HONGPING ANNIE NIE

The Selden Map of China

A New Understanding of the Ming Dynasty
Contents

Preface 5

1. A Treasure of the Ming Dynasty 6

2. The History of the Selden Map 17

3. Ming Dynasty Maritime Trade 23

4. The Selden Map and a New Understanding of the Ming Dynasty 38

Conclusion 54

Notes 56
Preface

This short book tells the story of a remarkable discovery in the stacks of the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Library: the Selden Map of China. Dating from the seventeenth century, at the height of the Ming Dynasty, it shows a China very different from popular conceptions of the time: a country looking not inward to the Asian landmass but outward to the sea. First, we learn the story of the rediscovery of the map, concealed within one of the world’s most venerable libraries. Then, we move back in time to find out more about the Chinese world that produced the map: China at the height of the commercial, lively Ming Dynasty, and the port city of Quanzhou, so prominent on the map. We then learn about the world of Chinese mapmaking: the skill and craft that went into the making of the Selden map and other maps of the time, drawing on indigenous knowledge as well as an understanding of maps from other parts of the world. Finally, we explore the significance of the Selden Map: what does it tell us about the Ming, and about the history of China’s relationship with the world? The voyages of the early Ming dynasty traveller Zheng He continue to fascinate people today and the story of the Selden Map is central to an understanding of the long history of China’s relationship with the sea, and with the wider world.
1. A Treasure of the Ming Dynasty

The Rediscovery and Conservation of the Selden Map of China

Early on the morning of January 10, 2008, Robert Batchelor, an American historian from Georgia Southern University arrived at the Bodleian Library. Located in the heart of Oxford, the Bodleian Library is the central library of the University of Oxford and stores eight and a half million of the University’s thirteen million books. It is not only the largest university library in Europe but also one of Europe’s largest national libraries.

Batchelor would come to Oxford every January to attend the annual conference of the British Society for Eighteenth-century Studies and at the same time he would visit the Bodleian’s pre-modern East Asian collection. Scheduled to fly back to the United States the next day, he decided to make another visit to the Bodleian to have a look at a Chinese map from the Ming Dynasty listed as ‘The Selden Map of China’ in the library’s catalogue. He had not the slightest idea that he was about to make a historical discovery.

David Helliwell, the curator of the Bodleian’s Chinese collection, met with Batchelor in one of the reading rooms. He brought out the rarely used Selden Map from storage and carefully spread it out on a big table. The old map, 158 cm long and 96 cm wide, was severely damaged in many parts. Its original colours were badly faded and exuded the distinctive odour of ancient book collections. Just as he had hoped, Batchelor identified it as an original map from the Ming Dynasty. However, to his utter amazement, the map in front of him was completely different from any other Chinese map he had ever seen before. Unlike typical ancient Chinese maps, which placed China at the centre of the world and scattered other countries as
little pieces of territory around the periphery, the Selden Map of China covered vast areas of ocean and islands. It stretched from Siberia in the North to Java and the Moluccas (the Spice Islands) in the South. To the east of the map were the islands of Japan and the Philippines and to the west were Burma and southern India. Interestingly, mainland China was squeezed into the upper left part of the map while the islands of East Asia and South East Asia occupied more than half of the map. Although each Chinese administrative district was outlined with a thick green line, and the names of each province, prefecture, and county were systematically marked, Batchelor noticed that there were few other details about the inland areas.

In the soft light of the reading room, Batchelor also noticed a number of scarcely discernible thin black lines linking the Fujian coast with various ports in East and South East Asia and almost unnoticeable navigation markings next to the lines. His many years of research into the history of world trade had given Batchelor exceptional insight. He immediately realized that these lines were none other than Ming Dynasty trade routes! The so-called ‘Selden Map of China’ was actually a Ming Dynasty seafaring chart! Batchelor was delighted with his discovery, for he knew what a great impact it would have on the world’s knowledge of Ming China. The image of an isolated and conservative Ming China in conventional scholarship was wrong; in fact, Ming China was outward-looking, capitalistic and vibrant. Turning to Helliwell, Batchelor exclaimed: ‘This map will become world famous. It will appear in all history textbooks!’

Batchelor’s discovery quickly spread throughout academic circles around the world. Experts agreed that the map was an extremely significant Chinese historical document, forcing people to reassess the relationship between marine and inland China during the Ming Dynasty and the position of Ming Dynasty in the world. Originally, the map had no Chinese name on it and had been named after John Selden, the collector and donor of the map. Chinese academics commonly refer to it as the
Dongxiyang Hanghai Tu (东西洋航海图) [Nautical Chart of the Eastern and Western Seas]. Helliwell has included this Chinese title in the Bodleian Library’s latest catalogue because it conveys more accurately what it is.

Immediately after the rediscovery of the Selden Map of China, Robert Minte and his colleague Marinita Stiglitz collaborated and submitted a proposal to restore and conserve it. The Pilgrim Trust, the Radcliffe Trust, and the Mercers’ Company generously provided funding, which enabled the Bodleian Library’s restoration team, lead by Robert Minte, to take on the task of restoration.

The Selden Map of China was originally a scroll to be hung on the wall. But it had lost its shafts and been kept in a long box, where it had become seriously damaged from being rolled up too tightly. It would be taken out to show to visitors as a Chinese curiosity and, by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was badly worn. In 1919, using contemporary methods of conservation, it was backed with linen, which proved to be a bad mistake. As time passed, the backing stiffened and each time the map was opened and unrolled fragments of the map dropped off, causing yet further damage.

To Minte and his team this was the most challenging conservation of their careers. After several months of careful consideration they finalized their conservation plan. They decided to combine techniques and materials from East and West to conserve the map and preserve all of its material characteristics and historical evidence, while removing the 1919 inappropriate lining and repairs. Removing the textile lining from the back proved to be the most difficult part of the project, a painstaking process which took several months. The conservators first gradually humidified the surface from both sides using dahlia sprayers and Japanese brushes in order to enable the textile lining to be removed, to flatten distortions, and to draw out discolouration. They then used Japanese paste brushes to apply on the front a temporary facing, adhered with
Japanese red seaweed extract while the linen backing was being removed. The backing had been stuck on with strong adhesives and the paper of the map was extremely thin and fragile. They had to use special bamboo utensils to carefully remove the backing and patches bit by bit. Since the map could not be subjected to humidity too often or for too long, it was a race against time to complete their meticulous work.

After the backing was successfully removed, they used Chinese dyed paper to fill in the gaps left by the missing part of the map and applied three layers of Japanese paper to the back of the map in order to strengthen it. At different stages of the restoration, they brought in experts with special skills from the British Museum and the British Library to help them. As a result, one year later, the map had regained its original beautiful appearance. In September 2011, the map made its first debut at the Bodleian Library Exhibition of Rare Treasures of the World, revealing its splendour to the world and becoming a great attraction.

A Description of the Selden Map of China

The Selden Map of China is a work of art, beautifully painted in multiple colours and black Chinese carbon ink on three pieces of *edgeworthia chrysantha* or Mitsumata, paper made from the Japanese plant of the same name that was cultivated in China and Korea in the seventeenth century and widely traded. It is a large map, measuring 158 cm in length and 96 cm in width. Most likely it would have been put on display as well as used as a reference in a wealthy merchant household. In the north part of the map is Siberia and in the south are the island of Java in Indonesia and the Moluccas (the Spice Islands); to the east are the islands of Japan and the Philippines and to the west are Burma and southern India. In the foreground, more than sixty ports are labelled along the shipping routes, as well as countries, Japanese provinces, islands, reefs, rivers, mountains and ocean currents. At the top of the map are a compass rose, a scale bar and an empty rectangular bordered box. A box on the western
edge of the map gives directions for reaching the Persian Gulf. There is an image of the sun on the upper right edge of the map just and an image of the moon at on the upper west end of the map. The Latin words for sun and moon are written on each respective image, in the handwriting of Thomas Hyde, as an analysis of the ink used has revealed. The central point of the map is the middle of the South China Sea.

The clear focus of the Selden Map is China’s coastal regions and islands from north to south, as well as the eastern and western oceanic regions. The Chinese mainland is squeezed into the upper left part of the map and is rather distorted in shape and situated in a less important position. Each Ming Dynasty administrative area is outlined with a thick green line. The names of each province, seat of government, prefecture, and county are marked with different signs, but there are few details about the inland areas. Japan and the Korean Peninsula are just sketched in and are not very accurate. However, the depiction of the topography of South East Asia is relatively accurate and the Philippines are drawn in detail, with sixteen names marked. The ocean and islands occupy about half of the map.

The Selden Map shows considerable contemporary geographic and nautical knowledge. Above the Malay Peninsula and close to the Indian Ocean, where India is supposed to be, are the ‘sources of the Yellow River’ (黄河水源) and the ‘Constellation Sea’ (星宿海), as well as the sources of the Yangtze River and the Mekong River. Flowing down the east side, the Kuroshio Current is marked as ‘Yegu passage, eastward current, very tight’ (野故门水流东) by Ryukyu and ‘This passage, flowing east, extremely tight’ (此门流水东甚紧) between Taiwan and Luzon.

The Selden Map not only marks six eastern sea routes and twelve western sea routes of Chinese boats sailing from Quanzhou (泉州) on the Fujian coast as well as sixty ports along these routes. There are also characters written next to these routes, indicating the compass directions for the main stages
of the route. For example, on the route to Ryuku, each stage is marked with the characters: 甲卯 (jia mao), 乙卯 (yi mao), 卯 (mao), 乙卯 (yi mao), 卯, 乙卯, and so on. Although the map extends only as far west as the Bay of Bengal, on the far left of the chart, near Calicut (古里国) is a text explaining the route to Aden (阿丹国), Djofar (法儿国) and Ormuz (忽鲁谟兹), which demonstrate Ming China’s knowledge of and interest in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea regions.

The cartographer who drew the Selden Map used Chinese landscape painting techniques, sketching in ink the outline of mountain ranges, forests, plants and flowers, rivers, ocean waves and so on and then applying six different colours—red, green, blue, yellow, white and black. Particular topographical features, such as mountains, rivers, islands and straits, provincial boundaries, cities and coastal maritime routes are shown in different colours and patterns. A nautical chart, the Selden Map can also be appreciated as a beautiful landscape painting, a perfect combination of the two forms.

