A Map of the Great Wall of China

By M. J. Meijer (Imago Mundi, Volume 13 (1956)), pp. 110-115, with added graphics

The first map reproduced here was found in 1952 by the cartographic historian Leo Bagrow in the Lateran Museum. The roll was hanging on the pedestal of the model of a Mongolian monastery. The description provided by the museum stated that it represents the Amur River, and the date of the map was indicated as end of the 18th century. The map was then taken to the Vatican for photographing, and attempts to locate it since then have failed.

At first glance, however, it is clear that actually it is a map of the Great Wall of China, and therefore the river cannot possibly be the Amur but must be the Yellow River. It must be conceded, however, that the course is sometimes represented in such a way as to confuse the casual observer. The date also seems to be wrong, for reasons that will be shown below. It is a pity that no documents referring to the map were found; sometimes such maps are accompanied by an explanation giving region, date and purpose. In the absence of such a document it is the aim of the present article to establish approximately the date the map was made and the purpose it served.

The Great Wall runs from Chia-yü-kuan in Kansu province to Shang-hai-kuanon the coast at the border of Manchuria. Its length is about 2,300 km. The part of the wall reproduced on this map runs from Chia-yü-kuan to Ta-t’ung in Shantung, which is about three quarters of its total length. The map itself is in the form of a hand-scroll, 22.3 cm broad and 355 cm long. The following photostats reproduce the map in thirteen sections. The wall is represented stretching horizontally across the length of the map. The upper part is inside the wall, the lower outside. In some sections, the bottom of the map roughly corresponds to North with South at the top. Sometimes, however, the wall runs approximately from the North to the South as in the former province of Ninghsia, in which case (Section 6) the upper part of the map is East and the lower West. The scale of the various sections is very unequal. In fact it seems that the map does not at all aim at a faithful representation of the length of the wall and that its main purpose lies elsewhere. These deviations from geographical accuracy, however, are to some extent corrected by inscriptions indicating the distance and direction between the towns. The sketch on the next page gives an idea of the actual situation and of the extent of the various sections.

Another feature that is striking is the decoration of the map. Like their contemporaries in Europe, the Chinese cartographers liked to add pictures, but in this case the pictures have a special purpose. We find indications of wells in the arid regions and at places like Kan-chou trees are found; also the non-Chinese tribes are seen
hunting, riding camels, cooking, camping, herding their sheep; sometimes they seem to be dancing.

The most important items on the map, however, are the inscriptions. Besides indicating the distances between places, they give particulars about the strength of the garrisons inside the wall and about the location of "barbarian" tribes inside and outside.

The information about the tribes is sketchy. For the greater part, the inscriptions merely mention the name of the chief, e.g. Western Barbarian Chief A-tzu-ch'a. Most of them seem to be figures of mere local importance and cannot be identified. Only in a few cases is the indication clear enough to draw some inferences from it. For identification the following books were consulted: Meng-ku yu-mu chi by Chang Mu, a careful record of the wanderings of the Mongols and their history and the places where they camp and herd; Huang-ch’ao fan-pu yao-lüeh by Ch’i Yün-shih, a very detailed study of the history of the Mongols written from the point of view of the Chinese government official; this reproduces many imperial edicts on the investiture of chiefs of the Mongols and of other non-Chinese people and at the end it gives a detailed list of the high chiefs who had to be appointed by imperial mandate; the third source was the Kansu t’ung-chih, the general gazetteer of Kansu, which supplies information about the geography, history, climate, famous officials and scholars and other particulars of the province. In general the results of these investigations were very meager. There are, however, as will be shown later, three exceptions. In three places the name of Galdan occurs. Galdan was the Mongol Prince who, as a leader of the blot Mongols of the Ho-la-shan and other regions along the wall, rebelled on several occasions against Sheng-tsu (K’ang-hsi) in the years from 1677 till 1696.

