Call for Papers

International Workshop

3-4 June 2027, University of Padua

Global Goods in the Early Modern Italian peninsula: Production, Trade, Consumption, and Imaginaries (1500–1800)

In the last decades, consumption in the Early modern period has been the focus of numerous and important research. Rooted in the idea that a consumer revolution laid the foundations for the Industrial Revolution in England, scholars have questioned the characteristics and the limits (both geographical and social) of consumption in the pre-modern world. “New”, “exotic”, or “global” goods continue to occupy a central place in these debates, as they often became the symbols of new consumption patterns and associated socio-cultural phenomena.

Supported by a broader scientific interest in material culture, the social/global lives of things, and the circulations of commodities, research on global goods has expanded significantly in recent years. Scholars have increasingly explored case studies beyond North-Western Europe and outside the European world altogether. Despite this expansion, several major contexts remain significantly understudied — the Italian peninsula being one of the most striking examples.

While the global dimension of Early modern Italy has recently been questioned through renewed perspectives on the Mediterranean (focusing on global interconnections, mobility, and the movement of ideas, goods, and people) gaps remain. Consumption has received some attention, with studies applying various methodologies to specific global commodities. However, we still lack a comprehensive synthesis of the role these goods played across Italian societies during the early modern period.

The workshop seeks to explore and discuss the cultural, economic, and social lives of global goods in the Italian peninsula during the early modern period (1450-1800), with particular attention to the processes through which these goods were integrated into Italian societies and the transformations they brought about.

Themes and Topics

The workshop adopts a broad, working definition of global goods as items whose production, circulation, representation, and consumption facilitated and strengthened connections between distant regions of the world, while simultaneously contributing to the transformation of the interconnected societies.

In this framework, the workshop does privilege any specific category of goods (hot beverages, foodstuffs, drugs, dyes, *exotica*, manufactured objects etc.). However, in developing their proposals, interested researchers are encouraged to highlight the relevance of their chosen subject to understanding the transformative impact of global goods on Italian societies.

The organizing committee welcomes proposals from scholars at all career stages working on global goods and addressing one or more of the following themes:

Circulations
- Maritime and inland trade across and beyond the Italian peninsula
- Transportation systems and practices
- Redistribution networks between ports, cities and hinterlands
- The diffusion of goods in rural areas

Production
- Imitation and adaptation practices
- Import substitution strategies
- The impact of consumption patterns and/or cultures on manufacturing

Consumption practices
- Public and private spaces of consumption
- Spatial diffusion
- Social stratification
- Meanings

Cultures of consumption
- The role of exotic goods and exoticism
- Representations, imaginaries and aesthetic dimension of global goods
- Intellectual debates over consumption/global goods
- The role of communication

Submission and deadline

The workshop language will be English.

Proposals shall include:

- An abstract in English of 250 words specifying the research question, sources, methodology and relevance for the workshop theme
- A short biography of no more than 100 words, with current affiliation and contact information

Submission email: pierreniccolo.sofia@unipd.it

Submission deadline: 1 February 2027
Notification of Acceptance: 1 March 2027
Conference Dates: 3-4 June 2027
Location: Padua

Travel and subsistence costs (one night hotel, a lunch and a dinner) shall be covered by the organizers.

A selection of the papers will be published.

For further information or general inquiries, please contact: pierreniccolo.sofia@unipd.it

Workshop organizing committee

Pierre Niccolò Sofia (coordinator) – University of Padua
Alida Clemente – University of Foggia
Paolo Calcagno – University of Genoa