It is clear that whoever created the Selden Map had considerable knowledge of South East Asia’s landscape and local products. Different species of trees, whose growth patterns roughly correspond to the longitude, include cedar, plum, willow, bamboo, camphor, pine, and palm, etc. For example, the trees depicted in Ming territory are not the same as the trees depicted in the tropics of South East Asia. On the island east of Sumatra are images of different kinds of palm trees used as cash crops. In South East Asia there are images of the valuable commodity, sandalwood, with the text ‘Sappanwood place near Aceh’ (蘇木達即亞齊 Sumuda ji Yaqi). Many plants are shown on the map, including orchids, peonies, pines, bamboo, fir trees, palms and loquats, and many of these images appear repeatedly. In the south of Japan a scarlet chrysanthemum flower is painted.

Most importantly, the Selden Map represents a major breakthrough in traditional Chinese cartographical and geographical conceptions. Cartography in ancient China was
closely associated with the concept of the ‘world under heaven’ (天下观) and the idea of barbarians (华夷观). The ‘world under heaven’ referred to the territories that might be reached by the power of the emperor, with China seen as the centre of the world and the centre of civilization. The further out from the centre in all four directions, the more barbaric the world became. The map of the ‘world under heaven’ and the map of the ‘world of barbarians’ are the same, the latter simply being an extension of the former. As a result, traditional Chinese maps of the world deviated from geographical realities. The official cartographic method was to position China in the centre and tiny areas of foreign land would be scattered around the periphery. Matteo Ricci’s geographical concepts influenced a group of Chinese scholars, but the world maps made by the traditional literati were still Sino-centric. For example, in 1644, Cao Junyi (曹君義) drew thirty-six unmarked meridians on his world map entitled ‘Tianxia jiubian fenye renji lucheng quantu (天下九邊分野人跡路程全圖). He depicted with some accuracy the geographical positions of Europe, the Mediterranean and Africa, but Europe and America were still shown as tiny areas of barbarian land in the West. Around the huge Chinese territory was a partitioned and caricaturized Western-style world map. The lines of longitude and latitude were mere decoration.

The Selden Map of China shows not only China within its borders but also the world that lies beyond its borders, especially the open seas. It reveals a change in China’s traditional inward-looking view of the world. The Selden Map is the first Chinese nautical chart that correctly shows the geographical relationships in the East Asia region. It depicts China as being a part of East and South East Asia. China is shown merged into this region and not dominating this part of the world. Such a large-scale depiction of the oceans on a single map is a feature of Western cartography, the Ptolemaic method of looking at the world on a single chart. It shows at a glance China’s global position in Asia’s seas and oceans and the main routes connecting Ming China to
the world. The Selden Map reveals a highly progressive view of
the world and its oceans, and it is possible that contemporary
Western world maps may have been consulted.

Ming sea maps, such as those in the map collection entitled
Chou hai tu bian (筹海图编), show the topography of Chinese
and foreign lands, cities and towns, rivers and islands, and
coastal defences. However, almost all these maps were official
maps made for imperial envoys sent abroad on diplomatic
missions or for national defence purposes. The Selden Map was
a merchant map. It highlights not only the importance of the
trading activities of ordinary merchants, but also reflects a new
type of relationship between merchants and the state, the world,
and the oceans in Ming China.

In ancient Chinese cartography, the seas were marginalized. 3
Despite China’s long seafaring history, Chinese nautical charts
that have survived to the present day are extremely rare. The
Zheng He Nautical Chart (鄭和航海圖), the only nautical chart
of the high seas that has survived from the Ming Dynasty is an
eexample of the traditional Chinese method of map-making.
Made in 1628 and based on Zheng He’s expeditions, the Zheng
He Nautical Chart was painted on a rolled-up scroll which was
so long that it was divided into 40 short charts forming the
Sea Maps Collection (筹海图编). It includes eighteen charts
of China and twenty-two charts of foreign parts, as well as two
pages of seafaring constellation charts. The Zheng He Nautical
Chart shows fifty-six compass course routes from Taicang in
Jiangsu to Hormuz and fifty-three return routes, depicting in
Chinese landscape- painting style the different scenery along the
Yangtze River below Nanjing, the East China Sea and the South
Sea as far as the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, East African
routes and the coastal terrain.

Typical of Chinese traditional nautical charts, the Zheng
He Nautical Chart lacks a compass rose or scale. In traditional
Chinese nautical charts, the topographical features were
realistically and vividly depicted so that map users could identify
their locations by matching their surroundings with a particular scene on the chart, that is, the ‘scene-matching method’. By placing the user in a central position, the compass was not a factor. There was no consistency of scale either, while lines and text are relied upon for explanation.

As a fifteenth-century Chinese nautical chart, the Zheng He chart was very different from traditional Western nautical charts in content, design and technique. Western medieval nautical charts typically featured many radial navigation lines, a compass rose and a scale, which helped the voyager determine the orientation of his ship on the ocean and the distance to the destination. The coastal areas were depicted in more detail while land areas were either left blank or filled with images. These charts were typically painted on parchment paper less than one metre square and sometimes several charts formed a set of maps.

The Selden Map, made two hundred years after the Zheng He Nautical Chart, is the first practical Chinese nautical chart to mark compass bearings and ratios, crucial elements in Western cartography. It clearly displays an unusually strong sense of direction and distance. In the centre of the upper part of the Selden Map is a traditional Chinese mariner’s compass rose, accurately showing eight points of the compass: east, west, north, south, south-east, south-west, north-east, and north-west. For example, on the route to Ryuku, each stage is marked with the characters: 甲卯 (jia mao, 85°), 乙卯 (yi mao, 95°), 卯 (mao, 90°), 乙卯 (yi mao, 95°), 卯 (mao, 90°), 乙卯 (yi mao, 95°), and so on. It is radically different from the traditional ‘scene-matching method’ as used in the Zheng He Nautical Chart.

Below the compass rose on the Selden Map is a slightly slanted scale. Although some believe that the mapmaker did not understand how scale was used for guided navigation and added it to the map as a decoration in reference to some contemporary Western nautical charts, it could indeed be a Chinese type of nautical scale: one inch (寸) equivalent to a voyage of ten-night watches (更, geng). According to ancient Chinese ways
of calculating time, one day was ten night watches, and one night watch was equal to 2.4 hours. In Ming China the geng was already being used as a unit of measurement in maritime navigation. In the space of one geng, a vessel travelling at normal speed could cover an average of sixty miles. For example, the sea route from Manila to Brunei on modern maps is a distance of 1185 km (640 nautical miles). According to the scale on the Selden Map, this would take a voyage of 6.2 days, or 62 geng, in other words 4.3 nautical miles per hour. Based on original navigational data, this speed is fairly accurate. 

The blank square to the right of the compass rose and above the scale is more intriguing. It is not an unfinished part of the map as some believe; rather, it represents the map itself. The scale on the map was not perpendicular to the map’s vertical line and the slant of the scale is particularly obvious in relation to the blank square. The combination of the scale and the blank square suggests that the map had a magnetic declination, that is, the map conveyed not only a ‘compass north’ but also a ‘map north’. According to observations made by Joseph Needham, China’s magnetic declination at the beginning of the seventeenth century was 60 to 70 W, which corresponds with the discrepancy shown between the scale and the square frame of the Selden Map.

Not only did the Selden Map include a Chinese-style compass rose and scale that differ from those on Western nautical charts, it also adopted a traditional Chinese cartographical method: a square grid system of coordinates, rather than the Western latitude-longitude coordinates. The length of each side of the square is more or less equivalent to the scale used in modern maps. Although the Chinese mainland appears skewed, the depiction of South East Asia is relatively accurate. It is possible that the mapmaker may have consulted Ricci’s world maps since there are many similarities between the South East Asian regions on these maps and the Selden Map. It is therefore fair to say that the Selden Map was a combination of Western and Chinese cartography.
During conservation and after the backing and patches had been removed, it was found that on the back of the map was a sketch of a scale, navigation points, and a diagram showing the shipping routes. The trunk route was in a T-shape. One route ran parallel to the coast of Fujian, linking Nagasaki (籠仔沙機), Hirado (魚鱗島) and central Vietnam (占城). Another route started from near Quanzhou and went south to Manila in the Philippines. The importance of the maritime trade between China, Japan and the Philippines could thus be seen. This trunk route witnessed heavy traffic in the early seventeenth century from Chinese merchants, Japanese Red Seal Ships and the Dutch East India Company and the British East India Company. The discovery of this sketch map confirms that the shipping routes are the focus of the Selden Map. This has great significance for research into international trade in East and South East Asia during the Ming Dynasty, especially into the relationship between China and the galleon trade, as well as the important role China played in the emergence of global trade in early modern period.
2. The History of the Selden Map

When and By Whom It Was Made

It is widely accepted that the Selden Map of China was created between the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, at the end of the Ming Dynasty’s Wanli era and the beginning of the Tianqi era, when maritime trade with foreign countries was flourishing after the Ming court lifted the ban on foreign trade. Some scholars, basing their theory on the evidence of changes in Taiwan’s name, believe that the Selden Map was created in the Wanli era between 1566 and 1602. Others, inferring information from contemporary terms of address used by the Dutch, the Spanish and the Portuguese, believe that it is most likely that the map was produced between 1610 and 1620. However, others assert that the map was created in the sixth year of the Wanli era (1578) at the earliest, and that it was produced around 1621 after the Dutch occupied the Moluccas (present day Indonesia) and before they entered Tainan (in Taiwan) in 1624, around the fourth year of the Tianqi era.

