Much has been written about the presence of Far Eastern porcelain at the Ottoman court and in Safavid Iran, as well as its impact in European palaces and houses from the seventeenth century onwards. Virtually nothing, however, has been published about the existence of Japanese and Chinese porcelain in Morocco. In particular, Imari ware was—and continues to be—highly prized, both as decoration in the furnishing of houses and palaces, and for the presentation of food, including rituals involving food and drink. Although there is no Far Eastern porcelain in the national museums of Morocco, examples can still be found in private collections. Of particular interest are family collections with items acquired in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, prior to the modern collecting of porcelain as antiques. Through these private collections we can gain a rare insight into the pre-modern taste for and usage of Far Eastern porcelain in a Muslim country.

It is well known that Chinese porcelain was in great demand and had a significant impact on Islamic ceramics manufacture from the Abbasid era onwards. Chinese porcelain was highly regarded by rulers and the wealthy across most regions of the Muslim world, and was included in trousseaus and presentation gifts. Not only has Chinese porcelain been found at various locations in the Middle East, including Hormuz and Siraf on the Persian Gulf, Samarra in Iraq, and Fustat (old Cairo), but Ibn Battuta, who was born in Tangier in 1304 and reached China in 1345, indicated that Chinese porcelain was known in the Maghrib. As for earlier centuries in the Maghrib, the presence of Chinese porcelain is less clear. No porcelain, for example, has been found at al-Hasa in northern Morocco, which flourished between the ninth and eleventh centuries.

The use of porcelain in Muslim lands for serving food was probably encouraged by the condemnation in the hadith about eating from vessels made of precious metals. It is known, for example, that in Yemen the Rasulid sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf (r. 1377–1401) displayed many dishes of Chinese porcelain for his son’s circumcision feast; in Edirne, sherbets and sweets were served in porcelain bowls at the circumcision feast held in 1457 for Bayezid and Mustafa, the sons of the Ottoman sultan Mehmed the Conqueror. The Ottoman sultans subsequently amassed a vast collection of Chinese porcelain at the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, along with various Japanese and European pieces. Most of this porcelain was used for serving food or other purposes; it thus contrasted with the Ardebil Shrine collection in Iran, which was not used.

The Chinese porcelain items in the present-day collection of the Topkapı Palace Museum number over ten thousand. According to the inventory completed in 1936, the Topkapı Palace Museum also had 721 Japanese pieces. There is no specific mention, however, of Japanese porcelain in the archives of the Topkapı Palace. One can only assume that the earlier cataloguers, like their European contemporaries, were incapable of distinguishing Japanese from Chinese items. Furthermore, the Ottoman court’s method of acquiring Far Eastern porcelain was haphazard. There is only limited evidence to suggest that the Ottomans made special orders. Some porcelain was received as gifts from foreign rulers, especially from Iran. Other items were obtained as booty, and by unclaimed inheritance or confiscation (Ott. muhallefat), the latter being prominent in the eighteenth century. Purchases were rare, although there was a porcelain market in Istanbul, and the court disposed of objects there. By the eighteenth century, it was the practice for Ottoman officials to be given presents when they took up a new post, and they often received porcelain.
Historical sources also point to the use of porcelain in the Mamluk era (1250–1517), and Far Eastern porcelain was sold in the Khan Khalili in Cairo in 1615–16. Cairo seems to have acted as a point of dispersal, and porcelain was also disseminated at Mecca. The Haj pilgrimage was a means by which Moroccan officials, merchants, and scholars immersed themselves in the culture of the Ottomans. In this respect, however, it should be noted that by 1722 the British had set up a trading mission in Jidda, and, by the late eighteenth century, Europeans were challenging the Suez–Jidda monopoly of the Egyptians.

In the late sixteenth century, the Moroccan ambassador to the Sublime Porte, al-Tamgruti, described a royal reception at the Badi Palace in Marrakesh, where food was served on “…gilt dishes from Malaga and Valencia [probably Mudejar-style lusterware plates], and on admirable dishes from Turkey [presumably Iznik ware] and from India [presumably Far Eastern]....” Might it have been the case that Far Eastern porcelain began to replace Spanish lusterware and even Iznik pottery in Morocco as these wares ceased to be available? Neither Spanish lusterware nor Iznik pieces have been preserved in Moroccan museums or family collections. Iznik tiles were, however, in use in Morocco by the early seventeenth century, as seen, for example, on the mihrab of the Zawiya of Mawlay Idris in Fez, which was rebuilt by Sultan Zaydan (r. 1603–27). There was a regular exchange of ambassadors and lavish goods between the Sa’dian (1511–1659) and Alawi (1631–) dynasties in Fez and Marrakesh and the Ottoman court in Istanbul. Indeed, in Moroccan Arabic, a common word for a dish or plate is *tabsil*, which is probably derived from the Turkish *tepsi*. This implies a transfer of Ottoman ceramic fashions (and culinary traditions).

