



Asociación Cultural Galeón de Manila

**The West Indies & Manila Galleons:  
the First Global Trade Route**

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## **Abstract**

Most essays on the Manila Galleons or West Indies Fleet concentrate on the respective trade routes across the Pacific and the Atlantic, without assessing the greater, global route that both fleets comprised. The aim of this paper is to reflect on the larger context of the West Indies-Manila Galleon trade, a route that spanned from Europe to the Americas, and to Asia-Pacific, the first global trade route in history, and the longest in its time. The line covered 15,000 miles in its full length from Spain to the Philippines, linking Seville with Veracruz in its Atlantic phase, then Mexico City and Acapulco overland, and eventually Manila across the Pacific.

The Pacific line existed since Urdaneta’s discovery of the *tornaviaje* in 1565, and linked Manila with Acapulco regularly until 1815. Asian goods like silk, porcelain, ivory and spices were carried to Acapulco in exchange for silver from the mines of Zacatecas and Potosi. Much of this merchandise was then carried overland through Mexico City to Veracruz, where it was loaded on the West Indies Fleet or *Flota de Indias*. The fleet sailed to Seville after calling at Havana, carrying valuable commodities from New Spain, Peru and Asia. This influx of Asian goods for over two centuries led to interesting cultural phenomena in Spain, such as the adoption of the Manila shawl in the flamenco dress, today considered inherent to Andalusian fashion.

In the opposite direction, the West Indies Fleet already sailed the Atlantic between Spain and the Americas since Columbus’ first voyage in 1492. The fleet split into two convoys in the Caribbean, *La Flota* which headed for Havana and Veracruz, and *Los Galeones* which called at Cartagena and Portobello. Spanish wines, olive oil, and manufactured goods were shipped to Veracruz and then embarked on the Acapulco

galleon to Manila. The introduction of Spanish tools, textiles and agricultural products in the Philippines led to important changes in the way of life of its population. It also led to the adoption of many Spanish terms in Tagalog which are since considered native terms. Examples include “kutsylio” (knife), “martylio” (hammer), “araro” (plow), “algodon” (cotton), “oliba” (olive), and “asukal” (sugar). The regular shipment of goods from Seville to Manila (and back) and the fact that it fell under the single, central jurisdiction of the *Casa de Contratación*, proves the existence of this global trade route that spanned three continents.

Interestingly, this route was not only the longest in its time; it was also the first global trade route in history. Other historical routes such as the ancient European-Indian routes, the Silk Road (up to the 13<sup>th</sup> century) or the contemporary Portuguese and Dutch spice routes, were all inferior in length. More importantly, the continental coverage of these other routes was smaller as they were limited to Europe and Asia, sometimes Africa. The Seville-Manila route also linked, and crossed, the American continent.

Linking three continents was just one of the achievements of the global Spanish-Philippine route. More significantly, it contributed to the development of trade within Asia and Europe, either by promoting existing routes or by establishing new ones. Large quantities of Spanish 8-Real silver coins entered the Asian markets via Manila, in exchange for all sorts of luxury goods. These coins eventually became legal tender in countries such as China. On the opposite end, Seville became one of the major trade centers in Europe, leading to growth of manufacturing activity. In the Americas, the global route also resulted in the development of internal trade within New Spain and Peru.

## **I. Introduction**

The subject of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon is usually studied in a monothematic way, by concentrating on the route that stretched the Pacific Ocean, describing the trade system, and the goods, culture and ideas that travelled from the Philippines to Mexico, and back. Most works analyze the Asian exports to the American continent through Manila, and eventually to Spain, and look at the ramifications of these commercial links in Peru, and the origin of those products, especially China. Most historical essays however, do not visualize the greater, global perspective of the entire trade route that stretched from Manila to Seville, crossing two oceans and linking three continents.

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the larger context of the Manila Galleon trade, a worldwide route that spanned from Europe to the Americas, and to Asia-Pacific, the first global trade route in history, and the longest in its time. The line covered 15,000 miles in its full length from Spain to the Philippines, linking Seville with Veracruz in its Atlantic phase, then Mexico City and Acapulco overland, and eventually Manila across the Pacific. This work emphasizes the importance of this route as one of the early, if not first example of globalization, specially from a cultural point of view.

The paper does not aim to produce new findings on the Manila Galleon trade, but to propose this wider approach and perspective. It also suggests future research intended to measure the global dimension of the global route by quantifying the goods shipped the entire journey from Manila to Seville, and those shipped back, versus those consumed in the Americas.