The creator of the Selden Map of China is unknown and experts have proposed many ideas about who it could be. Some believe that the creator was probably from southern Fujian because the starting points of all the sea routes, whether eastern or western, are along the south-east coast of Fujian and many of the characters on the map are written in the southern Fujian vernacular. Others suggest that the mapmaker was a sinicized Arab who had settled in Fujian, because the map provides directions to Arab regions in the Middle East. The creator could also have been a Chinese resident of the Philippines because the term for the Spanish ‘化人’ in the inscription by the Moluccas is what Chinese people in the Philippines called the Spaniards. At the same time, given the fact that Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch
were active in South East Asia, the map could also have been the result of an encounter between China and the West, and that it was the joint effort of Fujianese traders and Western explorers.\textsuperscript{13}

How the Selden Map travelled far across the seas from China or South East Asia to England is also a mystery. One idea is connected with Banten on the island of Java, the biggest pepper trading centre in South East Asia at the beginning of the seventeenth century, which attracted a large numbers of merchants from Europe, South West Asia, South China, the Malay Peninsula and the Spice Islands. Fujian merchants and the British East India Company were the most active and the two sides would often cooperate in managing the pepper purchasing and exporting business. It is possible that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, an English person with the British East India Company in Banten might have obtained the map from a Fujianese pepper merchant and later brought it back to London.\textsuperscript{14} Another theory is that the East India Company commander John Saris, captain of the first British ship to reach Japan and a significant figure, might have accepted the map in lieu of a large trading debt.\textsuperscript{15}

Batchelor proposes a different theory. He suggests that the Selden Map of China, which was commissioned by Li Dan, the most powerful Chinese merchant at the time, was on a ship to Japan and became one of the spoils of war when the English and the Dutch jointly enforced a blockade on Portuguese trade in the region.\textsuperscript{16} Li Dan was the leader of China’s biggest merchant group and was known by foreigners as China Captain. He had a close relationship with the Japanese upper classes and also cooperated in trade with Richard Cook of the British East India Company. Every year, his smuggling ships would sail back and forth between Japan, China and Taiwan in the South China Sea. It is suggested that one of Li Dan’s ships sailed from Manila via Macau back to Nagasaki. The captain was registered under the name of an Osaka merchant and the crew was made up of Chinese, Japanese and Portuguese. There
were also two Portuguese priests disguised as merchants who were preparing to slip into Japan to do missionary work. Japan at that time prohibited any trade with Portugal and Spain, both of them Catholic countries. Supported by the Japanese government, Britain and the Netherlands jointly imposed a blockade on Portuguese and Spanish ships entering Japan. A British East India Company ship, The Elizabeth, had just arrived from London and was keen to prevent the Portuguese Catholic missionaries from doing their work. It intercepted and seized Li Dan’s ship near Taiwan and it was purely by chance that the Eastern and Western Nautical Chart happened to be on this ship. This incident had disastrous consequences in Nagasaki. Li Dan was suspected of illegally transporting Portuguese missionaries into Japan as well as smuggling goods. In order to protect their own companies, he and Richard Cook tried to think of ways of deflecting public attention away from the smuggling and onto the missionaries. Li Dan was able to escape, but the Japanese captain and two Portuguese priests were tortured and put to death. This became a notorious case of martyrdom in the history of Catholicism. The British and Dutch blockade was finally lifted. A great quantity of Li Dan’s merchandise was confiscated and Richard Cook died in disgrace on the journey back to England.

Nevertheless, there is no hard evidence to confirm that the Selden Map of China fell into the hands of the British during this blockade. The East India Company archives have always been preserved intact, but surprisingly the record of the blockade by The Elizabeth is missing. All the material in English, including Richard Cook’s diary, was scattered and lost after reaching London. Since there are no records, one can only imagine what happened. The mystery remains.

The Selden Map was later acquired by John Selden, a well-known London lawyer and Oriental scholar trained at the University of Oxford. Selden described the map in a codicil to his will dated 11 June 1653.
A map of China made there fairly, and done in colours, together with a sea compass of their making and divisions, taken both by an English commander, who being pressed exceedingly to restore it at a great ransom, would not part with it.

In his will Selden said that he hoped to donate the map and other items in his collection, including many oriental manuscripts and Greek marble carvings, to a public library. John Selden composed a treatise in 1619 entitled *Mare Clausum* (‘The Closed Sea’), in response to a similar book, *Mare Liberum* (‘The Open Sea’) by the Dutch scholar Hugo Grotius. Grotius asserted that the seas were shared internationally and that any country could freely engage in all maritime trade. But Selden believed that the seas and dry land alike could form part of a country’s territory. He would prohibit the Dutch from expanding into the North Sea and he also opposed the joint British and Dutch blockade of the Portuguese sea route at Manila. That Selden had the map in his collection clearly arose from his great interest in maritime rights and trade. If the map was really the spoils of war from concerted action taken by the British and the Dutch, then the fact that it had fallen into his hands was indeed an irony.¹⁷

**The Bodleian Library**

John Selden died in 1654 and in 1659 the map was presented to the Bodleian Library, the only Ming China nautical chart in the world. The Bodleian has a long tradition of collecting Chinese books and manuscripts. As early as 1604, the University alumnus, diplomat and promoter of knowledge, Thomas Bodley, purchased for the library the first batch of Chinese books from Amsterdam, Europe’s largest oriental commodities transit station, although at the time no one either English or Dutch could read Chinese. Throughout the sixteenth century,
the Bodleian acquired Europe’s biggest collection of Chinese works, around a fifth of Europe’s entire Chinese book collection. Fortunately almost all have survived.  

Thomas Hyde (1636–1703), an Oriental scholar and librarian-in-chief at the Bodleian Library, was not able to categorize the Chinese book collection, which included the Selden Map, until 1687, when he met a visitor from China. Shen Fucong (Michael Alphonsius, 1657–1692) was a Chinese Catholic who, in 1683, had accompanied the Belgian Jesuit Philippe Couplet to Rome to give an account of missionary work in China to the Pope. Along the way, Shen Fucong was received by the French king, Louis XIV, to whom he showed a portrait of Confucius and demonstrated calligraphy with a writing brush. This visit facilitated the sending of the first group of French missionaries to China in 1685. Couplet and Shen Fucong went once again to Rome to have an audience with Pope Innocent XI and offered him more than 400 scrolls compiled by missionaries and edited from Chinese documents, and these formed an early collection of Chinese books in the Vatican library. In 1687, Couplet and Shen Fucong paid a formal visit to the English king James II. James took a great liking to this knowledgeable Chinese man and asked the artist Sir Godfrey Kneller to paint a full, life-size portrait of Shen Fucong, which he hung in his bedroom.  

In the summer of 1687, Hyde invited Shen Fucong to Oxford to help translate the titles of Chinese books and manuscripts into Latin and compile a catalogue. In a letter to a friend, Hyde wrote: ‘Michael Shen Fucong is a scholar well-versed in all areas of Chinese learning, and is sincere and dependable . . ., he can speak Latin and we can freely communicate.’ In the accounts of the Bodleian Library for the years 1686 to 1687, a disbursement of six pounds can be seen: ‘Payment to the Chinese man for cataloguing Chinese books and other expenses and board and lodging.’ With Shen Fucong’s help, Thomas Hyde added Latin notes on the Selden Map, which we can still see today. In 1688, Shen Fucong left Oxford for Lisbon and became a Jesuit.
Unfortunately, in 1691 on his way back to China, he fell ill and died. Today, his portrait still hangs in Windsor Castle.

In 1697, the Oxford scholar Edward Bernard included the Chinese catalogue compiled by Shen Fucong and Thomas Hyde in the famous Latin catalogue *Catalogi librorum manusciptorum Angliae et Hiberniae*. Several hundred years later, the Bodleian’s librarian David Helliwell, who is proficient in Chinese, updated and annotated Edward Bernard’s catalogue, which led Robert Batchelor to the rediscovery of the Selden Map in 2008.

On the 15th September 2011, the University of Oxford organized an international conference about the map, during which scholars from around the world discussed its features and its significance. There was unanimous agreement that the Selden Map is an extremely important Chinese historical document. Renowned sinologist Timothy Brook declared it to be the most important Chinese historical document he had ever seen. Zhang Zhiqing (张志清), Head of Special Collections at the National Library of China believed it was more important than any of the pre-modern maps in his care.

The collection includes the Laud Rutter, (Shunfeng xiangsong 顺風相送), a Ming navigator’s manuscript guide to the sea routes connecting China to the world, donated by William Laud (1573–1645), Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of the University. Some of the compass bearings in this manual of compass directions can be found on the Selden Map of China. In fact, according to Timothy Brook, the cartography of the Selden Map closely matches the written text of the Laud Rutter.⁴⁰
3. Ming Dynasty Maritime Trade

The Ming Dynasty, which witnessed China’s second commercial revolution, was a rather open, dynamic and outward-looking period of Chinese history. Despite the Ming court’s ban on maritime trade with foreign countries, overseas trade flourished as never before during this period. The newly discovered Selden Map of China revealed Ming China’s maritime commercial activities in various coastal ports between the Pacific and the Indian oceans, east to Japan, Korea, via the Philippines and the South Sea islands, and west to the Arabian Peninsula and as far as the east coast of Africa. Chinese merchants could be seen everywhere.

Commodities, Maritime Navigation and Ship-building Technology in the Ming Dynasty

Most people have the impression that the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) was an autocratic and closed-off society. In the reign of the first Ming ruler Emperor Hong Wu (1368–1398) China’s autocratic, imperial power system was at its height. However, compared to previous dynasties, economic development in the Ming Empire was unprecedented. The Ming Dynasty was the pinnacle of Chinese culture with regard to technology, commerce, art and literature.

Emperor Hong Wu was born into a peasant family and attached great importance to agriculture. When he ascended the throne, he immediately resumed the agricultural production that had been destroyed in the late Yuan Dynasty. As society stabilized, agricultural production increased and a great number of surplus agricultural commodities appeared. Infrastructure and communication also improved under Emperor Hong Wu, and private business and trade were also promoted. New markets
burgeoned along the route of the messengers of the imperial court and huge numbers of surplus agricultural commodities were sold here, ushering in the Ming Dynasty’s commercial revolution.  

China’s financial strength and its power continued to grow during the Yongle era (1402–1424). Yongle is universally regarded as the Ming Dynasty’s ‘second founding emperor of China’, because he reversed many of his father’s policies, including policies that suppressed the gentry and merchants. Emperor Yongle moved his capital from Nanjing to Beijing, and in 1403 he built a new city of Beijing, which included the Imperial City and the Forbidden City, expanding the city by four and a half miles. Once the capital had been moved to the north, the most pressing task was to transport goods to the capital. Yongle ordered the re-opening of the Grand Canal to connect the north and south inland waters. Many important ports sprung up along the banks of the Grand Canal. Ming Dynasty trade became increasingly prosperous as more and more people engaged in commerce. Compared to the first commercial revolution in the Song Dynasty, in the second commercial revolution of the Ming Dynasty, the market economy was broader and economic growth more diversified, providing great resources and capital for maritime trade.