Yet the geographical location of Morocco also exposed the country to the expansion of European maritime trade, which from the sixteenth century brought Far Eastern goods around the Cape of Good Hope. Portugal occupied most of the Moroccan ports in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Chinese porcelain seems to have reached the country through them. Several decades ago, archaeological investigations at Qsar es-Seghir, the enclave in northern Morocco held by the Portuguese from 1458 to 1550, revealed the presence of Chinese porcelain in the uppermost levels of the Portuguese occupation debris, which can be dated to the first half of the sixteenth century. Beginning with the capture of Sebta (Ceuta) in 1415, the Portuguese were the first of the European seafaring nations to establish trading forts or “factories” (Port. *feitoria*) on the shores of Africa and Asia. The first Portuguese trade contacts with China occurred between 1516 and 1521, and in 1543 the Portuguese reached Japan. By this time, they had established themselves as a mercantile power in Asia. Chinese porcelain was among the many commodities that they traded, and a market developed for it in Lisbon.

The taste for Imari porcelain in Morocco, however, was a later phenomenon, made possible by the growth of large-scale Dutch and British maritime trade. The Dutch began to trade in Asia in the seventeenth century and soon displaced the Portuguese. The first contact between Holland and Japan was made in 1600, and the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*) was founded two years later. Thereafter, the Dutch opened a trading facility at Hirado in Japan in 1609, moving to Deshima at Nagasaki in 1641. From 1639 to 1854, the Dutch were the only European traders allowed in Japan. Headquartered in Asia at Batavia (Jakarta) on the island of Java from 1622, the Dutch East India Company initially purchased Chinese porcelain in quantity, having become aware that there was a great market for it in Europe and elsewhere. More than three million pieces of Chinese porcelain were shipped to Holland in Dutch East Indiamen between 1602 and 1657 alone. Much of it was then reexported to other European countries or conducted by seaborne trade to the Mediterranean. The latter region was thoroughly exploited by both the Dutch and the British, and helped make their early fortunes. By the 1640s, the Dutch were also shipping hundreds of thousands of pieces of Chinese porcelain to ports in Japan, Southeast Asia, India, Iran, and Arabia. At first, the Dutch shipped *kraak-porcelein* (carrack-porcelain), the name applied to Ming dynasty (1368–1644) blue-and-white, but then expanded to other varieties. From the late seventeenth century, Europeans were ordering porcelain with shapes and decoration quite different from the usual Chinese repertory.

When political unrest in China accompanying the fall of the Ming dynasty disrupted the Chinese porcelain trade for several decades, the Dutch East India Com-
pany found a substitute in Japanese porcelain. Company records indicate that Japanese porcelain was purchased from the 1650s onwards. The porcelain included blue-and-white wares, enameled wares, and polychrome enamels decorated with gold. Many had a rich decoration of floral and other motifs adapted from Chinese porcelain. Production in Japan accelerated drastically; by the 1660s, between 50,000 and 100,000 pieces of porcelain were produced annually in the Arita region. Much of it was made for export, and given the name Imari after the port from which it was exported. Japan began to enjoy a near monopoly on porcelain exports to Europe and Asia. Between 1659 and 1682, about 190,000 pieces of Japanese porcelain were shipped to Europe in Dutch East Indiamen. It is noteworthy that while much of Muslim Asia seems to have preferred blue-and-white wares, Holland and other European countries also sought brilliant enamel colors, including Imari dishes with blue, red, and gold decoration. It was around this time that Japanese Imari began to enter Morocco and a taste for it developed.

The Japanese near monopoly was, however, short-lived. From the early 1680s, the irregular deliveries, uneven quality, and high prices of Japanese porcelain led the Dutch East India Company to return to Chinese porcelain, which was starting to become available again in quantity. The bulk of the continuing trade with Japan was then taken over by representatives of the Dutch East India Company acting in a private trading capacity. Moreover, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Chinese traders may have bought over twice the amount of Japanese porcelain by value as that bought by the Dutch, and they sold it to Europeans who did not have access to Japan. During the peak of the trade in Japanese porcelain, which lasted from 1659 to 1745, it was highly sought after and expensive in Europe. After 1757, however, the Dutch East India Company did not buy porcelain in Japan, largely because of the high prices, although private individuals still brought Japanese porcelain on to the market.

The increased Chinese competition in the first half of the eighteenth century also extended to the field of Imari. Adopting the Japanese palette of underglaze blue, iron red, and overglaze gold, the Chinese version of Imari is similar, although the red is brighter than is typical of Japanese wares. The earliest pieces of Chinese Imari ordered by the Dutch, carrying coats of arms, date from around 1705. Chinese Imari was less expensive than Japanese Imari and available in greater quantity; it was therefore more profitable for those who transported goods from Asia to Europe. Nevertheless, Chinese Imari still cost about twice as much as ordinary Chinese blue-and-white.