## **II. Historical background**

In 1521 a Spanish expedition led by Ferdinand Magellan reached the Philippines after sailing around the southern tip of South America and crossing the Pacific Ocean. The ships landed in Homonhon (Samar) in March after passing Guam and the Marianas, and reached Cebu a month later. The friendly chieftain Rajah Humabon of Cebu, requested Magellan’s help against his enemy Lapu-Lapu in the nearby island of Mactan. The resulting campaign led to the death of Magellan and some of his men. Later, Rajah Humabon himself killed another 21 men, including the newly-appointed leaders Duarte Barbosa and Juan Serrano. As a result, navigator Juan Sebastian Elcano took command of the expedition and drove the remaining ships to Palawan, Brunei, and later the Moluccas, where they collected a valuable cargo of spices. With only one ship remaining, Elcano led the journey back to Spain across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape of Good Hope, reaching Cadiz in September 1522 aboard the “Victoria”. This expedition became the first world circumnavigation.

Although Magellan took possession of the Philippine archipelago for the King of Spain in 1521, colonization did not start until the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi from New Spain (present-day Mexico) in 1565. With instructions from Philip II, Viceroy Luis de Velasco sent Legazpi to explore the Philippine islands in search for spices, and find a maritime route back to Mexico, which previous expeditions by Loaisa (1525), Saavedra (1527), and Villalobos (1543) had failed to accomplish. Villalobos, who named Samar and Leyte “the Philippines” after King Philip II, sailed in August 1543 in eastward direction, but returned a few weeks later, unable to hit upon favorable winds. This time, the *tornaviaje* or return route was discovered by Andres de Urdaneta, an Agustinian friar and navigator in Legazpi’s expedition. Urdaneta was able to return to

Acapulco by sailing north to latitude 39°, where his ship, the “San Pedro” picked the eastward *kuroshio* winds from Japan, blowing it across the Pacific to the coast of California. From there he sailed south along the coast, until finally reaching Acapulco. The entire eastward transpacific journey lasted over 4 months.

Meanwhile, Legazpi explored Samar, Leyte, and Bohol, where the famous “blood compact” was signed with chieftain Sikatuna, in March 1565. Later, the first Spanish settlement of the Philippines was founded in Cebu. In 1571 Manila was established as the capital of the archipelago, made a Captaincy General. Legazpi’s arrival started a period of Spanish colonization that lasted over three centuries, creating a permanent relationship between the Philippines and the Americas until 1815, and with Spain until 1898. The political, cultural, and commercial links between such distant lands required a network of regular sea lines that connected them efficiently.

A West Indies Fleet already sailed the Atlantic between Spain and America since Columbus’ first voyage in 1492. In the 1560’s a monopoly system was organized with escorted galleons sailing fixed routes on regular schedules. The fleet was composed of two lines: *La Flota*, which sailed to Veracruz, and *Los Galeones*, which travelled to Nombre de Dios (later Portobelo) on the Isthmus of Panama. They sailed together across the Atlantic, and then split both ways upon entering the Caribbean. *La Flota* would call at San Juan (Puerto Rico), Santo Domingo, and Havana before heading for Veracruz, while *Los Galeones* called at Cartagena de Indias before reaching Nombre de Dios. On the return trip, both convoys would call at Havana before sailing together back to Spain. The West Indies Fleet carried passengers and goods for trade in both

directions. Manufactured goods were sent from Europe to New Spain, and precious metals and agricultural products were shipped back from the Americas.

With the colonization and settlement of the Philippines, the Spanish Crown also needed a regular line of communication across the Pacific, to link Mexico City and Manila. The Philippines became an autonomous captaincy general attached to the Mexico-based Viceroyalty of New Spain. Manila was the capital of this captaincy general, which included Guam and the other Mariana Islands, Palau, the Caroline islands, and for a time some of the Moluccas. With trade becoming the major incentive for immigration to the Philippines, a regular maritime route was also indispensable. The Manila-Acapulco Galleon, inaugurated in 1565 by Urdaneta, was the response to this logistical need.

The galleon or *Galeón de Manila*, usually sailed once a year in each direction. The journey from Acapulco to Manila lasted about three months, including a short stopover in Guam. On the opposite direction it required four to five months, sometimes even six, due to the long detour it made to pick the eastward *kuroshio* winds near Japan. Initially a royal decree mandated that two galleons sailed together from Manila to Acapulco. However, after 1650 the convoy was reduced to one, as this represented a smaller investment for the Manila merchants, who could fit the entire cargo in a single, larger galleon. In 1702 a new decree ratified this practice.

The galleon made possible the political and commercial relationship with New Spain, of which the Philippines and other Pacific territories were an extension. The ships carried civil servants, soldiers and priests from Mexico to Manila, including newly appointed governors, archbishops and sometimes *Visitadores* or royal inspectors. It also carried

silver to pay for civil and military expenses of the colonial government in the Philippines, and official correspondence between both cities.

