doubt that having England torn apart by civil war would vastly affect their commerce and their lives.

Both the merchants' credit and the manufactured goods they needed from England were affected by the war. Earlier, however, metal coinage, never plentiful in the colonies, had become so scarce that in 1640 the Massachusetts General Court passed a decree encouraging barter, the oldest of all media of exchange (Bailyn 1964: 48). Wampum, made from sea shells and originally designed for use in the fur trade with the Native Americans, came into use to purchase domestic necessities; Dutch currency was accepted as legal tender.

Bailyn (1964: 91), in his study of New England merchants, writes that they, "from the first, conducted their trade within the confines of the British commercial system." Nevertheless, it is obvious from the records of the Boston notary public, William Aspinwall (1903), and the diary of John Hull (*Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society* 1857: 167–265), a prominent merchant in that city, that early in the 1640s commercial leaders were convinced that they must set about directing their own economic destiny.

In the years between the settlement of Boston and the beginning of the civil war in England, the Boston merchants had carried on most of their shipping trade in English ships, or in those leased from the Dutch of New Netherland with Dutch skippers. Now, they decided to expand eastward into more active foreign trade, and to build their own vessels for it.

The first ship built in Boston was the *Trial*, and its first voyage, in 1643, was to Fayal, a Portuguese island in the Azores archipelago, famous for its wine trade (Weeden 1890: 193). On her maiden voyage, the *Trial* sailed from Charlestown, which lay across the Charles River from Boston. She carried a cargo of dried codfish and pipe staves, the latter, as we have seen, needed by the Portuguese for making the containers in which wine was stored and shipped (Weeden 1890: 193). On its return voyage, the *Trial* brought back wine and sugar, and possibly bay salt, the latter needed in New England for the preservation

of fish. Recent excavation of the Maudlin Street site in Charlestown (judged to be ca. 1640–1660) by Steven R. Pendery (1991), retrieved many 17th-century sherds of Portuguese *faiança*.

Apparently this voyage of the *Trial* to trade in Portugal was not illegal, in spite of English laws forbidding its colonies to trade with foreign countries. The reason it was not is because of the special trade relationship that existed between England and Portugal, mentioned earlier (Noël Hume 1970: 140). The trade in staves and fish with Portugal was to prove immensely profitable for the Boston merchants, and, for a time, nothing was allowed to interfere with it.

To stimulate their commerce and obtain the coinage and consumer goods they needed so badly and could not get from England, Boston merchants, like others in New England and New York, entered into a symbiotic relationship with the piratical buccaneers of the West Indies. This practice was not suppressed completely until later in the 17th century. As for the English Navigation Act of 1651, which limited the colonial trade with other countries, one historian wrote that it was “loosely administered or wholly evaded” (Weeden 1890: 227).

The Portuguese trade to Fayal, Madeira, the Cape de Verde islands, and Lisbon for the most part was not carried on directly with Portuguese merchants of these places, but was accomplished through “factors.” These were Bostonians who lived in the so-called Wine Islands, or in Lisbon, and acted as agents through whom trade was transacted (Aspinwall 1903: 110).

There appears to have been no specific mention of household ceramics or dishes in the cargo manifests, yet this does not mean that such wares were not included among the “other commodities” mentioned, especially as ceramic wares are little affected by water and could be stowed in the holds of ships where more fragile goods could not.

The most valid testimony to the omission of ceramics from ship manifests is found in the case of the *Witte Leeuw*, a three-masted, square-rigged Dutch Eastindiaman of around 700 tons that the Portuguese sank in 1613 in the harbor of St. Helena, as it was returning

from the Orient with a cargo of late Ming trade porcelain. Yet the loading list of the *Witte Leeuw* contains no mention of the presence of ceramics in the cargo.

The published report on the salvage operation and cargo of this ship, made in the 1970s by the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam, with the aid of other prominent Dutch museums, has this to say of the omission of ceramics from the loading list:

The decision was made to concentrate efforts on the study and recovery of the cargo, rather than on the study of the construction of the hull. The unexpected discovery (since no China-ware is mentioned on the loading list) of a significant quantity of highly important Chinese porcelain artifacts was a further incentive in reaching such a decision. (van der Pijl-Ketel 1982: 23)

James Deetz directed excavations at the Joseph Howland site in Kingston, Massachusetts near Plymouth, some years ago, and pieces of Portuguese pottery were found there (FIGS. 7, 8). As has been mentioned already, in Charlestown, which was settled earlier than Boston, sherds of Portuguese ceramics were recovered during a project directed by Steven R. Pendery from cellar fill in the Maudlin Street district. Pendery has recently published a preliminary study of 17th-century Portuguese ceramics found in New England that contains drawings of designs on sherds. These should be of great value to archaeologists for identification purposes (Pendery 1999: 58–76). In Cambridge, archaeologists from the Peabody Museum, while excavating the site of Harvard College’s first building, found pieces of this Portuguese ware there.