The arrival of Japanese and Chinese Imari in Morocco happened to coincide with a new phase of Moroccan relations with Europe. In the seventeenth century, Dutch and English consuls were appointed in Morocco, particularly Tetuan and Salé, and trade began to flourish. As hostilities with Spain made it desirable for the English to find a port where their ships could be re provisioned and repaired, in 1656 the sea-commander Robert Blake reached an agreement with the governor of Tetuan, 'Abd al-Krim al-Naqis, which enabled Blake’s ships to use the port of Tetuan. A further episode in Anglo-Moroccan relations commenced in 1662, when Charles II received Tangier from John IV of Portugal as part of the dowry of Princess Catherine of Braganza; the English presence in Tangier lasted until their withdrawal in 1684. Although the episode was negligible as far as Far Eastern porcelain was concerned, twenty years later, in 1704, the British established a permanent base across the strait at Gibraltar. This presence had important ramifications for trade throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The desire for “china ware” in Morocco becomes evident in various sources at this time. In 1721, for example, the gift of a British diplomatic mission to Sultan Isma’il (r. 1672–1727), which traveled from Tetuan to the court at Meknes, consisted of a chandelier, cloth, sugar, and a box of china ware. In 1727, “a large Box of China” was given as a present to the governor of Tetuan, while “1 Box of China Ware” and “1 Box containing 3 Large China Jars of Sweetmeats” were given to the Sultan.

Among the earliest and finest Japanese Imari pieces surviving in Morocco are chargers or massive plates datable to the early decades of the eighteenth century. A charger preserved in a private collection in Tetuan with a diameter of 53.5 centimeters has a sloping rim and decoration divided into three shaped panels (fig. 1).
An almost identical charger, with the same diameter, is in the collection of Queen Elizabeth II, and another is in the Freda and Ralph Lupin Collection. Another early-eighteenth-century Imari charger in Tetuan, with the same shape and diameter, has a rarer design of a vase on a table with a red tablecloth, surrounded by four cartouches with lions (fig. 2). A smaller plate (diameter 29 centimeters) in Tetuan, which can be dated to the first quarter of the eighteenth century, has a wisteria design (fig. 3); this design was copied in the late eighteenth century at the Amstel factory near Amsterdam. Some other pieces in Tetuan are Chinese Imari, such as a charger from around 1730 (fig. 4); a Chinese Imari piece with a similar design, consisting of a pavilion surrounded by a fence, is in the Topkapı Palace collection.

The proximity of Tetuan to Gibraltar suggests that such porcelain was transshipped in London. Besides chargers, Imari items of the early eighteenth century preserved in Tetuan include covered jars about 50 centimeters high (fig. 5), vases (fig. 6), and bowls (fig. 7). There was a demand for polychrome Imari with large-scale motifs and richly patterned surfaces, highlighted with gold, which conveyed an aura of wealth and status.
Fig. 4. Charger (diam. 47 cm). Chinese Imari, ca. 1730. Tetuan, private collection. (Photo: Nadia Erzini / Stephen Vernoit)

Fig. 5. Covered jar (ht. 50 cm). Japanese Imari, ca. 1700–1725. Tetuan, private collection. (Photo: Nadia Erzini / Stephen Vernoit)

Fig. 6. Vase (ht. 34 cm). Japanese Imari, ca. 1700–1725. Tetuan, private collection. (Photo: Nadia Erzini / Stephen Vernoit)

Fig. 7. Bowl, interior (diam. 28.5 cm). Japanese Imari, early eighteenth century. Tetuan, private collection. (Photo: Nadia Erzini / Stephen Vernoit)
However, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, figural imagery on porcelain and especially molded figurines, which were sought after in Europe, were deemed less acceptable.

Most of the early Imari plates found in Morocco are large chargers, around 46 to 56 centimeters in diameter. While the chargers were used for communal eating, Imari bowls and jars were probably intended for storing food. Large glass vessels and bottles were rare. Large deep bowls of different sizes and lidded jars were used for storing oil, honey, preserves, and oily food, such as butter, clarified butter (smin), and dried meat preserved in fat (khli), essentials of pre-colonial Moroccan cuisine.

As time went on, the three-color Imari palette of blue, red, and gold saw an increase in clarity and brilliance. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, a pink wash made from colloidal gold was introduced, and often used thereafter. In addition, the palette was expanded to include other colors, such as yellows, greens, aubergine, and black. Morocco continued to import Imari porcelain in the nineteenth century, and, in this respect, was conservative in its taste.

It is well known that no great house in eighteenth-century Europe was without impressive garnitures of covered ovoid jars and tall cylindrical or concave-sided vases. These garnitures, in matching sets of three (two jars and one vase), five (three jars and two vases), or seven (four jars and three vases), adorned the mantelpieces and shelves of the aristocracy, and were among the most popular shapes for Imari ware. Such covered jars and trumpet vases were also introduced to Morocco, although they are less common than chargers, and whole garnitures of five or seven pieces have not been preserved.

There is also archaeological evidence for Far Eastern porcelain in Morocco, although there have been no formal excavations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century strata. The recent restoration of the Luqash Madrasa in Tetuan, carried out by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, uncovered a few fragments of Chinese porcelain, along with many shards of Moroccan and European earthenware. The fragments were found several meters below the surface, in the foundations of the building, at levels that were sealed around 1750, when the madrasa was built. They include the base of a fine, large, blue-and-white plate with a double foot-ring, of Chinese manufacture and datable to around 1700 (fig. 8), and eggshell-thin pieces of a blue-and-white cup or saucer. Both would indicate a taste for blue-and-white porcelain wares in Morocco that has since been forgotten, as these particular types have not survived in private collections.