More importantly, the galleon played a crucial role in the development of trade. Large quantities of silver were shipped from Acapulco to Manila in exchange for valuable Asian goods. Mexican and Peruvian silver became the basis of a lucrative trade between the Philippines and neighboring countries like China, the Moluccas, Japan, Formosa, Siam and even India. Merchants in the Philippines bought valuable goods from Chinese traders who arrived in Manila, and from local farmers and manufacturers, and loaded them onto the galleon according to a system of *boletas* or cargo permits granted to Spanish residents of the Philippines. Spices from the Moluccas, silk, ivory, porcelain, and jade from China, Japanese lacquer ware, and Philippine cinnamon and cotton textiles were among the goods embarked in Manila. The merchandise was then shipped to Acapulco, where import taxes were paid to the Royal Treasury, and sold to Mexican merchants in return for silver. One year later, the galleon returned to Manila stacked with silver 8-Real coins or bars from the sale of these products. The silver was distributed to the Manila tradesmen, who normally used it to purchase new cargoes of goods to be sent to Acapulco the next time round.

The Manila-Acapulco trade lasted until 1815, when revolution broke out in Mexico, leading to the country's independence. Thus, for two and a half centuries, a remarkable trade route operated across the Pacific, bringing huge quantities of silver to the Philippines, and fine goods from all corners of Asia to the Americas. Such an extraordinary commercial exchange made Manila the largest center of trade in the Orient. Indeed, trade became the major source of income for the Philippines.



### **III. The Manila Galleon as part of a World Trade Route**

The full Manila-Acapulco-Veracruz-Seville trade route spanned 15,000 miles in a straight line, crossing three continents and two oceans. As we have seen, the Manila galleon sailed the Pacific to Acapulco and back. On the Atlantic, the *Flotas* and *Galeones* linked Seville with the Americas through a network of four Caribbean ports: Veracruz, Portobelo, Cartagena de Indias and Havana. The *Flotas* sailed to Veracruz on the Atlantic coast of Mexico, and the *Galeones* travelled to Portobelo (Panama) with part of the fleet splitting off and calling at Cartagena de Indias, an important fortified port in present-day Colombia, where the riches from Peru were loaded on the galleons. On the return trip to Spain, both fleets would meet in Havana, and sail together as a convoy across the Atlantic, calling in the Canary Islands, and finally up the Guadalquivir River, to Seville. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the departure and destination point of these fleets was changed from Seville to Cadiz, which is on the Atlantic coast, and therefore easier to access.

Thus, two long maritime routes operated on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans simultaneously, connected by an overland route that linked Veracruz with Acapulco via Mexico City, known as the *Camino de China* or Road of China. It also incorporated a smaller route from the silver-producing town of Zacatecas, which supplied this precious metal to the Manila galleon. The *Camino de China* was the only overland course in the entire Manila-Seville route, and it made possible the link between the Atlantic and Pacific sea routes.

The fact that the combined Manila-Acapulco and Veracruz-Seville lines composed a single global route is explained by two main factors. Firstly, although both lines were

managed separately for administrative purposes, they fell under the single jurisdiction of the Spanish *Casa de Contratación* or House of Trade, a government division that oversaw all navigational and trade matters in Spain and her territories, and collected taxes for it. The *Casa* itself was overseen by the *Consejo de Indias*, a Council of the Indies which exercised supreme authority over all matters in the West and East Indies, that is, America and the Philippines. This control was exercised through the Viceroyalties, and at a lower level the *Audiencias*, a type of court with legislative and administrative powers. The *Casa* exerted a monopoly over all trade in the colonies and authorized or prohibited sea routes. Thus, a central government institution controlled the full Manila-Seville trade route.

Secondly, the fact that numerous commodities (and passengers) were transported the entire journey from Seville to Manila, and from Manila to Seville, indicates that a single, global route operated. On one hand, European products arrived in Manila after the transatlantic and transpacific journey, for example: Spanish wines and olive oil contained in large earthenware jars. These products were mostly from the Aljarafe region in Seville, a rich agricultural area conveniently located near the port where the Atlantic fleets sailed from. Manufactured products such as home utensils, construction tools, weapons, and textiles were also exported to the Philippines. The introduction of many such items resulted in Spanish terms entering native Philippine languages and dialects. For example, Tagalog words for table cutlery are mostly Spanish loanwords: “kutsara” (spoon) comes from *cuchara* in Spanish, “tinidor” (fork) from *tenedor*, “kutsylio” (knife) from *cuchillo*, and so forth. Many tools used for construction or agriculture also have Spanish-derived terms: “martylio” (hammer) from Spanish

*martillo*, “tornylio” (screw) from *tornillo*, “lyabe” (wrench) from *llave*, and “araro” (plow) from *arado*<sup>1</sup>.