In Boston, which economically was in the 17th century the largest and most important city on our eastern seaboard, archaeologists working at several sites have found Portuguese tin-glazed ceramics. One site at which two blue-and-manganese Portuguese sherds were discovered is the Bostonian Hotel site, which lies just north of Faneuil Hall (Bradley et al. 1983: 25–26). The most important site in the Boston area for sherds of the Portuguese ware, however, is likely to be in the North End, along the route of the Central Artery.



Figure 6. Five sherds of polychrome Portuguese *faiança* recovered from the Clarke and Lake Site, Arrowsic, Maine 1654–1676. (Photograph by Steve Bicknell. Courtesy of Emerson Baker, Salem State University.)



Figure 7. Polychrome rim sherd, possibly Portuguese *faiança*, from the Joseph Howland Site (C-5), Plymouth, Massachusetts. (Photograph by Mary C. Beaudry. Courtesy of Plimoth Plantation and the Pilgrim John Howland Society.)



Figure 8. A selection of blue-and-white Portuguese sherds from the Joseph Howland Site (C-5), Plymouth, Massachusetts. (Photograph by Mary C. Beaudry. Courtesy of Plimoth Plantation and the Pilgrim John Howland Society.)



Figure 9. Blue-and-white Portuguese plate sherds from the Cross Street Backlot Site, Boston, Massachusetts. (Photograph by Ann-Eliza Lewis. Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.)

Begun in 1992, the archaeological excavation of three sites—Cross Street, Paddy's Alley and Mill Pond—has resulted in the recovery of a number of what the author believes to be Portuguese sherds (FIG. 9). Another opinion is necessary, however, before these are indisputably identified as such.

Rhode Island

Because of its notorious disregard for English maritime laws governing colonial trade and its interest in ships and the sea, Rhode Island, in the 17th century, had more than an ordinary opportunity to acquire Portuguese *faiança*. Very early in the colony's history, Newport had become the center of a thriving shipping industry that would eventually bring down upon it the wrath of the English authorities and accusations not only of illegal trading practices but also of actual piracy.

In a report to the English Board of Trade, Governor Samuel Cranston explained the reason for the strong commitment of the colony to shipbuilding: "Because of the smallness of the colony, many sons of farmers could find no work on the land, so they took to the sea" (Preston 1932: 23). Just as the youth of Rhode Island could not resist the sea, the merchants of Newport, like those of Boston at this time, could not resist a profitable illegal commerce with the buccaneers of the Caribbean.

They received through this trade a variety of consumer goods that at that time they could never have obtained from England. Finally, Rhode Island merchants began to outfit privateers to prey on the ships of other countries considered to be England's enemies. The English Board of Trade did not look upon these activities favorably, however, and condemnatory messages came down from that body in language that made no attempt at diplomacy. Rhode Island was accused of being "the refuge and retreat of illegal traders and the receptacle of goods imported thither from foreign parts contrary to law" (Preston 1932: 12). A report to the king in 1698 by the English Board of Trade declared Rhode Island to be notorious for practices of illegal trade and piracy (Preston 1932: 17–18).

The Rhode Island officials, for their part, responded to these angry fusillades in calmly disingenuous language, denying any direct commerce with European nations. While documentary evidence shows that Newport merchants were importing wine from Portugal's islands of Fayal and Madeira, it does not show that they were doing this directly (Preston 1932: 23).

In support of the suggestion made earlier in this study that everything brought from Europe in trading ships was not always itemized individually in the manifests, there is a deposition made before a Rhode Island notary public that appears again to confirm this. This document concerns the capture of a Newport merchant ship, the snow *Diligence*, which was making its way back to Newport from Surinam. The deponent states that the cargo of the ship was "molasses and sugar," which, presumably, was what the ship's manifest specified as its cargo. According to the deponent, however, following the capture of the *Diligence*, the attacking crew of French and Spaniards "hove into the Sea" a keg of "China Ware," along with other goods such as linen and rum (Preston 1932: 42).