A small number of historic courtyard houses still exist in Morocco, decorated in the old manner with original furniture and decoration, including displays of porcelain. Chargers and bowls are hung or placed on supports in rooms and porticos open to the courtyard (fig. 9). They are hung alongside mirrors, calligraphic inscriptions, and photographs. Some plates are in identical sets of three or more, and displayed on special mounts, such as a late-nineteenth-century Meiji plate with a design of two birds and flowering pomegranate, here placed upside down (fig. 10). Other items are displayed in cabinets (fig. 11) or on shelves (figs. 12 and 13).

If not in England, Far Eastern porcelain was transshipped in Holland before reaching Morocco. The Dutch archives contain references to the Moroccan demand for Far Eastern porcelain from Amsterdam merchants of the Levant trade. In 1788, 640 Chinese Imari “punch-
bowls,” required to be “beautifully painted like turbans and rich with gold,” were shipped to Morocco. Such “punchbowls,” which were large and deep, were probably used in Morocco for storing food.

Although the Barbary pirates, the corsairs of Salé and elsewhere, posed a threat to Dutch, British, and other shipping from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries, and may have seized some ships to prey upon the cargoes and take captives for ransom, their actions alone are insufficient to account for the taste for Far Eastern porcelain in Morocco.

Rather, there seems to have been a link between the importation of porcelain and the demand for tea in Morocco. In the ships carrying tea from the Far East, chests of porcelain, which was non-odorous, were often placed beneath the chests of tea to protect them from water damage. Porcelain bottles, teapots, and garniture sets were filled with tea. Unlike neighboring Algeria and elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire, where coffee drinking predominated, tea began to be consumed in Morocco from the early eighteenth century. At first it was a rare and expensive commodity, and the drinking of tea was limited to the upper classes. A fall in the price of tea, however, allowed the beverage to be drunk among the affluent classes from around 1800. Thereafter it entered urban society between 1830 and 1860, and then spread from the towns to the peasantry. In this context, it can be noted that the typical Moroc-
can teapot has a shape that has been faithfully replicated since the first British pewter teapots of a “Queen Anne” or “Queen Anne revival” shape were imported in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Made of a metal alloy rather than ceramic, it has a pear-shaped body, a tall conical lid, and a distinctive, large, projecting handle. The best-known specimens are the later nineteenth-century teapots exported by Wright of Manchester, signed on the base in English and Arabic.

European travelers’ descriptions refer simultaneously to the Moroccan habit of drinking green tea with mint, and to the quantities of foreign porcelain in use. For example, in 1789–90, when the surgeon William Lemprière was received at the court of Sidi Muhammad ibn ‘Abdallah (r. 1757–90) in Marrakesh, the discussion turned to the drinking of tea with mint. Lemprière noted that the Sultan had an official tea maker, who was one of the courtiers deemed important enough to receive presents from the British embassy. Moroccans served their tea in “small cups of the best India china, the smaller the more genteel.” "India china" presumably refers here to the East India Company, suggesting that Far Eastern porcelain was being used.

Among other porcelain items shipped to Europe and then reexported for sale in Muslim lands were “Moorish” or “Turkish” cups. These Chinese porcelain cups with straight outward-sloping sides had no handles or saucers. They were requested from the Dutch East India
Company at least from 1753 onwards. As this company did not concern itself with transshipment from Holland, others were responsible for their reexport. The Amsterdam merchants of the Levant Trade were among the biggest buyers of the Turkish cups at the sales, and sold them around the Mediterranean, often with the involvement of Greek middlemen. It was requested that the decoration of the cups was non-figural; they were never supplied in blue-and-white, and some of them were in the Chinese Imari style. Around 1790, however, such cups went out of fashion. None have been encountered so far in Morocco, if indeed they were ever exported there, perhaps because they were associated with coffee.

From the late eighteenth century, trade into Morocco occurred largely through the ports of Tetuan in the north, and Essaouira on the Atlantic coast. In 1764, Sidi Muhammad established the royal port and city at Essaouira to take the place of Agadir, over which he was not always able to exert control. Henceforth, European merchants trading with southern Morocco were confined to Essaouira, while Tetuan was dominant in the north. Except for this trade, Morocco was essentially closed to the outside world.

In addition to porcelain and tea, British imports into Morocco in the early nineteenth century included linen and cotton cloth, firearms, iron, tin, hardware, paper, sugar, coffee, and chocolate. Morocco exported cattle, mules, beeswax, honey, raw silk, goat skins and other animal hides, ivory, and ostrich feathers. The Moroccon sultans attached great importance to the customs dues levied on imports and exports. According to one estimate, duties levied in Tetuan and Tangier on goods passing between those ports and Gibraltar amounted to nearly two million dollars a year. These duties, together with those levied at Essaouira, constituted the chief source of royal revenue, since the monarch was unable to extract taxes from more than one-third of his lands. This policy was also designed to keep foreigners from the interior of Morocco; in 1832, there were perhaps no more than about 248 Europeans living in Morocco—in Tangier, Tetuan, Essaouira, and Rabat. By this time, all the European consuls resided in Tangier. Muslim and Jewish Moroccan merchants, based in Gibraltar, Tetuan, and Essaouira, controlled imports into Morocco.