This also applies to fruits, vegetables and animals that were brought from Spain aboard the West Indies fleet and Manila galleons. Examples include the “cabalyo” (horse) from Spanish *caballo*, the “baka” (cow) from *vaca*, the “mola” (mule) from *mula*, and agricultural products such as “algodon” (cotton) from *algodón*<sup>2</sup>, “asukal” (sugar) from *azúcar*, and “oliba” (olive) from *oliva*. Other products were brought directly from America, and the Spanish version of the native word was incorporated, for example: “patatas” (potato) from *patata*, “mais” (corn/ maize) from *maiz*, and “tsokolate” (chocolate) from *chocolate*. This indicates that trade existed between Spain and the Philippines, and that a Seville-Manila route was in operation.

In the opposite direction, a variety of Asian products reached Spain via Acapulco and Veracruz. Chinese silk, ivory, porcelain, jade, gold, nacre and gemstones, spices such as clove and nutmeg from the Moluccas, Japanese furniture and lacquer ware, and Philippine cinnamon, tobacco, cotton and textiles were exported from the Philippines. Much of this was distributed within New Spain and Peru, and therefore stayed in the Americas. However, part was also sent to Veracruz and loaded on the West Indies fleet for Spain. This influx of Asian goods resulted in some cultural influences in Spain which have remained to this day.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter V looks at this phenomenon more closely.

<sup>2</sup> In Tagalog, the word “koton” (from the English term “cotton”) is also used.

The classical example is the adoption of the *mantón de Manila* or Manila shawl in the traditional flamenco dress, considered inherent to Andalusian fashion. As silk garments arrived in Seville aboard the galleons, the shawl soon became popular among women, and with time, incorporated to the *traje de sevillana* or Sevillian woman’s dress, which is since the icon of flamenco fashion. Another example is the *paipay*, a kind of fan which became popular in Spain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These Philippine terms were incorporated to the Spanish language as well as *carabao* (a sort of buffalo used for agriculture), *pantalán* (a wooden pier), *abacá* (Manila hemp) and *sampaguita* (a flower native to the Philippines).

#### **IV. The West Indies-Manila Galleons: The first global trade route.**

In this chapter we will compare the length of the major historical intercontinental trade routes up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with that of the West Indies-Manila Galleon route or “Spanish Crown Trade Route” (SCTR) as it will be called here. The comparison will show that the latter was the first global route, and the longest in its time. To do so, we will first make some considerations about the number of continents, especially from a cultural point of view, and the importance of those trade routes that crossed and linked them.

##### **A - Introduction**

As a result of globalization, the world nowadays is a relatively unified concept. From an anthropological point of view, the exercise of tracing differences between peoples in different continents is more arduous than it may have been in the past. Increasing travel, trade and new forms of communication have reduced the differences between cultures, especially since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Various considerations can be made on the number of populated continents in the world in order to understand commonalities between peoples and nations. From a geographic point of view, consensus varies between a total of five and six<sup>3</sup> continents, the difference being whether North and South America are considered different blocks. The six inhabited continents would be: Asia, Europe, Africa, North America, South America and Australia (sometimes called Oceania or Australasia). Other views establish four continents, with Europe and Asia being considered one (Euroasia) as they are part of the same landmass.

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<sup>3</sup> Antarctica is excluded, as it is an uninhabited continent.

Although most categorizations use the criterion of a common landmass (or separation by water) to identify continents, they also incorporate historical or cultural links as a secondary principle. This is the case in the consideration that Europe and Asia are different continents, a common interpretation in the West. Although continental Europe and Asia form a single landmass, cultural and historical differences are applied to separate them into two blocks. In countries like Russia however, only the landmass criterion applies, and both continents are considered to be the same.

If we were to consider the cultural and historical links as the primary criterion, the number of continents would be quite inferior. Logically this varies throughout history, as links have generally increased with time. In the current 21<sup>st</sup> century it could even be argued that a single, culturally integrated continent exists: the global village. However, looking at some basic differences in the large cultural blocks of the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and taking into account the great world civilizations from which they originated, a small number of continents could be counted. In fact, from our point of view a total of **three continents** can be considered to have existed at the time of the Galleon trade (16<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) from this broad cultural-historical perspective:

1. The Mediterranean (Southern and Central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and its extensions to Central Africa). The civilizations that flourished around the Mediterranean (Mesopotamia, Rome, Greece, Egypt, Muslim caliphates) and their descendant nations and empires have been permanently connected through trade, exploration, wars and conquests, and therefore have major cultural, and even religious links.