The greatest concentration of markets was in the Yangtze River basin, Fujian and around Beijing. There was a sharp decline in land ownership, since many people no longer depended on agriculture for their livelihood. Output of cotton increased substantially, with each household growing and processing cotton, and manufacturing cotton goods. The textile industry in both town and country expanded, especially in the region south of the Yangtze, which in time became the centre of the country’s cotton-textile industry. Many cities and towns, especially along the lower reaches of the Yangtze and Fujian, began to produce special handicraft products, such as various kinds of woven silk, different weights of paper, and unique earthenware and
porcelain. Of the last of these products, the extraordinarily fine blue and white porcelain of Jingdezhen and the white porcelain of Dehua in Fujian were sold to distant places all over the world.

Ming Dynasty maritime navigation and ship-building built on the achievements of the Tang, Song and Yuan dynasties and was extremely advanced. The large-scale ship-building industry at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty was state run. There were different kinds of ships, including big ocean-faring vessels, warships that fought battles at sea or on the rivers, light grain-transporting ships, and fast river ships, etc. The biggest state-run shipyard in the early Ming Dynasty was the Longjiang shipyard in Nanjing. It covered a vast area and after the ships were built they were launched directly into the Yangtze River. It also included the Longjiangbao shipyard, where large and advanced seafaring ships had been built for Zheng He’s voyages across the western seas. Chinese seafaring ships started to use compasses for navigation as early as the Song Dynasty. Around the twelfth century, compasses invented by Chinese were taken across the seas to Arabia and then through Arabia to Europe. China’s advanced sternpost rudder can be traced back to the second century but began to be used by Europeans only in the thirteenth century. Chinese ships already had water-tight compartments, and had become increasingly sophisticated by the Song Dynasty. The compartments were tightly sealed off from each other so that if one or two compartments started leaking – especially on long voyages across the ocean – water could not flow into the other compartments. They were easy to repair and could also be used to keep fish and store fresh water, thus improving the lives of the crew.

During Yongle’s reign, Zheng He (1371–1433), who was himself of Arab descent, commanded a fleet of ships on seven diplomatic missions to the West (today’s South Seas Islands and the Indian Ocean region). He set out from Suzhou, first sailing to the southern part of Vietnam, and then to West Java, Thailand, Malacca, and Sumatra, and thence to Sri Lanka, India,
the Moluccas, Aden, Mecca, and the east coast of Africa. He visited more than thirty countries in Asia and Africa. Zheng He’s mission was much earlier than that of Columbus’ discovery of the New World of the Americas in 1492.

Columbus had four ships, Zheng He had 317. Columbus’ Santa Maria was twenty-four metres long, with a capacity of 250 metric tons. Zheng He’s ‘treasure ships’ were at least 120 metres long, with a capacity of 2200 metric tons. Zheng He commanded 28,000 men, maritime experts, astronomers, and judges. Even Arab interpreters were all on his ships. There were 180 doctors and Chinese medicine specialists on the Chinese ships, as many as Vasco da Gama’s entire crew. Chinese ships were frequently at least ten times bigger in size, crew and equipment than the ships of European fleets. While Columbus’s crew were forced to spend their days eating bread cooked with seawater, Zheng He and his crew could enjoy fresh freshwater fish raised in sealed compartments.24

From the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there was a rapid and widespread expansion of privately-owned ship-building industries. Different ships were designed according to the different circumstances of each shipping route. Famous Ming Dynasty ships were the Fujian ‘Fu’ ship, the Guangdong ‘Guang’ ship, and the Zhenjiang ‘sand’ ship. For example, there were many sandy shallow waters long the Zhejiang coast, so a flat-bottomed ‘sand’ boat was designed, with a square prow, many masts, fabric sails, and easy to row with oars. Along the Fujian coast, where the wind was strong and the waters deep, the ‘Fu’ boats were built three storeys high, large enough to hold over 100 people with two sails, a sharp keel and broad on top.25 This advanced ship-building industry stimulated the development of private overseas trade in the middle and later years of the Ming Dynasty. Ming maritime trade was even vaster in scale than the prosperous maritime trade of the Song Dynasty.26

Chinese maritime traders had expanded into South East Asia by the early Han Dynasty. China’s developed agricultural
and handicraft industry and advanced maritime navigation and ship-building technology had allowed Chinese merchants to lead maritime trade between the Indian Ocean and the East Asia seas since the Song Dynasty. China’s maritime trade spread throughout the coastal areas of South East Asia, with long-distance and short-distance trading in Chinese silk, porcelain, spices from India and the Malay Archipelago, precious stones from Central Asia, and ivory from East Africa, etc.  

Tribute Trade and Private Maritime Trade in the Ming Dynasty

In the early Ming Dynasty, maritime links with other countries were strictly banned and foreign trade was conducted mainly through the imperial tribute system. The imperial court had created an extremely rigorous system of regulations regarding tributes and had specifically stipulated the number of envoys and ships from each tribute country. Therefore, only tributary missions from foreign countries could obtain permission to enter Chinese ports and it was only through these tribute channels that South East Asian countries could obtain Chinese goods. Vietnam, Champa, Korea, Cambodia, Java and other countries offered tribute every three years, Ryuku every two years, and Japan every ten years. Once the tributary missions arrived in Beijing, they would offer up a fixed amount of foreign goods to the Ming emperor. Under the principle of giving more than receiving, the emperor would then bestow on these envoys all kinds of silk fabrics and goods often worth many times more than the goods that the envoys had brought in as tribute. If Emperor Hong Wu’s tribute system was mainly a diplomatic measure, then Emperor Yongle’s method was to exploit the tribute trade to monopolize the country’s maritime trade. Zheng He’s voyages across the seas represented the pinnacle of the tribute trade and the establishment of ports in Vietnam, Java, Sumatra, Sri Lanka, and the West Indies.

After Emperor Yongle’s death, Zheng He’s voyages were brought to an end. In 1433, Zheng He completed his last
voyage and he died in the same year. The ‘treasure ships’ were abandoned and fell into decay and all the documents about the voyages were destroyed. One reason for the change in maritime policy was the rising Mongol threat from the territories in the north. In 1449, the Mongols attacked the Ming and captured the Zhengtong Emperor, Zhu Qizhen, at the Tumu fortress, an event which became known in history as the ‘Crisis of the Tumu Fortress’. The Ming Dynasty turned its attention away from the sea to the interior and the tribute trade began to decline.  

Private maritime trade was prohibited from the outset by the Ming government, so at the very beginning this trade was characterized both by commercial activities and by piracy. During the Hong Wu era, Japan was plunged into the chaos of civil war. During the seven years from 1368 to 1374, the Chinese coast was harassed by wokou (Japanese pirates) as many as 23 times. In 1371, in order to prevent anti-Ming forces from colluding with the pirates, the Ming government issued an order which prohibited private maritime expeditions and foreign trade, and also restricted foreign merchants from coming to China to trade. Whilst the tribute trade had expanded greatly in the Yongle era, especially with Zheng He’s voyages to the west, private foreign trade was now completely banned. There was a strict order that all seafaring vessels should be converted into blunt-headed boats not suitable for long-distance voyages. In the era of the Emperor Jiajing, it was forbidden to build large boats with more than two masts, and all boats that violated this ban would be destroyed. The ban lasted for over two hundred years.

The direct result of this ban on maritime trade was a scarcity of goods coming from China and great profitability for smuggling. The ban on private maritime trade failed to eliminate the harassment from the wokou; on the contrary, it stimulated illegal trade at sea. In the early Ming Dynasty there was every kind of private maritime trade. Some merchants disguised themselves as Ming envoys, or guided foreign merchant ships to smuggling ports along the coast to carry out illegal trade.
However, the most common way was to risk putting out to sea to transport goods illegally. Maritime smuggling flourished especially along the south-east coast of Fujian, a region which was surrounded by mountains on three sides, lay far beyond the reaches of imperial power, and had a winding coastline and many bays. Fujian had had a maritime trading tradition since ancient times and in the Song Dynasty such trade was extremely prosperous. A popular Ming saying was ‘The sea is farm land for Fujianese.’ After the maritime ban, boat-building was prohibited, people’s lives were bleak, and the only thing one could do was to breach the ban and take up smuggling.

When Fujianese vessels put out to sea, it looked as though they were shallow, flat-bottomed boats, just sailing along the coast. But as soon as they were out of sight of law-enforcement officials, they started sailing east and transformed themselves into seafaring vessels: they surrounded the bulwark with a bamboo fence to prevent the waves from rushing onto the deck and put a huge knife-shaped wooden rudder into the water to stabilize the boat. It took only two days to sail from ports in Fujian to the island of Taiwan but even this was illegal. According to law, ships could carry only two days of food and water supplies at most, yet this was enough to allow merchants to enter a whole new world away from Chinese waters. After obtaining further supplies in Taiwan, some merchants might sail along the Ryuku Archipelago as far the Japanese ports of Hirado and Nagasaki. Others chose to sail along the coast to the Philippines or along the Vietnamese coast to Java.

Private maritime traders traded with Muslim merchants and formed the main trading force in the South China Sea region. As early as the second half of the fifteenth century, before the Europeans came to the east, China’s south-east coast had become the centre of an immense maritime trade region with Japan lying to the north and the Indonesian archipelago to the south. Although this trading region was not yet global, frequent trade
within the region meant that it had achieved a high level of economic integration and become a self-sufficient and highly adaptable international economic system.\textsuperscript{34}

The Portuguese and Spanish entered Chinese territorial waters at the beginning of the sixteenth century and, together with wokou pirates on the south-east coast, engaged in illegal acts, to such an extent that in the Jiajing era China witnessed a period of soaring piracy.\textsuperscript{35} In 1498, the Portuguese opened up a new sea route from Western Europe to India. They then took Goa on the western coast of India and Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and in 1514 arrived at Tamao Island on the east side of the Pearl River delta in Guangdong in the south of China. In 1552, the Portuguese arrived in the Fujian-Zhejiang coastal areas and engaged in smuggling with the Chinese and Japanese, exchanging Japanese silver for Chinese silk. As a result, the island of Shuangyu developed into a fairly prosperous international smuggling centre.

In the second year of the Jiajing era (1524), due to conflicts among Japanese tribute bearers, China cut off its official trade with Japan. This led to a rapid development in smuggling which promised huge profits. Ever more coastal merchants, small traders, fishermen and farmers became involved in illegal foreign trade. International smuggling in the port of Shuangyu reached its climax in 1544, especially after the returning from Kyushu in Japan of Wang Zhi’s smuggling ring.