James Grey Jackson made note of some of the porcelain imports that passed through Essaouira in the early nineteenth century: in 1804, 330 dozen teacups and saucers from London and thirty dozen from Amsterdam; and, in 1805, forty dozen pieces of china from London and ten crates of British earthenware or British china, also from London. In these instances, we cannot tell whether the porcelain was European or from the Far East.

By 1792, the British East India Company stopped buying Chinese porcelain altogether. From the early eighteenth century, the rise of European porcelain manufacture undermined the Far Eastern porcelain trade. The first record of European porcelain (frentgi fagfuri) in Topkapi Palace documents occurs in 1145 (1733). European pottery in an Imari style was also exported. One such plate, made at the Belvedere factory in Warsaw, comes from a service believed to have been a
present from the King of Poland to the Ottoman sultan, Abdülahmid I, in 1776, but not delivered until 1789. Other European factories such as Amstel in Holland in the late eighteenth century produced more direct copies of Imari ware, and in the nineteenth century, the firm of Samson, which was established in Paris in 1845 and moved to Montreuil in 1864, made some imitations.

During the reign of Sultan Sulayman (r. 1793–1822), trade at Essaouira was dominated by the Macnin family, who were Jewish merchants to the Sultan, and from 1800 onwards, Meir Macnin (d. 1835) was active in London. The Macnin family invested heavily in maintaining a special relationship with the Moroccan government, sending presents (al-hadiyya) to the Sultan at the time of their monthly installments and giving gifts to officials. In February 1815, for example, shortly before the mawlid festival celebrating the birth of the Prophet, Shlomo Macnin, a brother of Meir Macnin, traveled from Essaouira to Marrakesh with some twenty boxes of presents for the Makhzan (the central administration of the Moroccan government). In these boxes, as recorded in Shlomo Macnin’s account book, were various luxury items including velvet, satin, and other fine cloths and linens—some of them embroidered—as well as silk, fine tea, loaf sugar, fine porcelain, a silver platter, candles, medicine, and watches.

Captain George Beauclerk, who accompanied a medical mission to the Moroccan court at Marrakesh in 1826, illustrated his travel account with a view of “The Interior of an Opulent Jew’s House” in Essaouira (fig. 14); this was the house of Aaron Amar “Bujnah,” who married a daughter of Meir Macnin. The engraving shows a typical room in a Moroccan house: with one entrance, from the courtyard, the room is both shallow and wide, with a curtained niche at one end for a bed. The only other furnishings are a carpet on the floor and two large lidded jars, which are taller than the child that stands between them. The decoration on the lidded jars is not rendered clearly, but they are most probably Far Eastern; the animal finials on the lids clearly indicate that these are not Moroccan lidded jars (khabya). While in the house of the governor of Rabat, Beauclerk also noted the following objects:

An English tea-board then made its respectable appearance, attended by a tea-kettle of steam-engine dimensions, and covered with mutilated coffee-cups of all ages, shapes and sizes; and two large bowls of curious Fezzan earthenware, full of rich milk, formed the advance-guard of the motley Chinese corps drawn up behind them.

In 1848, David Urquhart, who was a British Member of Parliament, described being served tea in the house of the Muslim merchant Makki Brital in Rabat, well known for his international wholesale trade. The service included a teapot of Britannia metal (an alloy that succeeded the pewter teapots mentioned above), a japanned epaulette box for sugar, and small and delicate Chinese teacups and saucers. Urquhart also noted “…many coloured racks or brackets…on which stood fine chinaware and ornaments.”

In Morocco today the word shīna is used to describe porcelain or china in general; despite the Arabic spelling, it is pronounced chīna in the Moroccan dialect. By contrast, Imari ware and imitation Imari are specif-
imari porcelain in morocco

ically known as taws, also spelled taws and tawūs (literally “peacock”); the peacock probably refers to the phoenix often found on these wares (fig. 15). The terms shīna and taws can also be found in nineteenth-century Moroccan documents. In the Erzini Archive of Tetuan and the Corcos Archive of Essaouira (now in Israel), there are documents that refer to the nineteenth-century importation of porcelain at the ports of Tetuan and Essaouira, and thence overland to Fez and Marrakesh. References to Imari ware (taws) are found in letters, commercial transactions, accounts, and documents of division of inheritance. One European author who mentions the term taws with reference to porcelain imported from Britain is the Spanish diplomat, historian, and long-term resident of northern Morocco, Teodoro de Cuevas, in 1884. He added that few could afford it, and that cheaper French porcelain was competing with it.50

The trade in porcelain is also mentioned in nineteenth-century bills of lading to and from Gibraltar, written in English, French, and Spanish, but it is not always clear whether this refers to European or Far Eastern porcelain. A ship’s bill of lading for an eighty-kilogram case of porcelain sent in 1838 from Marseille to Ahmad al-Razini of Tetuan in Gibraltar suggests that French porcelain manufacturers were already having an impact (fig. 16).51