2. The Americas. Ancient civilizations such as the Olmec and Toltec peoples, and later the Mayas, the Incas and other groups originated in Central and South America. The arrival of the Spaniards and Portuguese in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century started a process of unification of all inhabited territories of the American continent under two political structures belonging to culturally related nations which has resulted in a Latin American culture. Later, the arrival of the British and the French led to other European-based cultures in North America, but these were comparatively small until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Eastern Asia. Asia is a major area of early human civilizations, especially India, China, Japan, Korea and South East Asia. The Indian peninsula and the Far East are perhaps the cradles of human civilization. Certain geographically-stable peoples arose in the Indus Valley and China. Later, other groups and cultures developed, which tended to migrate from place to place. Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century however, their movements, whether peaceful migrations or conquests, were mostly from East to West. Europe was a sort of extension or peninsula of Asia, and was often conquered by Asian peoples.

Since ancient times, links between the Mediterranean and the Far East have existed. They may have been interrupted from time to time, but in both areas people knew about the existence of *each other*.

Only from the discovery of the New World, by and for Europeans, was real and permanent global contact established: permanent trade started between Asia and America, and between America and Europe, thus resulting in all three continental blocks being connected. These two new links, of the total three, were part of a single route (Asia-America-Europe) that linked the territories under the Spanish Crown.

Between Asia and America, via Manila and Acapulco, and from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, at least one ship sailed every year<sup>4</sup>. By the standards of those times, this can doubtlessly be considered a permanent link. Following the shortest line from Manila to Acapulco, the distance is about nine thousand miles, but to complete the route, we should add another three hundred miles overland for the trip Acapulco-Veracruz, and another five thousand five hundred between Veracruz and Sevilla. Therefore, by following the shortest distance for each of the three phases, the complete route adds up to a little less than fifteen thousand miles.

## **B - Intercontinental trade routes**

In this section we will calculate the length of the major historical trade routes between continents up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and compare them with the West Indies-Manila Galleon route or SCTR (for Spanish Crown Trade Route). This will help prove that SCTR was the longest trade route in its time, and the first global route in history. We will also put together a distance index based on the length of the first world circumnavigation made by Magellan and Elcano to help explain the differences in length between routes.

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<sup>4</sup> Within the full 1565 – 1815 period about 40 galleons did not sail. On average, that is only one year out of seven, that the trip was not made.



The methodology used to calculate the distance of each route consists of selecting some strategic intermediate points<sup>5</sup> for each route, then measuring the distance<sup>6</sup> between them, and eventually adding up the distance of all sectors in every route. Except when stated, we have used the internet tool **gc.kls2.com** to calculate these schematic routes.

### **1. The first world circumnavigation:**

**Figure 1.1. Magellan and Elcano’s Circumnavigation of the World**

Source: <http://mappery.com/map-name/Magellans-Circumnavigation-of-World-1519-1522>

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<sup>5</sup> Only current cities will be used, not historical ones.

<sup>6</sup> The distance is based on the shortest airplane route, and therefore only for comparative purposes.



The above is the longest route calculated for the sake of comparison. It is not actually a trade route, but a voyage of exploration that brought the Far East to Spain's attention in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The distance of this voyage will be used to compare the major trade routes in history, and to put together a distance index where 100 = Magellan & Elcano trip.

**Figure 1.2.** Schematic Map of Magellan & Elcano's World Circumnavigation

Source: [gc.kls2.com](http://gc.kls2.com)



Distances in miles, by sector, and total:

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Sevilla-Las Palmas	855
Las Palmas-Dakar	918
Dakar-Conakry	441
Conakry-Recife	1,907
Recife-Rio de Janeiro	1,156
Rio de Janeiro-Mar del Plata	1,340
Mar del Plata-Punta Arenas	1,220
Punta Arenas-Isla de Pascua	2,658
Isla de Pascua-Cebú	8,790

Cebú-Kota Kinabalu	620
Kota Kinabalu-Ambon	1,063
Ambon-Dili	376
Dili-Cape Town	6,845
Cape Town-Sal	4,433
Sal-Horta	1,540
Horta-Sevilla	1,245
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>35,407</b>

It should be noted that for calculation purposes, the distance taken for each phase of the route is the shortest one. This is not historically accurate, but because the methodology is common to all routes, the percentage deviation remains unchanged, and thus the terms of comparison are not affected.