This is the only direct mention of ceramics in the cargo of a ship during this period encountered by the writer in the research attending this study. The lack of specific mention of ceramics in ships' cargo manifests of this period, yet its obvious presence as cargo on this Newport merchant ship, supports the belief that ceramics were generally not considered significant enough to be itemized on cargo manifests, but, rather, were covered under the "other commodities" item generally found on manifests.

In spite of the well documented trade that Rhode Island had with the Portuguese, this writer has not been able to document the presence of Portuguese ceramics on Rhode Island's archaeological sites. In view of that colony's free-wheeling maritime history, however, the evidence of its importation of wines from Fayal and Madeira, and the presence there of Portuguese Jewish merchants who settled in Newport in 1658, all make it reasonable to



Figure 10. Blue-and-white cup or bowl fragment recovered within Fort Orange, Albany, New York. (Courtesy of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; photograph by Paul R. Huey.)

believe that Portuguese tin-glazed pottery was imported there in the 17th century.

New York

Curiously little Portuguese *faiança* has been reported as having been recovered from New York excavations, as far as this study has found. The circumstance that until 1664 this area was a part of New Netherland does not satisfactorily explain this, because *faiança* has been found in other colonies owned by the Dutch in the 17th century, and in Amsterdam.

In the Albany area a cup or small bowl of this ware was excavated at the house of the trader, Hendrick van Doesburgh, within Fort Orange in the winter of 1970–71 (FIG. 10) (Huey 1989). In addition, sherds that are probably Portuguese were found at the Schuyler Flatts site, north of Albany. Both sites were excavated under the direction of Paul R. Huey.

Another 17th-century site on North Pearl Street that is currently being excavated in Albany may locate Portuguese tin-glazed *faiança*.

As for the discovery of any Portuguese sherds in New York City, none has been reported, so far as this writer has been able to

learn. Yet, that city should have these remains, because its merchants dealt constantly with those of Portugal, as the Boston merchants did.

In her book on early New York City's merchants and commercial activities, Cathy Matson (1998: 60) writes particularly of the Gomez and Lopez families, who were Sephardic Jews and important merchants of New York. They lived there in the 17th century and traded with Portugal. Quoting from "An Account of Her Majesty's Revenue in the Province of New York" by Julian Bloch, Matson (1998: 61) writes that prior to 1700 New York City merchants were dealing in goods from Southern Europe such as "wine, brandy, and fancy stuff" and says further that they favored Lisbon and the Portuguese Wine Islands. In view of Lisbon's manufacture of the attractive *faiança*, is it not reasonable to assume that this was among the "fancy stuff" being imported into New York in the 17th century?

This writer believes that sherds of Portuguese ceramics are in the archaeological record but unrecognized. To believe otherwise, in view of the trade its merchants had with Portugal, seems unrealistic.

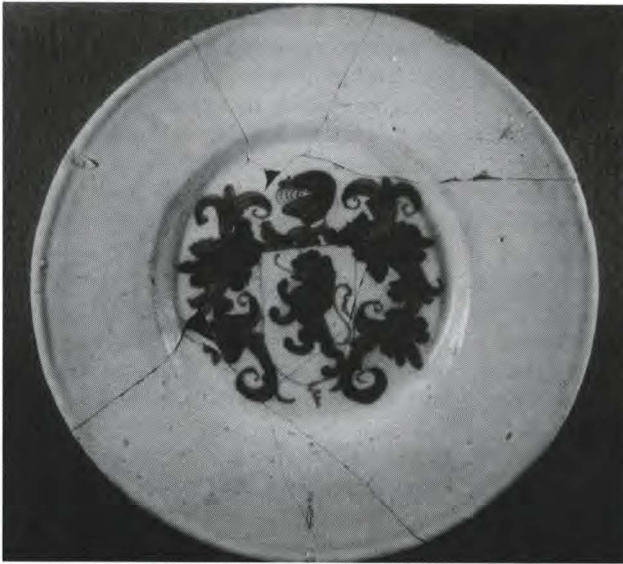


Figure 11. Blue-and-white *faiança* armorial dish from Anne Arundel County, Maryland, 1649–1660. (Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Trust.)

