Research Report.

During the summer of 2013 I returned to Mexico to continue the research I began on 2008 on the Mexican Silk Road Project.

https://ospace.otis.edu/MexicanSilkRoute/Home/ The original premise for the research was to explore the presence and contributions of African and Afro-Mexicans to Mexican culture. Since it seemed that their cultural participation has been obscured by the institutional denial of their existence it seemed logical to research the area between the two most important colonial ports, the Port of Veracruz to the east and the Port of Acapulco the west. The initial research produced a wealth of information about the African contributions to the wealth of the Viceroyalty of the New Spain, now Mexico.

The second part of the research took me to the western port of Acapulco were the “Ship from Manila,” a Spanish galleon that brought the riches of Asia to the Western hemisphere and Europe after the disruption created by closing by the Muslims to the traditional trade routes to the west. The ship from Manila “El Galeón de Manila/La Nao de Manila” was the most important commercial event in the New Spain. To my surprise the discovery and further conquest of the Philippines not only brought Africans but also native Filipinos to the Western Hemisphere creating a very complex commercial and cultural universe not seen since the heyday of the Asian Silk road.
The globalize economy of the Spanish Pacific enterprise changes more than just issue of race and color. The influence of the event in the language, gastronomy, arts and crafts is so significant that I had to expand my research to these areas to fully understand the role not only Africans but Asians in the context of a globalized economy that has not been fully studied.

As Africans became more integrated and took charge of many of the activities of the Vice Royalty their presence moved to the periphery of society. Although the town of Yanga continued functioning much Africanisms became tangled with Asian
influences. As an example this Ship’s Figurehead from the Manila Galleon shows how much in flux the idea of race and color navigated the Spanish oceans.

Summarizing, the research that began as a simple premise of how African culture emerged and developed in Mexico must be understood as part of a globalize economy that open Asia to the world.

Africans moved these goods to Mexico City, Oaxaca and Puebla on their way to Veracruz and the world. Below are some examples of the goods brought by the “Ship from Manila” The Next step will require more research about the cultural interactions between Asians and Africans as Mexico, like China today became the purveyor of cheap Chinese knockoffs that almost created a trade war.

The Parián

Was a large and closed market with many streets, established near the place where the active world of traders was, in which they received the products from the East.

Set by law, Chinese had to live within the "Parián" space, where they were able to show their merchandise and trade and, at the same time, they could be observed by the authorities of the city.

In the middle of the XVIII century, "sangleyes", who were also manufacturers, were established in an octagonal building in a reserved section kept near to the Passig river south bank, that had a large central patio surrounded by arcades to which innumerable stores and warehouses had access.
Chinaware

Since the XVIII century, instanced by the Jesuits who had a strong influence in the Chinese Court, chinaware elaboration changed. Pink color was discovered which would be plentiful used in domestic consumption with its classic shapes, as well as in export that had acquired new occidental line models. During the last decades of this century, there was not a rich family in New Spain who did not have great chinaware with its coats of arms or initials on it. Important events were immortalized on chinaware with commemorative symbols and escutcheons.
Map Showing the provenance of the goods brought to Acapulco through the Manila Galleon. What began as a simple project has become a major subject of research.

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