The figure of plus thirty five thousand miles represents Magellan-Elcano’s world circumnavigation, and can be considered the maximum route for comparative purposes. A simple index could be created by calculating the percentage that each of the following trade routes represents compared to the maximum route. In the next section the following international historical trade routes will be studied: three Europe-India routes, two Ancient Silk Routes, the Portuguese Spice Route, and our SCTR.

## **2. Europe-India Routes**

**Figure 2.1.** Schematic Europe-India Routes



This route existed in ancient times. We have taken three different paths and then measured their respective lengths, always starting in Rome and ending in Goa:

**Table 2.1.a**  
 Roma – Bari – Tirana – Istanbul – Tabriz – Zahedan – Quetta – Goa

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Roma-Bari	228
Bari-Tirana	155
Tirana-Istanbul	475
Istanbul-Tabriz	949
Tabriz-Zahedan	1,032
Zahedan-Quetta	366
Quetta-Goa	1,113
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4,318</b>

**Table 2.1.b**  
 Roma – Catania – Heraklion – Tel Aviv – Kuwait – Dubai – Goa

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Roma-Catania	335
Catania-Heraklion	582
Heraklion-Tel Aviv	604
Tel Aviv-Dubai	802
Kuwait-Dubai	531
Dubai-Goa	1,375
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4,229</b>

**Table 2.1.c**  
 Roma – Catania – Alexandria – Aden - Goa

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Roma-Catania	335
Catania-Alexandria	953
Alexandria-Aden	1,587
Aden-Goa	1,939
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>4,814</b>

**3. Ancient Silk Routes**

**Figure 3.1.** Ancient Silk Route

Source: [http://bizchinatown.com/img/travel/ancient\\_silk\\_road\\_map.gif](http://bizchinatown.com/img/travel/ancient_silk_road_map.gif)



**Figure 3.2.** Schematic Ancient Silk Route



We have taken two different paths and then measured their respective lengths, always starting in Venice and ending in Xi'an (from north to south):

**Table 3.2.a**

Venice – Istanbul – Trabzon – Tbilisi – Baku – Almaty – Urumqi – Xi'an

Sector (sub routes)		Miles
Venice-Istanbul		886
Istanbul-Trabzon		574
Trabzon-Tbilisi		273
Tbilisi-Baku		279
Baku-Almaty		1,400
Almaty-Urumqi		524
Urumqi-Xi'an		1,310
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>5,246</b>

**Table 3.2.b**

Venice–Catania–Heraklion–Beirut–Zahedan–Quetta–Islamabad–Xi'an

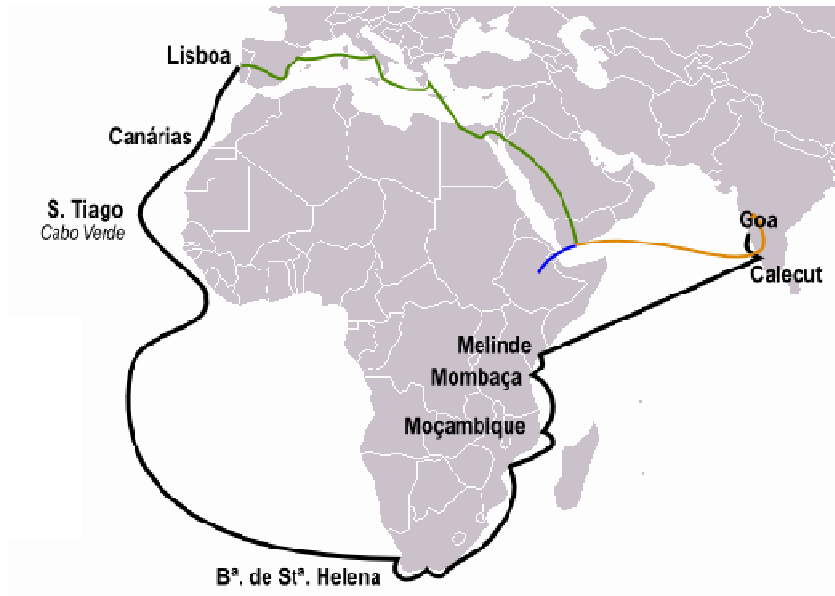
Sector (sub routes)		Miles
Venice-Heraklion		972
Heraklion-Beirut		597
Beirut-Tahran		908
Tahran-Zahedan		704
Zahedan-Quetta		366
Xi'an-Quetta		430
Islamabad-Xi'an		2,036
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>6,013</b>



#### 4. Portuguese Spice Route

**Figure 4.1.** Portuguese Spice Route (black line)

Source: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/21/Caminho\\_maritimo\\_para\\_a\\_India.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/21/Caminho_maritimo_para_a_India.png)



**Figure 4.2.** Schematic Portuguese Spice Route<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Although the route is often considered to end in Goa (India) where the Portuguese had a major commercial hub, we have extended the route to Malacca (Malaysia) as some Portuguese galleons continued their journey to that port until 1641, when it was ceded to the Dutch.