Before the Jiajing era (1522–1566), the maritime smuggling trade was fairly small scale. But during the Jiajing era, smugglers began to be armed, with smuggling rings possessing great wealth and many ships. On the one hand, they would do business with different places in Japan and South East Asia; on the other, they would enter the area between Japan and the Chinese coast where they would loot, plunder, and carry out pirate-style trade. In the 27th year of the Jiajing era (1548), after the Ming government destroyed Shuangyu as a smuggling centre, large-scale piracy shifted to the coasts of Fujian and Guangdong.\textsuperscript{36}
Before the Jiajing era, it had been mainly Japanese wokou pirates who harassed the Chinese coast. But the wokou situation became more complicated in the Jiajing era. Apart from those who really were Japanese, most of the wokou pirates along the Fujian and Guangdong coasts were Chinese living along the east coast. There were also Malays, Thai, Portuguese, Spaniards, and Africans. Most of the wokou leaders were Chinese, as were most of the wokou ships.  

In the 44th year of the Jiajing era (1616), General Qi Jiguang led troops into Guangdong to exterminate the wokou. Here he found three main headquarters that were held by local Chinese pirates. The Zhejiang governor Hu Zongxian said, ‘The bandits from the sea nowadays move in their tens of thousands, all say they are Japanese, but actually only a few thousand come from Japan; the others are all Chinese.’

Most of the smuggling during the Jiajing era took place in the Zhejiang region. By the Wanli era and after, the smuggling had shifted to Fujian. Multinational smuggling prevailed mainly because of the cooperation and support of coastal residents, the local gentry, and even Ming officials. All levels of society took part in piracy to one degree or another. Pirates and merchants were similar. When the embargo on sea trade was lifted, pirates were merchants; when it was imposed, merchants were pirates. No wonder the Zhejiang provincial governor Zhu Wan said: ‘It is easier to get rid of foreign pirates than Chinese pirates; it is easier to get rid of Chinese pirates than Chinese pirates dressed as the gentry.’

Faced with the strict Jiajing prohibition on maritime trade, which could implicate a whole clan, some Chinese pirates disguised themselves as Japanese in order to protect their own families. If Chinese army officers and soldiers fighting pirates were defeated, it would be easier to claim that they had been defeated by Japanese pirates. If they won, they could gain a higher reward if they claimed that it was Japanese pirates whom they had defeated. As far as the Chinese rulers were concerned, labelling popular unrest along the coast as foreign invasion would make it easier for them to suppress it.
Consequently, popular armed rebellion caused by maritime embargo was treated as foreign invasion. After the death of the Emperor Jiajing, the new Emperor Longqing ratified a lifting of the prohibition on maritime trade, to ‘allow trade between east and west seas’. As a result, some of the pirates became lawful maritime merchants and the wokou crisis quickly subsided. The wokou crisis during the Jiajing era was clearly an extreme expression of the clash between private maritime trade and the government policy that banned it.

At the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty several large and powerfully armed maritime groups, hybrids of trading companies and military forces, appeared along the Fujian coast, led by men such as Li Dan, Zheng Zhilong and Yan Siqi and others. The most powerful, influential and enduring of these was Zheng Zhilong’s group, which became a merchant-militant organization, representing the initial stage of a maritime government.

Quanzhou and the Galleon Trade

All 16 eastern sea routes and the two western sea routes on the Selden Map of China started at Quanzhou, connecting this port city on the Fujian coast with sixty ports in the South China Sea region. For the cartographer, Quanzhou clearly occupied an important position as a big maritime trading port. Quanzhou was situated on the south-east coast of China across the sea from Taiwan, where maritime communication was easy. Proceeding northwards one could reach Japan, Ryuku and Korea; eastwards the Philippines; and southwards the Malay Peninsula and Java. Quanzhou was the starting point for the ‘Maritime Silk Road’. In the Yuan Dynasty it was known both in China and abroad as ‘the world's greatest trading port’. Many foreign merchants, travellers and missionaries lived here. When Zheng He made his voyages, he had a high regard for the superiority of Quanzhou’s port, ship-building, foreign maritime trade, goods, religion, talented people, and many other aspects. There were many Arabs
in Quanzhou and Zheng He was able to find the interpreters he needed for his voyages. Quanzhou was the home of sailors and talented people who understood navigation could be found and recruited. The port was also a collecting and distribution centre for silk and porcelain and much of these were taken from here to Western countries. On Jiuri Mountain in Quanzhou there remain to this day Song Dynasty inscriptions carved in stone of prayers for favourable winds, as well as more than seventy Ming-dynasty inscriptions carved on cliffs. Foreign trading vessels coming to Quanzhou would arrive with the spring and summer south-east winds, and depart in autumn with the north-west winds. Each year, when the foreign boats hoisted their sails, the Quanzhou magistrate, customs officials and celebrities would climb up Jiuri Mountain to pray for wind for the foreign boats, and would leave behind carved inscriptions.

The Ming prohibition on maritime trade with foreign countries severely affected the development of Quanzhou’s economy. The government’s attack on private trade forced many merchants to move to nearby harbours that were not so closely guarded, such as the Moon Port at Zhangzhou. In fact, the starting point of the shipping routes on the Selden Map is not located exactly in Quanzhou but between Quanzhou and Zhangzhou, with the latter placed slightly inland. In 1567, not long after Emperor Jiajing died, the prohibition on foreign trade was lifted, allowing large numbers of Fujian merchant ships to put out to sea from the Moon Port to carry out legitimate trade abroad. At first, when the ban was lifted, the government allowed only fifty Fujian sailing ships to trade in South East Asia. By 1589, the government had increased this number to eighty-eight a year. By 1592, the number of certificates issued by the authorities for sea-going ships had increased to 110. By 1597, there were as many as 137 legally registered Fujian ships trading at sea.44

The galleon trade in Manila was on the rise just at the time the ban was lifted at Moon Port. In 1571, Spain opened up the Servetus (Spain)–Acapulco (Mexico)–Manila (Philippines)–
Moon Port (China) galleon trading route. It was mainly Fujian merchants who traded between Manila and the Moon Port. The silk that China transported to Manila included all kinds of fine silk, coarse silk, raw silk and dyed silk. Silk fabrics included veils, brocades, white silk, coloured silk, printed silk, silk handkerchiefs, velvet, silk stockings, patterned silk parasols, and silk-linen blends. These represented the bulk goods traded between China and the Philippines. Antonio de Morga, a Spanish judge in Manila, wrote vividly about the Chinese merchant ships coming to Manila for trade.

The usual practice is that every year a multitude of small boats and big galleons sail from the Chinese Empire to Manila, loaded to capacity with merchandise. Every year about thirty or forty of these boats come. They don’t come in one after the other like a big fleet of warships, but in twos and threes. These junks follow the monsoon winds and often come in March when the weather is clear and sunny and the new moon is high in the sky. . . . Their voyage to Manila takes about fifteen to twenty days, and when they have completely sold all their merchandise they sail back at the end of May or beginning of June, before the arrival of the strong south-west monsoon winds, to ensure the safety of their voyage.

After the Chinese arrived in Manila, they congregated to live and trade in the north-east part of the city, and this place was known locally as ‘raw silk bazaar’. Here, prices were discussed and fixed by the Spanish and the Chinese who were familiar with the market, and payment by the buyer was in silver. All transactions had to be completed by the end of May when it was easy for Chinese ships to make their return voyage. At the same time, the Spanish would load their goods onto galleons and transport them to South America before the end of June. The consequence of this, as historians have commented, was that
Manila was merely a transfer hub along the silk route between China and South America and, strictly speaking, the ‘Manila galleons’ were galleons transporting Chinese merchandise. As far as South Americans are concerned, the galleons were Chinese vessels; when Spanish Mexicans talked about the Philippines, it was as if they were talking about a province of the Chinese Empire. Forty six merchant ships bounded for Manila from Macau and the Moon Port in 1588 and in average 37.2 ships each year between 1609 and 1612.

The Manila trade was the most profitable part of China’s foreign trade and was also the most profitable maritime trading route in the South Seas. Goods transacted were mostly Chinese silk and South American silver. The ban on foreign trade was not completely lifted and spurred on by high profits, much smuggling took place. Smuggling in Manila was especially rampant, and many Chinese sailing ships anchored clandestinely in the vicinity of Manila’s port. Many merchants had government shipping certificates to go to Champa, Tokyo, Pattani (in Thailand) or Taiwan, but they secretly slipped into Manila, aiming for a quick exchange of silk for silver. No wonder the Philippines coastline was drawn in great detail and that 16 ports were clearly marked and named on the Selden Map of China.

Porcelain was another big trading commodity in the galleon trade. The main markets for Ming export porcelain were Europe, Japan and South East Asia. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were the first to come to China and take porcelain back to Europe. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company captured a Portuguese merchant ship, the St. Katarina, which was loaded with a great quantity of Chinese blue and white porcelain for export. Not realizing where the porcelain came from, the Europeans named it ‘kraak’ porcelain; in Dutch ‘kraak’ was the word used for Portuguese ships. The next year, this porcelain, which had been produced during the Wanli era in the Ming Dynasty, was transported to Amsterdam to be auctioned off. This greatly stimulated the Dutch thirst for Chinese porcelain.
In the seventeenth century, the Dutch broke the Portuguese and Spanish monopoly, gaining a monopoly of the Chinese porcelain export trade. They ordered European style porcelain to be made in China, mostly utensils for everyday use, such as beer mugs and mustard pots, allowing Chinese porcelain to enter ordinary European homes and truly opening up the European market. According to statistics from The Dutch East India Company and Porcelain a vast amount of porcelain was transported by merchant ships from Xiamen to Taiwan or Batavia, and then was shipped all over the world via the Dutch East India Company.

Superior Chinese porcelain was highly esteemed in seventeenth century Japan, becoming an important component of the Japanese tea ceremony. In 1639, Japan prohibited trade with Portugal and Spain, allowing only Chinese and Dutch ships to go to the port of Nagasaki to engage in maritime trade. As a result, many Chinese merchant ships went to Nagasaki to compete in trade with the Dutch. Unlike the Europeans with their taste for kraak porcelain, the Japanese preferred a special kind of blue and white porcelain from Jingdezhen, the so-called ‘古染付’ and ‘祥瑞’ ‘auspicious’ porcelain. A lot of ‘古染付’ porcelain was ordered for small items used in the tea ceremony based on designs sent over from Japan, then manufactured in Jingdezhen and painted with Chinese-style patterns.