However, Moroccan trade in the nineteenth century was principally in British hands. Direct trade from Britain was carried out only with Essaouira, while British trade with Tetuan or Tangier went through Gibraltar.52 In a notebook in the Erzini Archive dated 1272 (1855–56) that documents trade conducted by Tetuan merchants in Gibraltar, it is recorded that a Far Eastern porcelain tea service (zinat taws) and an earthenware tea service (zinat qash) were bought by the former slave and later consul in Gibraltar, Sa’īd Gassus, for the then consul in Gibraltar, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Razini; the porcelain service was three times the price of the pottery service.53 Although the word taws may have been interchangeable with shīna, which was used more often, both terms were clearly distinguished from qash or earthenware.54

Those requesting taws in Morocco included the Sultan, the royal family, and ministers. For example, in 1272 (1855–56), dozens of Far Eastern teacups (kīsān taws) appear in the accounts of the Erzini family, which imported goods from Gibraltar to the interior of Morocco, including one set of cups specifically bought for a minister.55 In 1864, Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Jama’ī, who was later Grand Vizir, writing from Fez or Marrakesh, requested from Abraham Corcos in Essaouira, “six cups of very, very fine taws.”56 The taws vessels mentioned include sets of cups, plates, bowls, and lidded jars.

A most informative document is the inventory of the property of the governor of Tetuan, ‘Abd al-Qadir Ash’ash, who in 1267 (1850–51) was removed from office, imprisoned, and had his property and that of his family confiscated by Sultan ‘Abd al-Rahman (r. 1822–59). This record of items was comparable to the Ottoman muhallefat, mentioned above. The inventory was drawn up by a financial administrator of the Sultan, one Makki ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Qabbaj of Fez, a well-informed and well-traveled merchant.57 In addition to land, houses, and shops, the document provides a detailed description of the contents of the houses. There was a substantial amount of pottery and glass in the houses of the governor and his brothers; twelve packing cases of confiscated china and glass vessels were sent to the Sultan, one case containing 110 china plates, another thirty-four bowls. The pottery is variously described as earthenware (qash or fakkhār), porcelain (shīna), or Far Eastern porcelain (taws). The cut glass or crystal (billār) included plates, urns, tea glasses, bottles, and

Fig. 15. Exterior of a bowl (diam. 46.5 cm), with peacock or phoenix on rim. Tetuan, private collection. (Photo: Nadia Erzini / Stephen Vernoit)
tea boxes. Of the earthenware and porcelain, some is specified as foreign or European (rūmī) and some as English (qash inglīzī). Most of the latter objects are tea services, including a set of teapots, teacups and saucers, milk jugs, and sugar bowls. A foreign or loan word is used to describe the tea sets or tea services—sarbisiyūn, an Arabic plural form of “service.” Such was the British influence on the import trade into Morocco that in the same inventory cloth is often measured in yards (yarda, pl. yardāt); elsewhere, tea is measured in pounds, in Arabic, using the Spanish loan word libra. French glass or china cups (kīsān) are also listed. The taste for foreign goods in Tetuan is quite apparent, as can be seen from the Ash/lefthalfringalAsh/lefthalfringinventory, which also mentions European music boxes, soaps, perfumes, candles, wall- and hand-mirrors, rifles, grandfather clocks, smaller clocks, writing bureaus, tables and chairs, parasols, maps, and children’s playing cards; European and Turkish carpets; British iron and brass bedsteads; Indian shawls; silks, velvets, and woolen cloth from Europe; and chests from Livorno. Since ‘Abd al-Qadir Ash’ash had been sent as ambassador to France six years earlier,58 he might also have made some purchases there.

The inventory also specifies where the china was found in each house, room by room. Teacups and saucers were displayed on shelves in the reception rooms, along with china vases, urns, and glass bell jars covering artificial flowers. Large plates and bowls were stored in women’s marriage chests or displayed on shelves over the kitchen hearth (dukkana).

A document from 1273 (1856–57) certifying a gift from the merchant and consul in Gibraltar, Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Razini of Tetuan, to his wife Um Kulthum Hassara mentions a great variety of porcelain objects, including large bowls, cups, teapots, and perfume sprinklers “…of European and Chinese manufacture, of many types and from many nations” (‘amal al-rūm wa’l-shīna ‘alā akhtalaf al-ashkāl wa tabāyin al-ajnās wa’l-anwā’). The notary or scribe who drew up the document felt obliged to use this phrase twice.59

In 1317 (1899), upon the death of al-‘Arbi ibn Mhammad [sic] Barisha of Tetuan, an affluent merchant, gov-
government administrator, and diplomat, his estate was listed, and included European and Far Eastern porcelain (shīna and ṣaws) items—cups (ẓināt kuʿūs), bowls (ṭisān and zalāyif), and plates (ghuṭār) (fig. 17). Barisha’s property was inherited in part by his wife, Fatma al-Turkiyya (d. 1943), one of several Circassian slaves whom he had bought in the Ottoman Empire for Sultan Hasan I (r. 1873–94) and for notables of Tetuan. A porcelain bowl displayed on a bracket can be seen in a photograph of the Barisha house in Tetuan taken around 1930 (fig. 18).

