

## A Cartographic Connection

# A Cartographic Connection: Maps of China and Chinese Snuff Bottles During the Qing Dynasty

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Elegant and accurate maps of China began circulating in Europe during the second half of the seventeenth century. This coincided with the new Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) taking control of China from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). These maps combined knowledge of China provided by Christian missionaries and merchants with the production and artistic skills of European mapmakers, in particular the Blaeu family in the Dutch Republic.

The connections among three of the maps displayed here (Fig. 1-3) are strong. The geographical data for each of these maps comes from the China travels of Italian Jesuit missionary Father Martino Martini (1614-1661), directly in the case of two of the maps and derivatively in the case of the third map.

Father Martini arrived in China from Macao in 1643 and settled in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. He was a student of Chinese history and geography and traveled extensively in China. In 1651, he was summoned back to Rome. It took him nearly four years to make the journey. His return trip included being imprisoned in Batavia after his ship from the Philippines was captured by officials of the Dutch East India Company. He ultimately left Java and went to Norway (1653), Germany, Holland, and Belgium (1654), before finally arriving in Rome in the spring of 1655.

During his long sojourn back, Martini translated many of the numerous Chinese books, maps, and atlases he brought with him as well as wrote a detailed description of the China he knew. These primary sources included an early fourteenth century atlas of the Chinese Provinces compiled by Zhu Siben (Chu-Ssu-pen) and revisions to this atlas made by Luo Hongxiang in the mid sixteenth century. Martini also took the opportunity to meet with printers in the various European cities he spent time in, encouraging them to print his maps and publish his text.

In the latter endeavor, he was wildly successful. Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis* appeared as part of Volume 10 of Johannes Blaeu's 1655 *Atlas Maior*. The Blaeu Atlas volume on China contains seventeen maps and 171 pages of text and was the first atlas and geography of China to be published in Europe. Two of the maps shown here are from the *Novus Atlas Sinensis*.

The first map (Fig. 1) displays Quantung (Guandong) Province in South China. Small, brightly-colored islands dot the Pearl River Delta, including a label for the Jesuit's home base on the Macao peninsula (though not quite in the correct location). A large Hainan Island lies off the southwestern coast of China.

The second map (Fig. 2) shows the North Chinese province around Peking. The majestic, fortified Great Wall runs imposingly along the northern boundary of the Province. Mountains, rivers, lakes, and even a portion of the Grand Canal heading south make appearances.

These Blaeu maps are beauties. The Blaeu name is synonymous with refined and evocative seventeenth century maps of the world. While Johannes Blaeu (1596-1673) printed Martini's works, he was successor to his cartographer father, Willem Blaeu (1571-1638). Blaeu Senior made maps, globes, and scientific instruments. He was an astronomer who studied with Tycho Brahe. He was first appointed as map maker of the Dutch Republic and later became the official cartographer of the Dutch East India Company. He issued two volumes of his *Atlas Novus* during his lifetime but died before the other two he had prepared made it to print.

Brothers Johannes and Cornelius Blaeu (1610-1644) took over the family business, and Johannes took sole control once his brother died. Johannes also succeeded his father as chief cartographer of the Dutch East India Company. *Atlas Novus* was expanded to six volumes, and Johannes went on to create his *Atlas Maior*, a weighty nine-to-twelve volume collection (depending on the language) with 594 double-page maps and 3,000 pages of text. This grand atlas was the most expensive printed book during the seventeenth century. A colored-copy cost 450 Dutch guilders (USD \$27,000 today). It is estimated that a total of 200-600 copies of the *Atlas Maior* were printed.

Fig. 1

## From the first Western atlas of China

Quantung, Imperii Sinarum Provincia Duoecima.

Author

BLAEU, Johannes

Publication date

1655.

Publication place

Amsterdam

Physical description

The text on the reverse of this map is in Latin

Dimensions

527 by 612mm. (20.75 by 24 inches).



Fig. 2

## First atlas of China made in Europe

Novus Atlas Sinensis. A Martino Martinio Soc. Iesu Descriptus Et  
Serenissimo Archidvci Leopoldo Gvilielmo Avstriaco  
Dedicatvs. Cum privilegio S.C. Maj.

Author

BLAEU, Johannes

Publication date

1662.

Publisher

Joannes and Willem Blaeu

Publication place

Amsterdam

Physical description

Latin text edition, folio (570 by 350mm), engraved hand-coloured and gold illuminated frontispiece showing putti around a globe and a map of China, with the title printed on an open door, dedication, 17 double-page maps, 16 of China and one of Japan, rebound in the original vellum gilt.