Maryland

Maryland, in the 17th century, appears to have had a cultural and economic climate closer to that of Virginia than to any other of the English colonies. So it is somewhat surprising to find that the number of Portuguese sherds found there is far less than those discovered in Virginia. Unlike Virginia, Maryland was not subject to the restrictions of English laws, including those that concerned foreign imports, because it was under a proprietary government. A charter of 1632 from Charles I to George Calvert, first Lord Baltimore, named him Lord Proprietor of a vast tract of land lying north of Virginia, and gave to him, and future Lords Proprietor, absolute authority over the colony he was to found there (Winsor 1967: 521).

In March 1634, the first settlement was made and was named Ste. Marie's Citie. In the 1980s, the St. Mary's City Commission authorized an archaeological excavation here under the direction of Henry Miller. During this project, Portuguese ceramic sherds were found.

In 1649, fifteen years after the establishment of the St. Mary's City settlement, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Proprietor of the Maryland colony, invited a group of English Puritans to settle on a tract of land on both

sides of the Severn river, which included part of the present city of Annapolis. The new community was named Providence (Luckenbach 1995).

Early in the 1990s, an archaeological project under the direction of Al Luckenbach, Archaeologist for Anne Arundel County, was completed for this Broadneck site, as it is now called. During the excavation, certain ornamental buttons, jewelry, and other luxury items were found, suggesting that this settlement had a higher quality of material culture than perhaps had been anticipated (Luckenbach 1995: 17).

The Portuguese armorial plate (FIG. 11) that was found in a trash-filled cellar supports this conclusion (Al Luckenbach, personal communication, 1997). The heraldic charge on the plate, a lion rampant, is said to be the coat-of-arms of the Lloyd family, of Maryland (Luckenbach 1995: 28). Two handsome dishes with this armorial pattern were recovered from the wreck of the Portuguese ship *Sacramento*, however, which sank off the coast of Brazil in 1668; in the archaeological report for that wreck, these are said to have been a part of the personal dining service of Francisco Correa da Silva, General of the Portuguese Brazilian armada, who, apparently, was aboard the ship

(de Mello 1979: 222–223). As several plates with a strong similarity to these are shown in the Calado-Baart *Faiança Portuguesa* as having been found in Amsterdam or Lisbon museums, it may be that this device came to represent a generic heraldic type, although originally the arms of the distinguished Silva family. A large Portuguese dish from Jamestown also has a center decoration of a lion but does not appear to be an armorial piece.

The armorial plate appears to have three sagger marks in a triangular pattern on the rim of its *obverse* side. This suggests a deviation from the way *faience* plates were usually placed in the saggars, which resulted in the sagger marks being on the *reverse*.

Of the circumstances surrounding the Maryland plate, Luckenbach has this to say: "In my opinion, the [Broadneck] site dates from 1649 to around 1655 or 1660, and the plate was discarded in 1650" (Al Luckenbach, personal communication, 1997). Calado and Baart (1989) assign their plates of this kind to a 1625–1650 context.

Having mentioned the strong Dutch influence obvious in the material possessions of the Providence settlers, the Luckenbach (1995: 22) report comments on the cosmopolitan nature of the trade with the American colonies, ending with a specific reference pertinent to the thesis of this study: "The artifactual assemblage from Providence," he writes, "includes such items as ceramics from Portugal, Italy and Spain." It may be that this armorial plate came to Maryland through a Dutch trader, but it seems to be unmistakably of Portuguese provenance.

Virginia

Of the 13 original English colonies in America, only one—Massachusetts—appears to have rivaled Virginia as a market for Portuguese tin-glazed pottery. Indeed, the number of sherds from Virginia's archaeological sites preserved in various repositories in Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Richmond is most impressive.

The sherds of Portuguese tin-glazed ware found in Virginia by John L. Cotter and others differ somewhat from those of the Boston area:

The former tend to be larger and more formal in pattern, as would be expected in a newly rich and exuberant plantation society with tobacco money to spend—lions rampant, hearts pierced by arrows, rows and rows of lace!

The Virginia colonists built their first ocean-going ship in 1611, followed by a larger one in 1613, and continued to build merchant ships sporadically throughout the first half of the 17th century (Bruce 1896: 227). Although some of the wealthier planters acquired vessels for their own use, shipping as an important industry never flourished in Virginia. Edward Neill (1886: 435), in *Virginia Carolorum*, explains this: "The Virginia planter did not, like the New England farmer, have to seek the foreign purchaser"—because Virginia tobacco was a sufficient lure to bring to that colony trading ships from far and wide, loaded with goods to exchange for the coveted plant. Some of those ships brought Portuguese wines and Portuguese pottery; the amount of this pottery that is preserved in various Virginia repositories today is evidence of this.