The information on the garrisons provides better results. In the state almanac of the Manchu dynasty, the Ta Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li, one can find the composition of the garrisons of the whole of China from the beginning of the dynasty till the end. In chapter 552 all the information about the region in question can be found. The edition used is the lead type edition of Kuang-hsü. On the map the garrisons are described in great detail; for the province of Ning-hsia, now Kansu, they are only indicated by the ranks of the officers, and for the province of Shantung no indication is given at all. It seems therefore that the main intention of the makers of the map was to show the deployment of troops in the province of Kansu, together with information about the tribes. Because of this it may safely be assumed that the map was indeed a military map and that this province at that time was the rear base for an expedition against the Mongols. This conclusion is substantiated by the fact that we find an unusually large number of soldiers in that province. Altogether there are more than 25,000. Such a large number was certainly not needed at the end of the dynasty when the Mongols were subdued. Nor was this the total amount of troops then gathered in Kansu as will be shown in the next paragraph.

The military titles give definite proof that the map was made under the Ch’ing dynasty. The titles of the officers of the Chinese army under the Manchus show great similarity to those of the army under the Ming, but there is one important exception. It is the title for colonel, fu-chiang, which did not occur in Ming times. The appearance of several fu-chiang on the map is conclusive evidence. The titles correspond to those of the Green Battalions, the Chinese army. The Manchus had two types of army. On the one hand there were the Banners, composed of Manchus, Mongols and Chinese, whose loyalty was above suspicion since they had collaborated at the time of conquest. On the other hand there was the Chinese army, the so-called Green Battalions composed of Chinese only. The Banners enjoyed special privileges and were under a special...
supervisory board. They were not controlled by the Board of War nor by the Board of Revenue of the Central Government as the Chinese army was. The officers of the two armies had different titles. On the map we find no indication of Banners. All the troops mentioned belong to the Green Battalions as is shown by the titles of the officers. The probable explanation of the absence of the Banners (of which a considerable contingent must have been present) is that the map was made by the Board of War, or by the Military Council in the capital in order to give a survey of the available Green Battalions.

The military titles of the Battalions mentioned on the map are as follows: t’i-tu, general, the provincial commander in chief; tsung-ping, brigadier; fu-chiang, colonel; ts’an-chiang, lieutenant colonel; yu-chi, major; tu-szu, first captain (this rank occurs very rarely on the map and from the Hui-tien it appears that during the early times of the dynasty - Shun-chih and K’ang-shi - it was not much in use); shou-pei, second captain; ch’ien-tsung, first lieutenant; pa-tsung, second lieutenant.

Let us now proceed to a closer examination of the more important sections of the map, starting from the West. In the first section, just outside the wall of Chia-yü-kuan is the territory of .... Daidji. The brother of the late Lao-tsang-kun-pu, Galdan Dorji, has his camp beyond the border. The name of the Daidji is unreadable. The title is the lowest of hereditary Mongol nobility. The name of Galdan Dorji occurs in the Meng-ku yu-mu chi as a contemporary of Galdan. It is also found in the Huang-ch’ao fan-pu yao-liieh.

To the West beyond Huang-ts’a-yao-ying and on the other side of the wall lies the walled city of Chia-yü-kuan. The garrison under a major is shown to be 438 strong, consisting of both infantry and cavalry. There are also one first and two second lieutenants. According to the Tā Ch’ing Hui-tien shih-li (hereafter referred to as Hui-tien) this was the situation in the time of K’ang-hsi 30th year (1691) and no changes have been made afterwards. Chia-yü-kuan is a very important outpost, being the outermost bastion of the wall. It was fortified during the Hung-wu period of the Ming dynasty (1368-1398) and the wall was repaired and extended to this place in 1501. The really
important garrison, however, is a little further to the East, in the city of Su-chou. According to the map, Su-chou has about 3000 soldiers under a brigadier, three captains, six first and twelve second lieutenants. After the characters for “brigadier” there are four unreadable characters probably denoting a number of majors. The information concerning the garrison in the Hui-tien is not explicit: we read that in 1656 the military tao-t’ai was abolished and changed for a captain and that in 1691 “the colonel was changed for a brigadier, three battalions were added with three majors, one captain, two first, and four second lieutenants”. Since one battalion generally consisted of 750 men, 500 infantry and 250 cavalry, about 2250 men were added to the Su-chou garrison at that time, when the threat from Galdan was particularly grave. The strength shown on the map is equivalent to four battalions. From that time onwards the garrison was constantly weakened; until in the reign of Chia-ch’in there was only one first captain with one first and two second lieutenants. From these figures 1691 still seems a plausible date.