Morocco remained largely free from foreign intervention until 1859–60, when Spain invaded in the north. The Spanish occupied Tetuan and then evacuated the city after the Moroccan payment of an indemnity. The Spanish novelist Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, who was sent to Tetuan in 1859 as a war historian, mentioned seeing oriental and English bowls and plates in the principal houses of the town, which were occupied and looted by Spanish generals. Charles Yriarte, a journalist for Le Monde Illustré who also reported on the war, mentioned that china was displayed in the house of Muhammad al-Razini: “Les etagères étaient remplies de porcelaines de tout pays, depuis celles de la Chine, et du Japon jusqu’à celles de Londres et du faubourg Saint-Antoine.” Frederick Hardman, a correspondent of The Times, noted that there was a good deal of old china in the houses of Tetuan, and that several cases of china were sent to Queen Isabella II in Madrid, along with other booty, such as Moroccan tents and banners. In the 1870s, Dr. Arthur Leared observed that in the houses of several affluent Muslims in Tetuan, brackets, of Moorish design, held not only specimens of Moorish pottery, but some very good pieces of china, chiefly old Oriental…About five years previously the then Spanish vice-consul set to work and bought up all the old china that he could…

By the reign of Sultan Muhammad IV (r. 1859–73), there was much greater economic interaction in the world at large. The first international exhibition at which Morocco participated was the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867. Muhammad IV was invited by Napoleon III to the exhibition, and the Sultan sent Hajj Muhammad ibn al-ʿArbi al-Qabbaj al-Fasi (presumably related to al-Makki ibn ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Qabbaj of Ashʿash’s inventory), one of the principal merchants of Fez, with a variety of exhibits, leading Moroccans to nickname him “the Frenchman” (al-faransāwī). From then on, Morocco took part in all the major international exhibitions. Although the export of Imari porcelain from Japan continued in the nineteenth century, a fire at Arita in 1828 terminated production until it experienced a revival from 1860, following the “opening up” of Japan in 1854. In the late nineteenth century, the international exhibitions provided a new forum for Arita potters. Furthermore, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 altered trade routes and promoted the influx of, among other things, Chinese and Japanese raw silk.

A late-nineteenth-century Japanese bowl of fine eggshell-quality porcelain, decorated with two birds, can also be found in Tetuan (fig. 19). The base carries the
Japanese mark for Kutani (Nine Valleys) ware. The flimsy mount seems to date to the late nineteenth century. Some mounted bowls were placed freestanding on tables. A Meiji jar of the late nineteenth or early twentieth century was turned into an oil lamp (fig. 20). A bottle that was turned first into an oil lamp and then an electric one is not Japanese and may have been produced by Samson in the late nineteenth century (fig. 21); its mount is not Moroccan.

When the orientalist, author, and collector Pierre Loti accompanied the French minister to the court of Hasan I in Fez in 1889, he ate off Japanese plates in the houses of Moroccan viziers. Loti vividly described the hospitality, which included:

...luncheons worthy of Pantagruel...On tables or on the ground, are set large tubs of European or Japanese porcelain, heaped with fruits, shelled nuts, almonds, 'gazelles' hoofs', preserves, dates, saffroned sweetmeats. Gauze veils, highly coloured and sequined with gold, cover these mountains of things...67

At lunch in the house of the Minister of War in Fez, Loti continued:

The plates and dishes are Japanese; the glasses are gilt and variegated with colours...There are something like twenty-two courses...The dishes are so copious that a single man has difficulty in holding them; there are quarters of sheep, pyramids of chicken, mountains of fish, couscous for an ogre's feast. To these are added other edibles under the inevitable cones of white esparto ornamented with red designs; and all these cones accumulate on the ground, forming in the court a kind of dépôt of gigantic Chinese hats [cf. fig. 22].68

Loti's identification of the Japanese porcelain was well informed; three years earlier, he had published his novel about Japan, Madame Chrysanthème, based on his travels in the Far East.

The presence of foreign wares in Morocco did, to a limited extent, influence Moroccan potters, who imitated motifs found on Iznik pottery (carnations, saz leaves, and ships),69 European and Indian textiles (paisley motifs),70 and other designs. Moroccan potters also copied the shapes of some European vessels, such as decanters, jardinières, and teapots.71 One clear example of the imitation of a Far Eastern shape is the tall ovoid Moroccan jar (khabya), about 50 centimeters high, with
a narrow foot and high domical lid with a finial. This shape does not appear in Moroccan pottery of the medieval period. It is more difficult, however, to prove a Far Eastern inspiration for the large Moroccan bowl with a matching lid (jabbana), or for the large serving plate (ghujár) of an average 50-centimeter diameter. While the bright colors of polychrome Moroccan ceramics perhaps owe something indirectly to Imari, the blue-and-white ceramic palette is a distant echo of Far Eastern blue-and-white porcelain.