**Table 4.2** Portuguese Spice Route  
 Lisboa-Dakar-Cape Town-Maputo-Mombasa-Goa-Cochin-Malacca

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Lisbon-Dakar	1,732
Dakar-Cape Town	4,107
Cape Town-Maputo	1,003
Maputo-Mombasa	1,575
Mombasa-Goa	2,698
Goa-Cochin	325
Cochin-Malacca	1,905
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>13,345</b>

**5. West Indies-Manila Galleons or “SCTR”**

**Figure 5.1.** Schematic Spanish Crown Trade Route (SCTR)



**Table 5.1**  
 Spanish Crown Trade Route (SCTR)

Sector (sub routes)	Miles
Manila-Acapulco	8,926
Acapulco-Veracruz	287
Veracruz-Sevilla	5,448
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>14,661</b>

**C - Index elaboration**

To aid in the comparison of the different trade route lengths, an index has been constructed, the Trade Route Length Index (TRLI). It applies the value 100 to the world circumnavigation route, and then calculates proportional values for every other route as shown in Table 6.1:

**Table 6.1**  
 Trade Route Length Index (TRLI)

<b>Historical Routes</b>	<b>miles</b>	<b>TRLI</b>
World circumnavigation	35.407	<b>100,00</b>
Europe-India routes		
2.1.a	4.318	<b>12,20</b>
2.1.b	4.229	<b>11,94</b>
2.1.c	4.814	<b>13,60</b>
Silk routes		
3.2.a	5.246	<b>14,82</b>
3.2.b	6.013	<b>16,98</b>

Portuguese Spice route	13.345	<b>37,69</b>
Spanish Crown Trade Route (SCTR)	14.661	<b>41,41</b>

The table shows that the Spanish Crown Trade Route was the longest historical route: it presents a TRLI of 41.1, spanning 14,661 miles.

This helps explain that the SCTR was the **first global trade route**. It was the longest trade route up to that moment in history, but also the first one to link the three major cultural blocks or continents from the viewpoint of human civilization: The Mediterranean, the Americas and Asia.

## **V. Some repercussions of the West Indies-Manila Galleon trade**

In chapters II and III we have seen some of the cultural repercussions of the Manila-Seville link, the first global trade route. Spanish influence on Mexican and Philippine culture was much stronger than vice versa, as Spain was the colonizing power, and thus brought its own culture on the territories it settled. Spaniards brought their Catholic religion, their architecture, their arts, and their language to the islands. Missionary work led to the widespread of Christianity by the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and today the Philippines is one of only two predominantly Christian countries in Asia, the other being East Timor. Spanish construction methods and styles transformed the urban scenery in the islands, and led to a genuine Filipino style of architecture, which combines Spanish,

native, and Chinese elements. The "Bahay na Bato" or traditional Filipino house made of stone and wood, usually nipa palm or bamboo, is a good example.

The Manila galleon also brought the Spanish language to the Philippines. Although initially it was not a priority to teach the language to native Filipinos, important educational institutions which used Spanish as the medium of instruction were set up by religious orders from the beginning. The earliest examples include the Colegio de San Ildefonso (Cebu) founded in 1595, which later became the University of San Carlos, the University of Santo Tomas (Manila) founded in 1611, the San Juan de Letran School (Manila), established in 1620. In 1859 the Ateneo de Manila University was also founded. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century an important class of educated *Ilustrados* was fluent in Spanish, and Filipino literature in Spanish emerged. In 1863, almost fifty years after the galleon trade ended, Queen Isabella decreed that a public education system be set up in the Philippines, leading to the construction of many schools built across the archipelago. By the 1890's a large portion of middle class Filipinos spoke Spanish as their first or second language. In fact, when independence was achieved from Spain, and the First Philippine Republic established in 1899, the Malolos Constitution chose Spanish as the country's official language. Later, during the period of US administration which lasted until 1946, Spanish was marginalized, and gradually declined.