The presence of so many soldiers was particularly desirable in order to prevent the 016t from Kansu uniting with their brothers and other tribes of the Kukunor. From the Han dynasty onward, the Chinese emperors had always sought to prevent this alliance of Mongols and Tibetans. After the campaigns of Sheng-tsu against Galdan and of Kao-tsung (Ch’ien-lung) against Tsewang Araptan and the Dalai Lama, the maintenance of a heavy garrison in this region was no longer necessary.

Between Chia-yü-kuan and Su-chou there are three military posts with garrisons of either 40 or 50 under the command of a second lieutenant. This is the usual strength of these small places, whose troops mainly appear to have had the task of reconnoitering and protecting communications. All three were established in 1691. Su-chou is surrounded on all sides by such small posts. The only exception is Ch’ing-shui-pao, which is more important. It has a garrison of 146 cavalry under a captain. This place probably defends the passes of Hung-shan-k’ou and Kuan-yin shan-k’ou. The garrison was strengthened in 1691, and according to the Hui-tien a first captain was stationed there. Another place that deserves attention is Chin-ta-szu, north of the wall. It defends the point at which the San-ch’a-ho (at present Pei-ta-ho) pierces the wall and the gate to the North (i.e. the lower part of the map). The city is fortified by two walls and a moat inside the outer wall. The garrison, composed of a major, one first and three second lieutenants and 419 men, corresponds with the period from 1691 till 1780. After that time only a second lieutenant remained in command as the place had lost its importance. An inscription to the right of Chin-ta-szu reads: “To the West of Chin-ta-szu on the San-ch’a-ho are the tribes under Sai-yin-han...... (two characters unreadable) Daidji and his six chiefs come here to camp.” This Sai-yin-han had a son Kun-pu-pa-t’u or Kun-p u-pa-t’u-erh who is mentioned on the second section of the map inside the wall. It is stated there (above Kan-chou and between Hung-shui and Nan-ku-ch’eng) that he was Daidji of a great tribe camping near the Hu-la-hai pass.

On the Second Section of the map we find several interesting pieces of information concerning the barbarians. Against the Mongols before the tents the characters read as follows: “Outside the pass of Po-lo-k’ou there are the Chien-pa barbarians, who are under Galdan’s control and protection. They are commanded by Mai-li-kan-pai(?)-shou-tzu and Kun-pu-ch’a-han, their tribes camp there and at times they come to camp near Hua-lin-ch’uan.” Kun-pu-ch’a-han is mentioned a little to the right where it is stated: “Kun-pu-ch’a-han belongs to the barbarians of Galdan”, and between the two is a similar statement about Mai-li-kan. These are the only three instances where Galdan is
mentioned by name. They establish beyond doubt that these tribes actually had connections with Galdan. Therefore it seems likely that the map was made during Galdan’s lifetime or shortly afterwards.