Yamaguchi Prefecture in Japan was not far from the Chinese mainland and Ming merchants would often sail there. In the Yamaguchi Prefecture museum there is a ‘Japan-Ming trade ship flag’. On the flag is the family emblem of a Japanese official who managed trade; and beneath this there is writing that records that the ship owner of a Ming merchant ship from Quanzhou pledged to return to trade the following year. It also mentions that when the ship came the same flag would be raised. This shows how active Quanzhou’s maritime trade was at the time.

In May 2007, the wreck of a Ming Dynasty ship, the Nan’ao I, was discovered off the coast of Nan’ao Island near Shantou in
Guangdong. It had twenty-five compartments, was twenty-seven metres long, and is to date the largest ocean-going merchant ship salvaged in China. Experts have confirmed that this was an armed smuggling vessel from the Wanli era of the Ming Dynasty. It is believed that it set out from the Moon Port in Zhangzhou, Fujian, and struck a reef and sunk at Nan’ao Island, where the waters of Fujian, Guangdong and Taiwan come together. The ship contained a large quantity of porcelain. So far more than 6000 pieces having been recovered, most of which being blue and white porcelain from Zhangzhou and Jingdezhen. The discovery of the Nan’ao I provides concrete evidence of the Ming Dynasty export trade.

Silver was the main currency for the trade between Ming China and other countries. China exported a large amount of silk goods and porcelain, but imported only a small quantity of spices and suchlike goods. To remedy the trade imbalance, the other side had to pay in money, i.e. silver. A great quantity of Mexican silver flowed into China via the Philippines while the silver smuggled from Mexico to Spain ended up in the hands of the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese. The Portuguese would then transport the silver to the East Indies, and finally it would flow into China. Each year, 2.35 million liang of silver could be obtained from Chinese silk sent to Japan. This situation persisted for 250 years, and the huge amount of silver from America and Japan streaming into China became a unique feature of the global economy. Andre Gunder Frank refers to this trade imbalance as ‘commercial tribute’.51
4. The Selden Map and a New Understanding of the Ming Dynasty

An Open, Lively and Pluralistic Society

The maritime trade during the Ming Dynasty brought about a collision between East and West and its social, economic, and cultural impact on the Dynasty is not to be underestimated. The trade shaped Ming Chinese ideas, lifestyles, political and economic structures, and demographics. It also changed the Western world, contributing to the formation of the global economic system.

The rediscovery of the Selden Map overturned hitherto popular misconceptions about the Ming Dynasty and urges us to see China in a very different light. Ming China has often been regarded as a conservative and isolated country. The Selden Map reveals a relatively open, lively and diverse historical period. The Selden Map draws our attention to maritime trade in Ming China, China’s relationship with other countries at the time, and the social and cultural transformation of Ming society as a whole.

Values, Consumption, Culture

In traditional Chinese society, commerce was insignificant. The position of merchants was seen as being below that of scholars, farmers and craftsmen. They were even suppressed and discriminated against by the government and by society. From the middle of the Ming Dynasty, the development of commerce and trade brought about a change in social attitudes towards the position of merchants, who gradually rose to occupy a position just below that of scholars. Some people even consider that merchants occupied a higher position. The increasing intercourse between merchants and literati broke down the
barriers that existed between the two groups. Some scholars took on a dual identity of merchant and literati, or abandoned their literati identity altogether, and this became a main feature of Ming society. By the late Ming Dynasty, a gentry class had begun to emerge, with more and more of members of the cultural elite participating in local activities, such as making donations to Buddhist temples. The members of this class had a strong tendency to separate themselves from the state, but Yamaguchi Prefecture.

As the population of those engaged in commerce increased, members of the gentry sought to lead cultural trends to maintain their privileged social position. From the middle period of the Ming Dynasty onwards, there was a great increase in the consumption of culture and an appreciation of fine art and collectibles. Global trade and consumerism in the late Ming Dynasty influenced Chinese scholars’ tastes in gardens, paintings, books, etc. Intellectuals and businessmen were actively involved in South China’s flourishing art market. The development of artistic tastes and trends was a two-way interaction between scholars and merchants. The scholars needed money to sustain a life of luxury, while the rising merchant class, through the payment of ‘tuition fees’, sought to improve their taste in art and raise their social status.

The traditional notion of consumption was based on thrift, and at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty this continued to be the mainstream idea in society. But from the middle of the Ming, this attitude underwent a marked change. In the latter part of the Dynasty, global trade and trends in consumption imperceptibly influenced people’s attitudes towards daily consumption and lifestyle. A thirst for self-expression and the pursuit of wealth fused together and created extravagant tendencies that engulfed the whole of society. For example, evening banquets no longer offered modest fruit and vegetables, but were now ostentatious displays of meat and fish set out on costly porcelain. The simple four-cornered male headdress ordained by the first Ming emperor was replaced with all kinds of magnificent headgear.
and there were bizarrely patterned headdresses for women. Simple cloth shoes were replaced by magnificent footwear. Rich people’s way of life gradually transformed local customs. The extravagance and wastefulness in their etiquette, ceremonies, and dress led to a frenzy of conspicuous and showy consumption amongst the lower strata of society.

Past dynasties in China observed an extremely strict hierarchical structure. The basic necessities of life and conduct for different ranks of official and people were regulated by the imperial court. For example, dress and personal adornment were strictly prescribed. People of different status wore different kinds of dress and no infringements of this rule were tolerated. It was still like this at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty. By the late Ming, with the development of foreign trade and the abundance of merchandise, people had become tired of the hierarchal dress system and the unsophisticated clothing of the earlier days and they used what they wore to challenge their position within society. By the 1560s, gentry and common people alike wore whatever magnificent clothes they wished to wear. Even street vendors dressed resplendently. The same thing happened with the hierarchical residential system and, transportation system, etc.

The traditional moral order established by the founding emperor at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty also underwent huge change. People travelled everywhere, imaginative powers soared, and the old taboos were broken. With consumerism driving production, trade broke the moral views formed in an agrarian society, fuelling competition, and in doing so dissolved the public norms. The core Confucian values of etiquette, modesty, and care for others also disappeared. Ming China gradually became a commercialized society where social morality was played down. Some old-fashioned scholars complained that the silver dollar had become the personification of evil and was responsible for bringing China into a state of anarchy.
Catholicism and Western science and technology

From the middle of the Ming Dynasty, there was widespread penetration of Western culture into China, with the spread of Catholicism and Western science and technology being especially notable. This had a profound influence on many aspects of traditional Chinese culture. Following in the wake of Portuguese and Spanish merchant ships arriving on China’s south-east coast were Jesuits missionaries.

Jesuits brought typical Western curiosities such as guns, chiming clocks, spectacles, telescopes and other objects, which had a huge impact on Ming scholars’ ideas and concepts of culture. The ingenuity of Western scientific and technological instruments made some of the educated elite realize how advanced Western civilization was and so they began to accept it. Xu Guangxi, Li Zhizao, Li Jingtian, Wang Wei and others were not only fascinated by Western curiosities, they were also very enthusiastic about the science and technology that lay behind the manufacture of such objects. They also translated Western science and technology books together with missionaries, such as Euclid’s *Elements* and Ramelli’s *Hydraulic Machinery of the West* and others.

Xu Guangqi, wanting to make China prosperous and strong, learned from Matteo Ricci for he wished to bring Western science, religion, philosophy into traditional culture to urgently make up for the deficiencies in China. In the seventh year of the Chongzhen Emperor, Xu Guangqi petitioned for the construction of state-of-the-art scientific instruments in order to improve accuracy when making the imperial calendar. While some literati acknowledged the unique advantage of Western astronomical instruments, they also affirmed the equal status of Western Catholicism and Confucianism, reflecting the propensity towards cultural diversity in their thinking. Since the reign of the Hongwu Emperor, the Imperial Astronomical Bureau had established a Muslim division which only employed
Muslim scholars; Islamic mosque in the city of Beijing could be seen everywhere.55

The Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) was a pioneer of Catholicism in China and the first Western scholar who could read and study the Chinese classics. He was respected by many Chinese literati and given the honorific title ‘Confucian scholar of the West’. Apart from spreading the Catholic doctrine, he also made friends with many Chinese officials and noted public figures. He introduced Western astronomy, mathematics, geography and other scientific and technological knowledge, making an important contribution to the cultural exchange between the West and China. In 1609, in Zhaoqing, Guangdong, Matteo Ricci used the most advanced map-making technologies combined with Chinese data to draw the first Chinese world map the ‘Shanhai Yudi Quantu (山海輿地全圖). Later, Ricci drew three more Chinese world maps: the ‘Yudi Shanhai Quantu’ (輿地山海全圖), the ‘Kunyu Wanguo Quantu’ (坤輿萬國全圖), and the ‘Liangyi Xuanlan Tu’ (兩儀玄覽圖). The maps of the world created by Ricci were the most advanced of the time, and helped the Chinese to understand latitude and longitude, the Equator, the Tropic of Cancer and other concepts, especially the idea that the world was spherical. He also helped the Chinese to acquire geographical knowledge about the world outside China. Many of the geographical names and names of foreign places and rivers as translated by Ricci are still used today.56 He also translated many Western science books into Chinese. Under Ricci’s influence, a number of famous Chinese scholars and officials were converted to his religion, including Xu Guangqi.

The cultural exchange between the West and the China was mutual. Ricci also introduced Chinese culture to the West. In fact, the data Ricci collected in China not only enabled him to create the most advanced world map at the time, but helped him to prove that the Western name ‘Cathay’ was indeed the old name used by earlier Western travellers when referring to China.
Development of Chinese Blue and White Porcelain

Blue and white Chinese porcelain originated in the Tang Dynasty, came to maturity in the Yuan Dynasty, and flourished in the Ming and the Qing Dynasties. Sold all over the world, Ming Chinese blue and white porcelain absorbed cultural elements from abroad and embodied unique artistic styles in colour, shape, pattern and subject matter.