Dimensions

570 by 350mm. (22.5 by 13.75 inches).



The third map with a Blaeu connection (Fig. 3) is the Hollar and Blome map of China. The connection to the first two maps is that Richard Blome borrowed from the Blaeu/Martini 1655 map of Asia for his work. This map shows the entirety of China, again with the Great Wall running along the northern boundary and Canton, Macao, and Hainan Island in the south. The body of water directly south of China is labeled, "Indian Ocean." Blome produced the first set of large format world maps created entirely in Great Britain, and this map was one of the twenty-four maps in his atlas.

The title of this essay suggests a connection between these maps and snuff bottles in Qing Dynasty China. And so there is. The combination of merchants and missionary work is the glue that ties these maps and snuff bottles together. It is via the former that tobacco was introduced to China from South America by way of Europe, tobacco that was subsequently ground up and mixed with herbs and spices to become snuff. It is the former who gathered information, knowledge, and experience that led to these maps and the transport of snuff bottles from China to Europe as gifts. It is the former who introduced new technologies and design aspects of European arts to China that influenced the production of snuff bottles.

For example, the painted enamel gracing some of the prettiest snuff bottles came to China from Europe. Refined glass techniques and a broadened color palate that resulted in richly expressive glass snuff bottles also came to China from Europe. Foreign scenes, ranging from European ladies to ships transporting tribute, are depicted on porcelain, glass, and enamel snuff bottles. And, as we will see in the last map discussed below, it was Western expansion of the Qing Empire by the Qianlong Emperor in the mid eighteenth century that led to a surge of raw nephrite jade being transported from the far western regions to the Imperial Court and the jade snuff bottles and other works of art that resulted.

The fourth map (Fig. 4) is the first chart of the Chinese coast on Mercator's Projection. This engraved chart was produced by Robert Dudley in 1661. It shows dozens of ports and place names on both the Southern China and Northeast Vietnamese coasts as well as the waters between China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. This chart is from the *Arcano del Mare*, a novel sea atlas that not only was the first to use the Mercator Projection for a maritime map, but also the first to include prevailing winds and currents in harbors and anchorages, and the first to give magnetic declination. This atlas was a document that could actually be used to get a mariner and merchant from Point A to Point B to Point C, and back again.

The fifth and final map (Fig. 5) is different from the rest. For one thing, it is a Chinese map produced by Dong Fangli and Li Zhaoluo. This wood block print is not only the latest map presented here, being from 1865, but it is also enormous. It portrays the entire Qing Empire on sixty-four sheets grafted together. The map was initially forty-one sheets and compiled in 1832 from earlier maps prepared during the Kangxi Emperor's and Qianlong Emperor's respective reigns. This updated and expanded version contained the then most up-to-date data on Qing China, from the far west to the eastern shores and from the far north to the southern shores. This is the first Chinese map to use a longitude and latitude coordinate system. It is interesting that the twenty-three rivers and tributaries included on the earlier Qianlong map are reduced to fifteen. The map correctly depicts the source of the Yellow River in the Bayan Har Mountains of what is now Qinghai Province.

These maps capture a time in global history when the world was becoming more defined and smaller. They tell stories of how the world was conceived of, known, traveled, and portrayed by the (mostly) men who ventured far from home, be it within one country (China) or abroad across the oceans.

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Fig 3

## The first state of Blome's map of China

A New Mapp of ye Empire of China With its severall Provinces or kingdoms. Together wth. the adjacent Isles of Iapon or Nippon, Formosa, Hainan, etc. Rendered into English, & enlarged wth. the Isles of Iapon, by Rich: Blome, by his Majesties Command

Author

HOLLAR, Wenceslaus and BLOME, Robert

Publication date

1669

Publisher

Printed and sold for Richard Blome

Publication place

London

Physical description

Engraved map

Dimensions

346 by 424mm. (13.5 by 16.75 inches).



Fig. 4

## The first chart of the Chinese Coast on Mercator's Projection

Carta particolare del mare di Cocincina con la parte Australe  
della Cina...

Author  
DUDLEY, Robert

Publication date  
1661

Publication place  
[Florence]

Physical description  
Engraved chart

Dimensions  
460 by 370mm (18 by 14.5 inches).