The largest military formation in the area of the Second Section is at Kan-chou, where at that time the general had his headquarters with an army of 5000 men, one lieutenant-colonel, four majors, six captains, twelve first and twenty-one second lieutenants. This also corresponds with the situation in 1691. In 1758 the general was moved to Liang-chou. For the rest, the garrisons of the Second and Third Sections were more or less maintained at the level of 1691 with the exception of Kao-t’ai where the major was replaced by a captain in 1807. In the Southern part of this region we find mentioned Dalai Daidji and his nephew Kun-pu-pa-t’u-erh and sons O-erh-te-ni and O-li-k’o-ha and the Daidji’s son La-tsong-ling-li-erh-chi-pen, while in the part beyond the wall there is the following information: “Beyond the Pa-la-shan and close to the Tung-ta-shan the rebellious tribe of the Han-tun with O-erh-te-ni-ho-shou-ch’i have their camps.”

The Fourth Section has Liang-chou as its military center with 4,300 men under a brigadier, with a full complement of officers, and this was the strength of the garrison in 1691. This section abounds with names of Mongol chiefs, mostly inside the wall. The only exception is near Chen-fan where it is said: “Outside the border of Chen-fan as far as Ning-hsia there is the region of grassland of the Ho-lan-shan, where Chu-nang Daidji and .... hsia-ko Daidji have their camps.” This information is repeated on the Fifth Section which covers the area from Ta-ch’ing to some 20 km east of Chung-wei. In this section the Yellow River replaces the wall for a short distance. This place is protected by five walled cities on the Southern bank, but apparently at that time it was no longer necessary to maintain garrisons there. We only read of a colonel who is stationed at Chung-wei-ying and the strength of the garrison is not mentioned. From this section onward till the province of Shansi only the ranks of the officers are given. The colonel was stationed there in 1658 and was replaced by a captain in 1731.

The Sixth Section gives the region of Ning-hsia city. The officers in this city are a brigadier, five majors, one first captain and a first captain for irrigation (shui-li tu-szu), five second captains, ten first and twenty-two second lieutenants. This tallies exactly, with the exception of the irrigation captain, with the numbers given in the Hui-tien for 1681. By 1698 the first captain was replaced by two first lieutenants. The map has the following interesting information concerning this region: “At Ning-hsia there is a harvest every year thanks to the irrigation of the Yellow River. Every year on the Ch’ing-ming festival they start working on the soil. The second magistrate of the subprefecture appoints civilians and soldiers to make the earthen walls and dig the ditches under his supervision. Of every battalion twenty soldiers are appointed and with twenty civilians they work (in teams) with all their might. The width of every ditch is two, or four chang
(a chang is a very variable measure usually given as 141 inches, which seems rather too much in this connection), its depth two or three chang. When the ditches have been dug the water of the Yellow River can be allowed to enter and be used for irrigation. On the day of the summer solstice they stop working. After that the officers of the military camps and stations divide the water according to the extent of the land, so that there will not be any conflict about the water. For this reason brigadier Sang arranged matters in this way. Until now every year a good harvest has been obtained. Although it is said that it is a matter of irrigation (water benefit) it is a matter of human labor as well.” From this it appears that Ning-hsia was a kind of mixed military and civilian colony probably providing provisions for the army stationed along the wall. The picturesque Mongol group shown North of Ning-hsia represents the tribe of Dalai Daidji, mentioned before.