The blue and white porcelain of the Yongle and Xuande periods of the Ming Dynasty represent the highest quality of Chinese blue and white porcelain and rank amongst the most famous exhibits in any of the world’s museums. The quality of the Yongle and Xuande porcelain is directly related to the voyages of Zheng He. His voyages not only greatly stimulated the production of blue and white porcelain, but his ships also brought back the special blue pigment unique to the Middle East that made the blue and white porcelain distinctively beautiful.

The exotic fine metal ware that Zheng He’s fleet brought back from the Middle East and West Asia were also an inspiration for Chinese craftsmen in exotic blue and white porcelain. Some Muslim traders in China commissioned porcelain to be made in the local style of their own countries, and such styles became extremely popular in East Asian countries. As a result, the blue and white porcelain of this period is strongly influenced by Islamic culture both in form and content. Emperor Wuzong converted to Islam and Islamic decoration appeared on much of the porcelain produced during his reign.

Portuguese traders arrived in China in the sixteenth century and began trading in porcelain. Soon Chinese porcelain led to a European fascination with chinoiserie, influencing trends in European fashions. Chinese porcelain was often mounted with gold decoration and used for sacred functions. In the National Art Gallery of Washington, D.C. there is an oil painting painted in 1514 by Giovanni Bellini, ‘The Feast of the Gods’, in which Chinese blue and white porcelain can be seen.
In the course of this exchange between East and West, Chinese-made kraak porcelain uniquely blended Chinese and Western styles, as exemplified by the ewer in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in England, which includes Islamic metalwork, traditional Chinese decoration, and a Portuguese emblem. A Jingdezhen kraak porcelain bowl in the British Museum is decorated with a seven-headed hydra - a Greek mythical monster - and a Latin phrase ‘there is nothing new for the wise’, yet all its other features are typically Chinese. Another example is the 古染付, small vessels used in Japanese tea ceremonies. These vessels were made and decorated in China but based on designs from Japan.

The export of Ming porcelain to Europe gave rise to local imitations of Chinese porcelain, the best known of which is the Delft blue and white tin glaze earthenware of the Netherlands. The Netherlands was not the only country to imitate Chinese blue and white porcelain, there were many other countries doing the same. The history of Ming Dynasty blue and white porcelain trade is a history of the interaction of Chinese and foreign cultures.

Influx of New Food from the New World

While Chinese silk, porcelain and tea changed European and American lifestyles, crops from the New World quietly transformed the size of the population and food structure in Ming China. From around 1500 to 1650, in the last 150 years of the Ming Dynasty, American corn, sweet potatoes, peanuts and tobacco spread to every province in China. These new crops entered China mainly in merchant ships and through ports along the south-east coast. This sustained an agricultural revolution in the Ming Dynasty and created, after 1650, the conditions for a population explosion in China.

After sweet potatoes were discovered in America, they were first planted in the Philippines, from where they spread to the south of China round about the middle of the sixteenth century.
It is said that Chen Zhenlong, a businessman in Changle County in Fujian went to the Philippines to do business and brought sweet potatoes back with him to grow in his county. In 1594, when Fujian was suddenly struck by famine, he persuaded the Fujian governor Jin Xueceng to get people to grow sweet potatoes to relieve the famine. The sweet potatoes grew quickly and had a high yield. That autumn there was a bumper harvest and there was plenty of food for everyone far and wide, no one suffered from hunger, and as a result sweet potatoes became known as ‘golden potatoes’. Sweet potatoes were being grown throughout Fujian and Guangdong by the end of the Ming Dynasty. Xu Guangqi, the well-known official-scholar at the Ming court, and close friend of Matteo Ricci wrote,

>Sweet potatoes . . . recent years people abroad had this kind of crop . . . brought to Fujian and Guangdong . . . spread them over the land, plough deep, put thick soil around the base, if there is a serious drought irrigate them with water, nothing will prevent them from ripening. People from Fujian and Guangdong depend upon these to save themselves from starvation, and the benefit is great.\(^{59}\)

Between the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was a sharp increase in China’s population. As a result, the need for food also grew. The cultivation of sweet potatoes and corn became increasingly widespread, leading to great changes in land use. These edible crops began to be universally planted because they could be grown on land where it was not easy to grow other crops. This helped to increase the supply of staple foods and support the increased population. Consequently, patterns of food consumption also changed. In some regions sweet potatoes and corn became staple foods, as in the case of the peasants in Ganzhou Prefecture in Jiangxi, where it is said, ‘the stomach is filled from morning to night with grain, sweet potato and taro,
never cooking rice all year round, this has become a custom. Also in the mountain regions of Hunan, it was said, ‘in the deep mountains and poor valleys… everyone depends on corn, taro and grains to survive.’

The introduction and cultivation of plant species from abroad during the Ming Dynasty also enriched China’s culinary arts. Chilli is an extremely important component in Chinese cuisine. It was brought by the Spanish from South America to the Philippines and then traded with Chinese merchants who brought it into China. Before the sixteenth century, China did not have the chillies of modern times. Today, it is hard to imagine Chinese food without chilli.

The Chinese Diaspora and Han Chinese Assimilation of Taiwan

Ming China was a relatively open society in which many people, especially merchants, travelled greatly and settled in various places both within China and overseas. The founding Emperor Hongwu attempted to set up self-sufficient agricultural cooperatives. The population was not mobile and there were no commercial activities or urban trade centres. All the Emperor’s subjects had to register their professions with the government, and generation after generation had to engage in the same occupations in the same areas. Despite this stultified agricultural and financial economic system, Ming society became steadily commercialized. As society stabilized, agricultural production increased and a great number of surplus agricultural commodities appeared. Infrastructure and communication also improved under Emperor Hong Wu, facilitating and stimulating private trade and travel.

The emergence of one of China’s biggest diasporas occurred during the Ming Dynasty, with South East Asia as the most important destination. Maritime trade during this period led to a large number of Chinese people, especially Fujianese, to migrate into most major ports in South East Asia: Siam, Malay Peninsula, and Western Java, Manila and Nagasaki. Round about 1600,
when the Portuguese, Dutch and British arrived in the island regions of South East Asia to buy pepper and other local tropical goods, they discovered that Chinese merchants had already been doing business on the seas of Asia for several centuries. With the development of the galleon trade, many merchants from Fujian gradually settled in the Philippines, where they specialized as trade intermediaries. By 1590, the number of Chinese settlers in the Philippines had increased to between three and four thousand. In addition, there were over two thousand Chinese regularly travelling between the two countries. If one includes those who were engaged in fishing and horticulture on the outskirts of Manila, there could have been between six and seven thousand Chinese immigrants.\(^60\)

Chinese merchants living abroad were scattered over a wide area, ranging from Nagasaki in Japan in the east, to Malacca on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in the west, covering almost all the important trading ports in South East Asia and the East Asia region. Fujian merchants living overseas brought with them their traditional social ties and networks and re-established these in overseas communities. Well-known local Fujian deities such as the Goddess of the Seas were exported to these communities by Fujian merchants.

The Chinese merchants established special links and relationships with the local authorities and nobility and became assimilated into the local culture through marriage. In Manila, many Fujian merchants lived in the homes of Spanish priests and Mexican merchants and had good relationships with their hosts. Each time the Spanish colonial authorities began large-scale expulsions of foreign Chinese residents, the Spanish and Mexican hosts would step forward to protect them.\(^61\) They intermarried with local people, lived among them and had contacts with the upper echelons of society, thus forming a distinct Chinese community. The most flourishing and prosperous Chinese community was the community of Fujian merchants who lived in Japan on the north-east coast of the Bay

47
of Hirado. The activities of these Fujian merchants reached their peak during the period when Li Dan was appointed their leader. Not only did Li Dan marry a Japanese wife himself, he also helped his adopted son Zheng Zhilong marry a Japanese wife, who was the biological mother of the Chinese military leader, Zheng Chenggong, known in the West as Koxinga.

It is worth noting that Taiwan became part of Chinese territory during the Ming Dynasty. Before the beginning of the twelfth century, Taiwan was more or less unknown. Occasionally merchants or fishermen travelling back and forth from the Chinese mainland would sail to Taiwan to take shelter from a storm and trade with indigenous people. It was only between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Fujian and Taiwan began to have any real contact. Fujian merchant ships en route to the Philippines would barter with local people. On the voyage south, they would usually anchor off the southern Taiwanese coast and replenish supply of fresh water. In the middle of the sixteenth century when Japanese wokou were rampant along China’s south-east coast, these so-called ‘Japanese wokou’ actually included many pirates of Chinese origin and poor fisherman from coastal villages. Hunted by the government, these pirates found refuge in Taiwan and nearby islands.

In August 1604, a Dutch fleet en route to Macau was caught up in a typhoon and drifted towards the Penghu Islands near Taiwan. In June 1622, after failing to capture Portuguese Macau, a fleet of the Dutch East India Company occupied the Penghu Islands instead. In the two years that followed the Dutch did their utmost to try to force the Ming authorities to open the door to Chinese trade. In August 1624, Li Dan went to the Penghu Islands to act as mediator in the conflict between the Dutch East India Company and the Fujian authorities. After much mediation and negotiation the Fujian authorities finally agreed to open up trade conditionally, allowing Fujian merchants to go to Taiwan to trade with the Dutch. The Dutch agreed to leave the Penghu Islands and withdraw to Taiwan.
During the time that the Dutch occupied Taiwan, they built a fortress on the west coast, pitched camp and developed the island into an important trading port with China. Fujian merchants quickly changed their traditional sea routes and trading tactics and began to swarm in. Since it was possible to trade tropical goods from South East Asia with the Dutch along the neighbouring Taiwanese coast, many Fujian merchants crossed the strait to Taiwan instead of taking the long sea route to the South East Asian ports. From 1617 to 1624, 18 of Li Dan’s ships went to trade in Taiwan alone. In Beigang, their base in Taiwan, the Li Dan group mustered around three thousand Chinese immigrants, providing them with means of production such as ships, oxen, ploughs, offered them armed protection, and collaborated with the tribal chief to fix boundaries, levy taxes and collect rent from immigrants under their jurisdiction.

Large-scale Chinese migration to South East Asia started in the seventeenth century. In years of war and famine, the Fujian government authorities and the Zheng Zhilong group systematically organized emigration to Taiwan. In the first year of Emperor Chongzhen’s reign (1628), when Fujian was hit by yet another famine, the Zheng clan had the support of the provincial governor and collected tens of thousands of famine victims from the disaster-affected coastal region, gave each person three liang of silver, and every three people a cow, and transported them to Taiwan to open up virgin territory there. This was the first organized group of migrants to go to Taiwan.  