Fig. 5

## Longitude and Latitude on a map of the Qing Empire

Huangchao yitong yudi quantu [Complete Map of the Unified Qing Empire]

Author

Dong Fangli (Youcheng) (1791-1823), Li Zhaoluo (1769-1841)

Publication date

1865 [1832]

Publication place

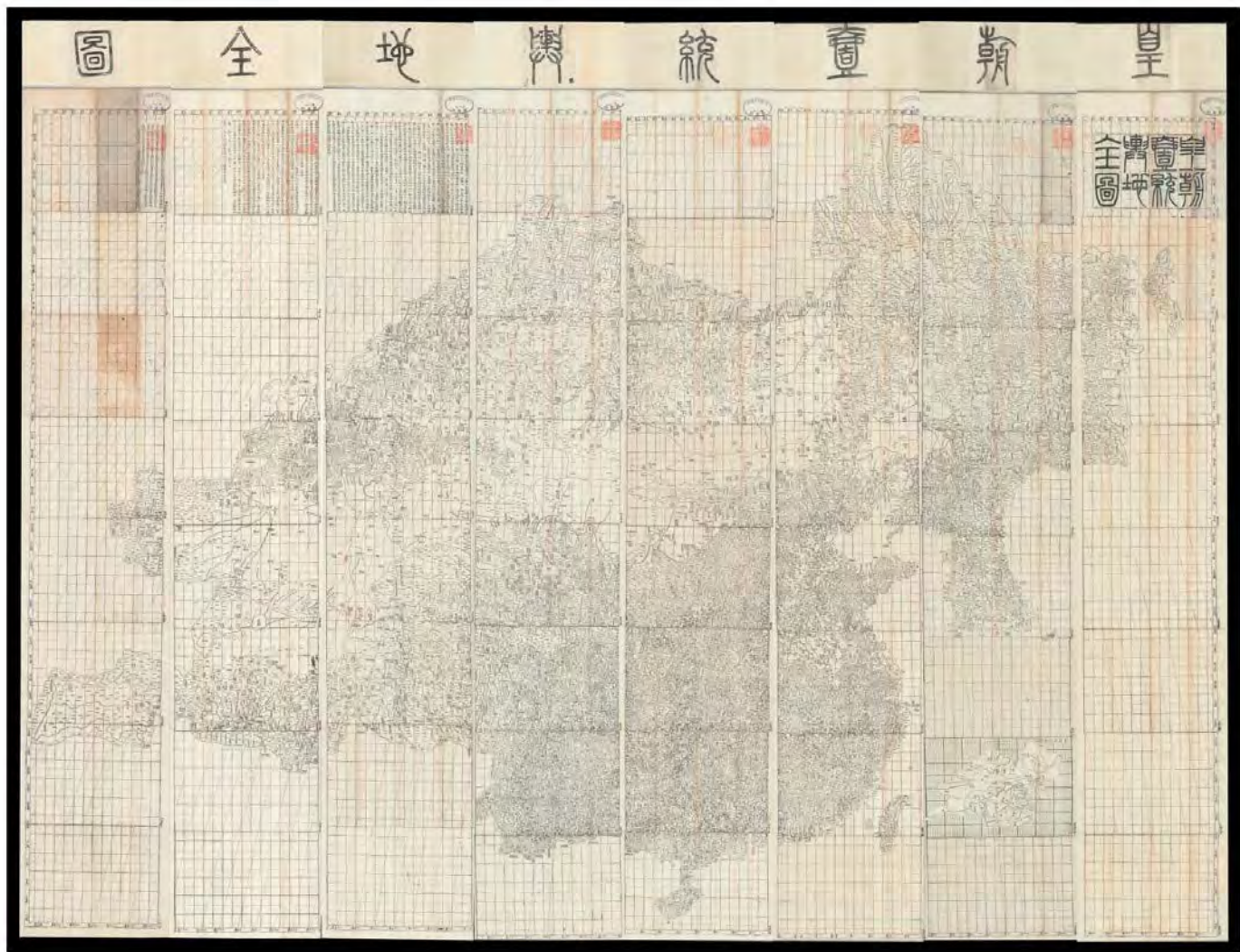
Changzhou, China

Physical description

Wood-block printed map of the unified Qing Empire, comprising sixty-four sheets. Two titles in seal script to upper centre and upper right in two lines

Dimensions

(if joined) 1780 by 2340mm. (70 by 92.25 inches). (each sheet) 203 by 277mm. (8 by 11 inches).



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