

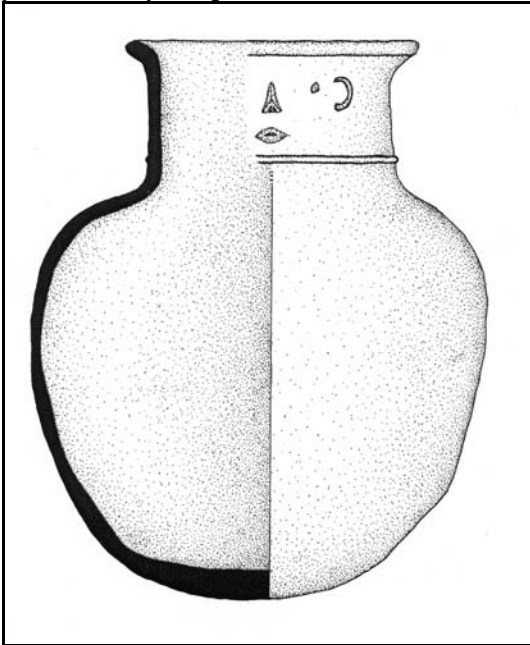
The Archaeology of Tourism

by Corey Malcom

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The stereotypical notion of the relationship between Spanish colonists and the cultures they encountered in the New World is one of brutality, plague, and enslavement, with little appreciation by the Spaniards for anything but the accumulation of wealth. While it is true that millions of the people the Spanish encountered were subjected to these horrors, judging from evidence from the shipwreck of the 1622 galleon *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, the story was more complicated than that. Certain objects make it clear there was a level of admiration for both the places, and cultures encountered in the New World colonies.

For the people sailing on the *Atocha*, their time in the New World was one that many apparently wanted to remember after they had returned to Spain. A variety of objects recovered from the shipwreck look to have been onboard simply as souvenirs, or mementos that could somehow provide a sense of the Americas. None of these items were found in quantities large enough to be considered commercial cargoes, and they most likely represent the personal possessions of passengers.



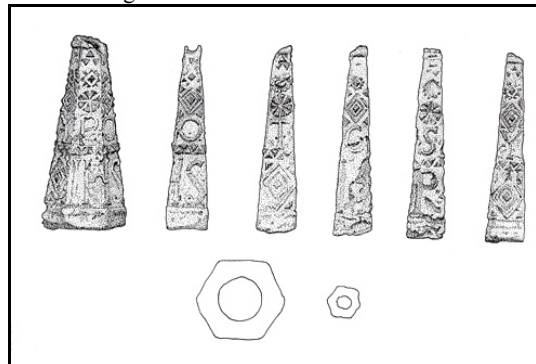
The earthenware "face-neck" jar would have originally been brightly painted. Its time underwater has left only traces of a reddish-brown burnish on portions of the body.

Drawing Corey Malcom/MFMHS.

Some of these are pieces that were created by Native Americans, and show that, despite the oppression, these cultures were still alive and flourishing in 1622. These regional handicrafts are examples of objects that would have been typically used by their

manufacturers in their daily lives. There are exquisite works of Incan silver, carved gourds, South American ceramics, and Central or South American jade pendants and blades. The silver objects – Incan cloak pins, plates, and vessels, all with intricately engraved designs – certainly had a value as objects of precious metal, but their same value could have been more readily transported as coins or ingots. Other goods, such as the carved gourds or ceramic vessels, held very little intrinsic value, and could certainly have been replaced by the many Spanish containers found onboard. Clearly, there was an appreciation for the artistic style and the culture that these objects represented. These South American objects appear to have been carried not for their utility, but because of what they represented.

Another piece looks to have been created especially for the tourist trade. It is a small, crude silver cone, and one of many similarly designed pieces recovered from the *Atocha*. This particular one though, is cast with six sides, and each of these faces bears a letter to spell out "P-O-T-O-S-Y." This the name of the famous Andean silver mine, and city in colonial Peru. This inexpensive looking memento possesses some of the key elements of a typical souvenir – an object bearing the name of the place visited, and a distinguishing characteristic of that place. This cone was apparently the 17th century version of today's alligator or flamingo handicraft emblazoned with a "Florida" logo.



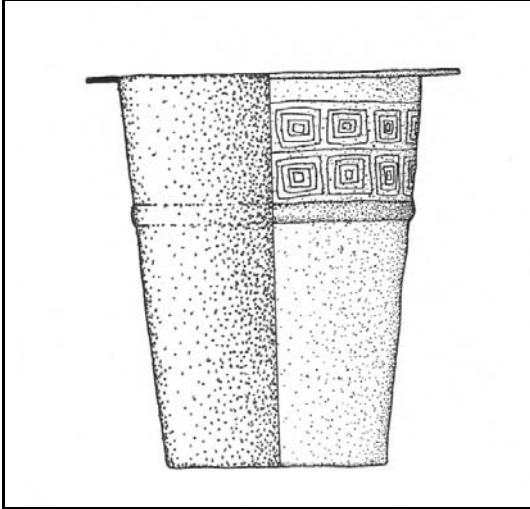
This silver cone is thought to have been a taper holder. The letters cast into each of its six sides spell P-O-T-O-S-Y, the name of the famous South American silver mine.

Drawing Katherine Amundson/MFMHS.

It may be that other, more basic mementos were carried too – rocks, plants, foods and animals – but, even though some may have been found, are not so easily categorized to the modern eye.

Though some of the people sailing on the galleons had spent a good portion of their lives in the American colonies, and some may have known nothing else,

they were essentially Spanish at heart. The fact that they sought out and carried home items that expressed the nature, and the “foreignness” of the West shows an appreciation for the cultures and places of the New World.



A silver *quero* is one of what would have been a matched pair. These drinking vessels are still an important part of traditional Incan culture.

Drawing Corey Malcom/MFMHS.

Because of the difficult nature of travel at the time, it was most likely that, after their return, most of the *Atocha's* passengers would never leave Spain again. Souvenirs embody memories. They capture the essence of a place, and note the achievement and adventure of the person who carries it. Once a voyage is complete, memories are all that remain, and the

objects that were collected during the travels facilitate their persistence. Uniquely American goods provided that function for those sailing on the galleons. It seems travelers of 1622 enjoyed reliving these memories, and sharing them with the people at home, the same as we do today. Looked at in a larger light, these souvenirs provide a way of gauging the process of the “Columbian Exchange” – the great passage of plants, animals, technologies, ideas, and cultures between the New and Old Worlds that began in 1492. Perhaps such a grand cultural shift, that forever changed the world, happened, in some part at least, with thoughts like, “I’ll bet my niece in Seville would just love this carved gourd.”



Fragments of a carved gourd recovered from the *Atocha* reflect a traditional Andean craft that began at least 7,000 years ago.

Photo Dylan Kibler/MFMHS.