In April 1661, when Koxinga was supporting the Southern Ming regime as a general after the Manchus had established the Qing Dynasty, he advanced on Taiwan with 25,000 officers and soldiers and several hundred warships. In February 1662, he forced the Dutch governor-general into signing a capitulation. The Koxinga regime brought Chinese political, cultural and educational system to Taiwan. Great importance was attached to exploiting the land and building water infrastructures, expanding foreign trade, and promoting the development of
Taiwan’s economy. By the final years of the Koxinga regime, the population of Han Chinese in Taiwan had reached 120,000.

Merchants in Court Politics

In the late Ming and early Qing period, some of the powerful sea merchants began to participate in the court politics and played an important role in shaping the political landscape of the empire.63 Li Dan (?–1625) came from Quanzhou in Fujian. He was a famous seventeenth century pirate and merchant from China’s south-east coast and was a leader of Chinese living overseas. He was originally involved in business in the Philippines, but he did not get on well with the Spanish rulers and so moved to Kyushu in Japan. There, with the help of Japanese pirate groups, he organized a fleet of armed ships. With this fleet he traded with China, Japan and South East Asia (including with the Dutch and the British) on converging shipping routes and at the same time plundered ships. In his many years of maritime trade, Li Dan not only established good relations with the Japanese feudal lords, but even made deep friendships with British and Dutch senior commercial officials stationed in the East. In the last years of the Ming Dynasty, owing to his special relationship with the Dutch, Li Dan became a mediator in the dispute between China and the Netherlands, mobilizing the Dutch to withdraw from the Penghu Islands and occupy Taiwan. He was known by Westerners as ‘Captain China’.

After Li Dan’s death, his adopted son Zheng Zhilong swiftly took his place. Zheng Zhilong was from Nan’an, Fujian. Not only was he the father of the national hero Koxinga, but he was also head of the biggest maritime merchant group at the end of the Ming and beginning of the Qing Dynasties. After accepting an amnesty and surrendering to the Ming, he suppressed - on behalf of the Ming government - the pirates who were harassing the south-east coast and frustrated a Dutch invasion at sea. Drawing on support from Ming forces, he eliminated competition and monopolized the maritime trade along the south-east
coast. He also forced the Dutch to reach a maritime and trade agreement with him. ‘Sea-going ships without the Zheng flag of command would not be allowed to come and go… Fujianese under his protection considered Zheng as the Great Wall.’ Zheng Zhilong’s business organization began to show some characteristics of a maritime government in initial stage.

Zheng Zhilong surrendered to the Qing, leaving his maritime kingdom to his son Koxinga. Koxinga, Chinese name Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662) was born in Hirado, Japan and his mother was Japanese. Koxinga made Xiamen his headquarters and each year sent out fleets of ships to Nagasaki, Taiwan, and all the main South East Asian ports to trade. In fact, he monopolized the maritime trade of the entire South East Asian region. In 1661, Koxinga, seeking grounds for resisting the Qing, took an army across the sea to recover Taiwan, which had for many years been occupied by Dutch colonizers, and formally established the Zheng armed maritime merchant group as a maritime power. The strict prohibition on foreign maritime contact enacted by the Qing government along the south-eastern coast, aimed at isolating the Zheng clan, had, however, the result of enabling the Zheng merchant ships to sail to Japan, Siam (now Thailand), Quang Nam (now Vietnam), and other places to purchase rice, grain and other strategic supplies. The Zheng merchant group gained almost complete control of the maritime sea routes to Japan, thus creating an unprecedented rise in foreign trade for Taiwan, until the Zheng clan finally fell.

The Chinese pirate-merchants and their counterparts from Portuguese and Dutch colonial countries competed for control of the eastern and western seas. Zheng Zhilong undergone an identify transformation, turning from the most-wanted pirate merchant into a military general of the Ming court. The Zheng group started with an armed pirate-commercial fleet, but by the end it had annexed Taiwan and exercised the functions of government in the regions it controlled. The entire process of its growth involved mutual support, expansion and interaction,
politically, economically and militarily, a phenomenon similar in nature to that of European countries in the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{66}

\textbf{China Enters the Global Economy}

Although traders from the West entered the markets of the East between the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, cheap, good-quality Chinese goods were very popular in South East Asia and Europe. The Spanish used the cheap silver of the Americas to buy Chinese silk, porcelain and other goods. Chinese traders travelled to Manila to sell Chinese goods and made huge profits huge. As the Manila galleon trade grew, the numbers of private traders, and countries and regions involved in the maritime trade increased greatly in South East Asia, and a global trading system began to take shape. In the late Ming Dynasty, silver become China’s key import o keep its economy running. The fluctuating exchange rate between gold and silver in Ming China is similar to that of the New World. Europe, South East Asia, Japan, the Ming Empire gradually merged into the emerging world economic system. In the sixteenth century and seventeenth century, Chinese demand for silver and the demand of other countries for Chinese silk, porcelain and other goods, deepened China’s involvement in the world economy more than ever.\textsuperscript{67}

Batchelor suggests that the shipping routes on the Selden map were connected with the rise of London as a global city. In the 1540s, Antwerp in northern European might have been a city with global aspirations, but by the 1700s, London, lying on the edge of Europe and the hub of the English wool and cloth trade, would become the centre of the world. Batchelor argues that it was not the much-documented Atlantic trade, but the interaction with Asia along the lines traced upon the Selden Map that was key to London’s modernity. \textsuperscript{68}

In the sixteenth century, the heart of the world’s economy was not yet centred on Europe. It was only several centuries later, that the West used the power of technology and narcotics to reverse
the trading relationship of China as producer and Europe as consumer. At the beginning of the modern age, China’s influence on the West was far, far greater than Europe’s influence on Asia. Without the Chinese demand for silver, there would not have been either financing mechanisms for the Spanish Empire or the century-long price revolution. Without China, the birth of world trade would be delayed for an unknown period of time. In the words of Timothy Brook, ‘rather than saying ‘China’s economy is controlled by the tides of the Atlantic Ocean’, one could say that the Atlantic tides were pulled by the Chinese moon.’

If some scholars assert that world trade was born in 1571 at the beginning of the galleon trade, then it seems fair to say that the beginning of world trade should be brought forward to the 1540s, that is, when silver became the main currency in China and China began to seek silver overseas. It was from then on that silver became a world currency through the trade structures that almost encircled the globe, connecting Chinese ports with world markets. As the world’s largest economy, China helped form the world trading network. In the Ming Dynasty, China played a key role in the initial stages of the construction of a world economic system.

This trading structure based on Chinese goods and Spanish silver went almost right the way around the world, connecting the Chinese market at the Moon Port with the world market. The network of sea routes on the Selden Map of China clearly reflects the connection between China and the world and reminds us of China’s contribution to the rise of the capitalist enterprise in Europe.
Conclusion

As one scholar once commented, the Ming Dynasty prohibition on maritime intercourse with foreign countries severed a Chinese seafaring tradition that had endured for thousands of years. The map of Zheng He's voyages deserves to be known as one of the world's earliest surviving nautical maps. However, apart from this map, China never discovered a second seafaring map, not even a nautical map of the South Seas. If the Zheng He map had been the only seafaring map surviving from ancient China, it would indeed have been a pity for the study of ancient Chinese geography, the history of cartography, and for the Chinese nation.  

Fortunately, after lying concealed from the world for more than three centuries, the Selden Map, the earliest large-scale nautical map to survive from the Ming Dynasty, finally saw the light of day and filled an important gap in our knowledge. China's maritime tradition was not severed because of the Ming government's prohibition on maritime trade. On the contrary, as Ming Chinese galleons plied back and forth across the East Asian, South East Asian and South Asian seas, Chinese maritime traders actively participated in the region's commerce, greatly contributing to the global economic system of the seventeenth century.

The Selden Map of China will change forever the world's understanding of Ming China. Ming China was not an inward-looking and isolated agrarian country with little interest in the rest of the world. Rather, the Selden Map's web of sea routes connecting China with the world suggests a Ming China that was outward-looking, seafaring and capitalist. China at the time of the Selden Map was at the height of a commercial, lively and pluralistic Ming Dynasty.
China and the world were not remote from each other. From the middle of the seventeenth century, China became a part of world history and started to work together with the West in many aspects. Ming Chinese society and people’s lives underwent huge changes as a result of China’s flourishing maritime trade and its active role in the emerging global trade system. The conventional notion about Chinese modernity suggests that China did not start to modernize until the Qing Dynasty, when the Qing court was forced to reform when confronted by the threat from the West. To the contrary, the Selden Map suggests that China’s modernization process had already begun as early as in the Ming Dynasty.
Notes

15. Timothy Brook, Mr Selden’s Map of China: The Spice Trade, a Lost Chart and the South China Sea, Bloomsbury Press, 2014.
23. Lin Renchuan, Private Maritime Trade in Late Ming and Early Qing (明末清初私人海上貿易), East China Normal University Press, 1982.
24. Hanson, 2000.


34. Brook, 2010.


36. Han Qing, A discussion on causes of Ming Dynasty taking policy of ban on maritime trade (明朝實行海禁政策的原因探究), *Journal of Dalian Maritime University (Social Sciences)*, 5 (2011): 87–92.


47. Antonio de Morga (1971: 305). In Qian, Junk Trade, Business Networks and Sojourning Communities, 2011.


50. Qian Jiang, Junk Trade, Business Networks and Sojourning communities, 2011.


59. Xu Guangqi, *Nong zheng quan shu* (農政全書). In Quan Hanshen, *Impact of the New World on Chinese Agriculture*. (美洲發現對於
60. Qian Jiang, Junk Trade, Business Networks and Sojourning, 2011.
61. Qian Jiang, Junk Trade, Business Networks and Sojourning, 2011.
62. Huang Zongxi, Ci xing shimo (賜姓始末), Taiwan Historica, 1995.
63. Wan Ming, Commodities, Merchants and Order: A New Interpretation of the Late Ming Maritime World (晚明海上世界的重新解讀——商品、商人與秩序), 2011.
67. 万明, Silver as Currency in the Ming Dynasty: New Perspective of the Connection between China and the Rest of the World (明代白银貨幣化: 中國與世界連接的新視角), Hebei Academic Journal Vol. 24, 2004/03.
72. Liang, 2011.