In the twentieth century, wardrobes and glass-fronted cabinets often replaced chests in the alcoves of rooms. Porcelain became the principal exhibit in these cabinets, especially such pieces as large lidded jars and tea services, which can be safely stored in them. However, Imari ware is intended not only for display but also for eating and storing food. The distinctive Moroccan presentation of food remains much the same as when it was described by Loti; there are numerous courses, presented on large Imari-style porcelain plates with conical covers of palmetto and leather (jbaq), which are placed on small individual tables or trays with feet (mayda). One need not look further than a Moroccan cookbook to find evidence of the ubiquitous presence of Imari. Thus, in Latifa Bennani-Smires’ Moroccan Cooking (1984) such national dishes as couscous or bastela are presented on imitation or pseudo-Imari plates. (By contrast, foreigners who write about Moroccan cooking prefer to serve their meals on Moroccan pottery.)

The use of Imari is deeply engrained in Moroccan culture. Even today, among the affluent and the urban families of long-standing, no celebration of a birth, cir-
Circumcision, wedding or funeral wake, or return of a pilgrim from Mecca, is complete without reproduction Imari plates and bowls. During a wedding, the bride-groom traditionally welcomes the bride with a symbolic meal of milk and dates, served on reproduction Imari bowls and plates. Following a bereavement, a Tetuani family does not light a fire or cook meals, but is supplied by relatives and friends with elaborate meals and tajines served on large Imari chargers for the duration of a three- to ten-day wake. Visiting monarchs or heads of state also receive the traditional greeting of milk and dates. This was the case, for example, when Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom visited Hasan II (r. 1961–99), and when the Tunisian president Zayn al-‘Abidin Bin ‘Ali visited Muhammad VI (r. 1999–) in 2000 (fig. 23).

The combination of milk and dates suggests a return to a primitive Bedouin diet, but to serve them on chinaware and specifically Imari porcelain evokes an image of luxury and refinement. When the daughter of the Venezuelan president paid condolences to Muhammad VI in 1999 on the death of the latter’s father, Hasan II, they were photographed in a room with Imari-style plates in the background.

Today imitation Imari is also widely on sale, mass-produced in China and in Morocco (fig. 24). The modern Chinese imitation Imari porcelain often carries a drawing of a peacock and the word ʿaws written in Arabic on the base. The Tajamu‘ti family of Fez, who have been active for several decades, is associated with its manufacture in Morocco.
Since the seventeenth century at least, Morocco has had a distinctive local ceramic tradition of highly-colored and strongly-patterned glazed earthenware. This local production was supplemented by a taste for imported porcelain, which became an essential component of the country’s tastes and requirements. The financial, technical, ritual, and artistic value attributed to this porcelain by Moroccans outweighed the importance given to indigenous ceramics. Thus, although Morocco was a separate and sometimes isolated political entity, the taste for Imari porcelain not only places it in the wider context of the Middle Eastern cultural milieu but also in the nexus of European trade and fashions. In this respect, Imari porcelain was a significant component of the material culture of Morocco; indeed, it was assimilated into the sphere of “Islamic art.”

*Tangier, Morocco*
NOTES


8. For porcelains taken from Mecca to Cairo, see André Raymond, Artsisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1973–74), 1:126.


11. This mihrab is discussed in a forthcoming article by Nadia Erzini.


23. Jörg, Porcelain, 94, 142.

24. Ibid., 157–58.


28. The authors wish to thank Prof. Christiana Jörg for his comments and observations on the various Imari items discussed below.

29. Ayers, Impey, and Mallet, Porcelain for Palaces, no. 236, which gives the date 1690–1720 for the charger.


31. For related designs, see Christiana J. A. Jörg, Fine & Curious: Japanese Export Porcelain in Dutch Collections (Amsterdam, 2003), nos. 297 and 303.

32. See, for example, the piece in the Groninger Museum, Groningen, inv. no. 1986.420, illustrated in Ayers, Impey, and Mallet, Porcelain for Palaces, 276 no. 324; see also Jörg, Fine & Curious, no. 108.

34. This study is based primarily on inherited family collections in Tetuan, a town that has enjoyed a long continuity of its historic families. The choice of Tetuan as the capital of the Spanish Protectorate (1912–56) contributed to the survival of porcelain collections in family homes, whereas under the French Protectorate many houses in Fez, Meknes, and Marrakesh were abandoned for Rabat and Casablanca. The Jewish families of Essaouira might also have owned porcelain but have long since emigrated, though it is possible that they preserve Imari collections in Israel, along with the Corcos Archive in Jerusalem.

35. Jörg, Porcelain, 182.

36. Ibid., 129.


38. William Lemprière, A Tour from Gibraltar to Tangier, Sallee, Mogadore, Santa Cruz, Tarudant; and thence, over Mount Atlas, to Morocco; Including a Particular Account of the Royal Harem (London, 1791), 210–11, 239, 299.


41. Ibid., 110, 134–35.


43. Jörg, Porcelain, 353 n. 127.

44. Raby and Yücel, “Chinese Porcelain,” 53.


48. Ibid., 95.


51. The first use of the word porcelain (būrsilān) in a document in the Topkapi Palace was in 1293 (1876): Raby and Yücel, “Chinese Porcelain,” 53 n. 177.