However, Spanish remains in thousands of words in Tagalog (and other Philippine languages) which are derived from Spanish, as a result of their introduction through the galleon trade, specially manufactured goods, agricultural products and textiles. The following list includes a number of such terms derived from Spanish:

**Construction & Agriculture tools:**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
hammer (martillo)	martilyo
machete (machete)	machyete
corkscrew (tirabuzón)	tribuson
wrench (llave inglesa)	lyabe
manual drill (barrena)	barena
brush (cepillo)	sipilyo
screw (tornillo)	turnylio
chain (cadena)	kadena
bucket (cubo)	kubo

**Weapons**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
sword (sable)	sable
dagger (daga)	daga
gunpowder (polvora)	pulbura

**Home furniture & utensils**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
spoon (cuchara)	kutsara
fork (tenedor)	tinidor
knife (cuchillo)	kutsylio
chair (silla)	silya
stool (banqueta)	bangketa
window (ventana)	bintana
table (mesa)	mesa
book (libro)	libro

glass (vaso)	baso
towel (towel)	tuwalya
tap (grifo)	gripo
lens (lente)	lente (also means flashlight)
lamp (lampara)	lampara
clock (reloj)	relo, rels

### **Clothes & footwear**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
undershirt (camiseta)	kamiseta
trousers (pantalón)	Pantalón
underpants (calzoncillo)	kalsonsilyo
shoes (zapatos)	sapatos
slipper (Chinela)	tsinelas
socks (calcetín)	kalsetin
stockings (medias)	medyas
coat (abrigo)	abrigo
wool (lana)	lana

### **Agricultural products (fruits and vegetables)**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
potato (patata)	patatas
onion (cebolla)	sibuyas
pear (pera)	peras
pepper (pimiento)	paminta
peas (guisante)	gisantes
cabbage (repollo)	repolyo
cucumber (pepino)	pipino



corn (maiz)	mais
indigo (añil)	anyil (also “indigo”)
sugar (azucar)	asukal
cotton (algodón)	algodón (also “koton”)
olive (oliva)	oliba
wine (vino)	bino

### **Animals**

<u>English (Spanish)</u>	<u>Tagalog</u>
Cow (vaca)	baka
Horse (caballo)	kabayo
Mule (mula)	mola
Duck (pato)	pato

Although to a lesser extent, Asian and Philippine culture also influenced Mexico and Spain, especially in art forms, including fashion. A classical example is the adoption of the silk *mantón de Manila* with East Asian decorative motifs, in the Spanish flamenco outfit. The original *mantons* with Chinese designs were shipped from Manila all the way to Seville, and were later produced in Seville itself.

Religious and decorative art in Mexico and Spain was also influenced by Oriental designs of sculptures and other objects produced in Manila by Chinese craftsmen, and shipped aboard the Manila galleons. In Mexico there are interesting examples of religious statues made of carved ivory which reflect Asian features or styles. The import of such objects in America and Spain had an influence on local manufacturers, who incorporated such Oriental styles to their products.

*“The West Indies & Manila Galleons: the First Global Trade Route”*  
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## **VI. Conclusions**

In this essay we have explored the Manila Galleon as part of a Spanish global trade route that crossed two oceans and spanned three continents. The regular shipment of goods for two and a half centuries between Seville and Manila, and the fact that it fell under the jurisdiction of the *Casa de Contratación*, demonstrates that a single route operated.

The combined West Indies and Manila galleon trade, or SCTR, was the first global trade route in history, and the longest in its time. The entire Manila-Acapulco-Veracruz-Seville line covered almost 15,000 miles, surpassing in length other historical routes such as the ancient European-Indian routes, the Silk Road, or the competing Portuguese spice route. More importantly, the SCTR had a larger continental coverage, as it linked Europe, America, and Asia-Pacific.

Beyond the impressive achievement of linking the three continental blocks, the SCTR also contributed to the development of trade within Asia, either by promoting existing routes, or by establishing new ones, especially between Manila and many other Asian ports. Traders arrived in Manila from many different regions including: China, Japan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, Sumatra, Ormuz, and Camboya. These merchants sold their products to traders who sent them to New Spain (Mexico) aboard the Manila Galleon. In the opposite direction, significant quantities of Spanish 8-Real silver coins from Mexico entered the Asian markets via Manila. In some countries like China, the 8-Real coins even became legal tender. In the Americas, the SCTR also resulted in the development of internal trade within New Spain and Peru, at least during a significant

period of time<sup>8</sup>. On the other end of the route, Seville also became a major trade center in Europe, leading to new infrastructures in Spain and growth of manufacturing activity.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the West Indies-Manila Galleons made possible the worldwide exchange of goods, peoples, and culture. By linking the three major continents for the first time in history, the route represents the earliest example of globalization.

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<sup>8</sup> Trade between Acapulco and other ports such as Callao (Viceroyalty Peru) took place during most of the existence of the Manila galleons (1565-1815) whether officially (until the 1630's, and again from 1774 to 1815) or unofficially as contraband.

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