It is reasonable to consider that Boston merchants, whose ships traded regularly with other colonies along the eastern seaboard, must also have been among the main suppliers of these goods to Virginia. There is abundant documentary evidence of relations between Boston merchants and Virginia planters. The name of Isaac Allerton, a New England entrepreneur of note, appears with surprising regularity in Virginia's early commercial history. Thomas Thoroughgood, who witnessed a deposition made in Boston in the 1640s, was possibly a relative of Adam Thoroughgood, a prominent Virginia planter.

There are in the Aspinwal (1903) *Notarial Records* the names of other Bostonians doing business with Virginians. A Boston deposition of March 10, 1649, records that the ship *Mary*, of London, was late in sailing to Fayal, to pick up a cargo and take it to Virginia (Aspinwal 1903: 210). Another Boston deposition in these records, for October 1649, shows that James Neale, who at times lived in Fayal as factor for several Boston merchants, chartered a Dutch ship, the *Orangetree*, of Amsterdam, Christoffel Jansen, master, to take a cargo from Virginia to

Lisbon (Aspinwal 1903: 210). On October 10, 1649, John Manning, a merchant in Boston, gave his power of attorney to James Neale "of Fayal" to transact business for him in Virginia (Aspinwal 1903: 210). These depositions are typical of references connecting Boston merchants with both the Wine Islands and Virginia.

Another source through which Virginia planters could acquire Portuguese ceramics, and no doubt did, was the West Indies. In the 17th century, these were a middle ground for trade between the countries of western Europe and America. Bruce, after discussing this, adds: "The commercial intercourse between Virginia and the West Indies was often of an illicit character" (Bruce 1896: 328). It cannot be disputed that a good deal of wine and other commodities came into the colonies through ways seriously frowned upon by the English Board of Trade.

According to one Virginia historian, Madeira and Fayal wines were favorites with Virginia planters. Not only were they ordered privately by the landowners, but both could be purchased in taverns and mercantile houses throughout the colony (Bruce 1896: 328). Because of a serious scarcity of coins in Virginia in the 17th century, coins of foreign nations were put into circulation there. Among these were Portuguese coins, which points to an established trade relationship between Portugal and Virginia (Bruce 1896: 328).

While this study has not been able to show the actual presence in Virginia of Portuguese ships, there is a suggestion that the ships of that nation delivered cargoes of salt there. It is certainly reasonable that Portugal would be willing to go to some trouble to exchange bay salt, one of her most important exports, for Virginia tobacco. With such direct contact, it is also reasonable to assume that Portuguese *faiança* would have been among other goods brought in on Portuguese ships, as it is clear that Virginia planters owned a large amount of it.

There are three probable sources for the *faiança* found at Virginia's archaeological sites: Boston's seaboard trade with that colony; trade with the West Indies; and a direct Portuguese salt trade with Virginia.

Methods Used in Pursuing This Study

During the period of this study, the author worked as a volunteer with sherds of 17th-century Portuguese *faiança* from three archaeological sites in America. She also visited sites in several states to familiarize herself with examples of this ware.

She wrote a number of letters to archaeologists, asking them to tell her of any American site where Portuguese pottery had been found of which they knew. She studied as many books and articles about this subject as she could find, and has examined illustrations of it in Portuguese museums.

After reviewing illustrations of the tin-glazed wares from the three places in Europe most likely to have made wares of a similar pattern (Holland, England, and Spain), and three others less likely to have (Italy, France, and Germany), no identical designs to those of *faiança* were discovered.

She wishes to thank Jan Baart, a friend and correspondent, and Rafael Salinas Calado for making available to her their booklet, *Faiança Portuguesa 1600-1660 Portuguese Faience*, which has been her principal guide.

Diagnostic Aids

A tin glaze on both surfaces is the prerequisite for all *faiança*, but it is not in itself helpful as a diagnostic criterion since there are so many types of ceramics that are tin glazed.

An experienced archaeologist once told the author that some *faiança* has a micaceous body, but she has not been able to learn if all of it has; this must be determined.

To be familiar with the minute details of the decorative designs of *faiança* by careful study of them is the most dependable aid in identifying Portuguese *faiança* and the wares with the designs that are closest to it. This requires thoughtful observation over a long period.

The paneled rim design is the *faiança* version of the design called by American archaeologists the Wan-li design, and by Dutch archaeologists the *kraakporselein* design (see FIGS. 2, 3).

The most helpful single motif among the *faiança* diagnostic aids is a narrow, tendril-like

line that curves sharply to end in a solid dark blob. Among the Maudlin Street sherds this assumes the spiral shape of a helix (Pendery 1999: fig. 6).

Another common motif is the lace pattern in blue and purple.

Plates with medium-wide vertical radial lines around the circumference of rim and cavetto, and either short lines or a non-line decoration in the center or well of the plate are likely to be of Portuguese manufacture.

Conclusion

That Portuguese tin-glazed pottery (*faiança*) was imported into the American colonies in the 17th century was established many years ago by American archaeologists. That its presence here was incidental to an active trade between the colonists and the Portuguese in wine, bay salt, and other commodities is an inescapable conclusion. Jan Baart came to the same conclusion in his study of the Portuguese *faiança* found in Amsterdam and North Holland. He wrote that Dutch ships trading with Portugal for important commodities needed by the Dutch probably brought back this ware "as a side product" (Calado and Baart 1989: 23).

The present study has placed the Portuguese ware in five colonial areas chosen for concentrated research on its presence on American sites. It has shown, too, that there was ample trade communication between the two countries to facilitate American importation of these ceramic wares in others.

Baart and Calado carried their study of the Portuguese ceramics discovered archaeologically in Amsterdam, and those in the Lisbon museums, only through the third quarter of the 17th century. In 1672 England passed a law forbidding the importation into its colonies of "any kind or sort of Painted Earthen wares whatsoever" (Noël Hume 1970: 140). Exceptions were Chinese ceramics and stoneware bottles and jugs.

In the third quarter of the 17th century, England had passed the Navigation Acts in an attempt to increase trade and to prevent the

import of foreign goods into her colonies. At the same time English ships were to be stationed in the West Indies to curb the activities of pirates, buccaneers, and smugglers in that area. To do these things demanded a reorganization of the navy, a move made even more essential because of the three maritime wars against the Dutch in which England became engaged. This writer does not know at what date Portuguese ceramics ceased to be imported into North American colonies, but suspects that it was in the last quarter of the 17th century. By that time, England had much stricter control over imports than formerly, when smuggling and disregard for the Navigation Acts were flagrant. Also, developments in the potting industry in England were producing new forms of earthenware and stoneware more durable and cheaper than former tin-glazed wares. Even Continental Europeans and Americans began to import these wares. The chronology of the Calado-Baart book on the Portuguese ceramics imported into the Netherlands ends in 1675; it seems likely that the American imports of the Portuguese ware may have ended about the same time.

In the limited response received to queries asking for information on sites in the original 13 colonies where Portuguese ceramic sherds have been recovered, several experienced archaeologists replied that they might have encountered these without recognizing them. Their candor was admirable, and not unexpected. In view of the general lack of awareness in America of Portuguese cultural artifacts and the little information about these that have appeared in English-language publications, this is quite understandable.

A number of people, however, responded to the call for help quickly and decisively. To these, the author gives most sincere thanks and assurance of her gratitude. Without their cooperation, this study would be far less complete; with their help, an exploratory study of 17th-century Portuguese *faiança* and the extent to which it was imported into America was greatly enhanced. Now, the way is open for more extensive appraisal of this ceramic item and the part it had in our country's early ceramic experiences.

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Charlotte Wilcoxon first became interested in the history of the Dutch in New Netherland when she moved to Schenectady, New York, in the early 1930s. For a time in the 1960s she lived in Sante Fe, where she was a member of the curatorial staff at the Museum of New Mexico. Returning to New York in the 1970s, she was for 15 years Research Associate of the Albany Institute of History and Art, and the *de facto* curator of its ceramics collection. During these years she published two books, *Albany: A Dutch Profile* and *Dutch Trade and Ceramics in America in the 17th Century*, also articles in magazines and journals. In 1987, by a Resolution of the New York State Legislature, she was one of the three persons to receive the first New York State Library Research award for "sustained commitment to the history and profile of the state of New York." Mrs. Wilcoxon became interested in the presence of 17th-century Portuguese ceramics in America as the result of a talk with Jan Baart, then city archaeologist of Amsterdam, who had found Portuguese ceramic sherds in the area of that city occupied in the 17th century by Sephardic Jewish exiles from Portugal.

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