From the Sixth Section onward we find some curious things. In the first place the distances between the various places do not tally. When we follow the Yellow River, we come to the Sheng-chin pass; from there to Shih-k’ung-pao according to the map is 30 li. A li generally 576 meters. The distance should therefore be about 18 km. In reality, as the crow flies it is 25 km. From there to Kuang-wu-ying is 80 li on the map, in reality a radical distance of 50 km. From Kuang-wu-ying to Ta-pa is 30 li, in reality about 25 km. Then, however, the real trouble starts, for on the map Yii-ch’ian-pao is situated to the southwest of Ta-pa, while actually it is to the northwest. The same applies to the situation of P’ing-ch’iang-pao which on the map is southwest of Yü-ch’üan-pao, in fact it is northwest. The result is that the city of Ning-hsia, which actually is almost due north of Ta-pa, is found due west on the map. The road which almost runs straight North is halfway bent back south and then resumes its northern course with the most curious
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The situation becomes still stranger after P’ing-lo-pao. This city is found on the map to the northwest of Ning-hsia, while in fact it is practically north of that city. Near P’ing-lo-pao the Yellow River breaks through the wall and continues its course to the north for some 200km, after which it bends West and subsequently after again 300 km it runs due south where it forms the boundary between Shensi and Shansi. The wall, however, does not follow the River, but from a point near P’ing-lo-pao it runs south to Lin-ho-pao (southeast of Ning-hsia) and 100km due south of P’ing-lo. On the map Lin-ho is northeast of Ning-hsia and still more so of P’ing-lo, while the river seems to continue its course peacefully to the east from P’ing-lo onward. Here the difficulties of the shape of the hand-scroll which did not allow enough width are quite apparent. We are only warned by the character “South” in the right-hand upper corner of Section Seven. In section eight we are informed that Ting-p’ien-ying is more than 400 li south of the Yellow River; it is actually about 400 km south of the river. The cartographers therefore were quite aware of the actual situation, but had to compromise with the shape of their map. The Yellow River turns obediently south at Huang-fu-ying and enters the region within the wall, as it should.

The remaining sections of the map offer no points of special interest. It would therefore be both tedious and pointless to enumerate the composition of the remaining garrisons. For the greater part, they correspond with the descriptions contained in the Hui-tien for the 30th year of K’ang-hsi, i.e. 1691. This evidence and the occurrence of the name of Galdan leaves little doubt that the map was made either during or shortly after his revolt, that is, between the years 1680 and 1700, and that its purpose was largely military.
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[Map images of the Great Wall of China]
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China
The following are some other early maps that displayed the Great Wall of China. Numbers (#) reference detailed monographs relating to that map (see www.myoldmaps.com)

**Huayi tu [Map of Chinese and Non-Chinese Territories], 1137. (#218)**

Measuring 1136.79 x 79 cm, this map is carved on the same stele reproduced in Yuji tu. This map is carved on the same stele. Because the maps are placed in opposite directions on the stone, this particular stele was most likely to have been used to produce rubbings and was not for public display. Based upon Jia Dan’s Map of Chinese and Non-Chinese Territories within the Seas of 801, it shows the main natural and administrative features of the Chinese Empire up to the 1120s. The texts arranged around the edges of the graphic part of the map provide quotations from historical and other sources and briefly explain the meaning and history of essential markers such as the Great Wall, the size of the empire, and the states to the west.
Detail of the showing the region northwest of the Tang capital Chang’an (lower right). This is the region that extended into the territory of the Uighers and was the focus of Yuan Zhen’s tujing as submitted to Emperor Muzong tracing out the itinerary of Princess Taihe.
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Luo Hongxian’s General Map of China, the Guang Yü T’u, 1320/1579; 28.5cm; x 41cm (British Library, London, 15261.e.2, 1b-2a). (##227)

Based on Map of China by Zhu Siben of Yuan Dynasty, the map was completed by Luo Hongxian around 1541 (the 11th year of Jiajing’s reign of Ming Dynasty), who had spent more than ten years on mapping. According to the accompanying text, this general map of the empire is drawn so that each side of a square represents one hundred li [~ 33 miles]. The whole map contains two volumes, including 45 maps and 68 attached maps, 113 maps in all are characterized by careful and neat painting and delicate carving, and the map was the first one to adopt the 24 kinds of map codes, a part of which had been abstract. The map was in the form of atlas, with abundant information, which was not only practical and scientific but easy to be preserved, so it was copied six times. Therefore, parts of the lost Map of China were able to be preserved in it. What’s more, it became the master copy, based on which many traditional maps since Ming and Qing Dynasties were drawn, for it was accurate and easy to obtain. The atlas contains one key map; detail maps including map of Northern Zhili, map of Zhisu in Henan, map of Shanxi, map of Shaanxi, map of Henan, map of Jiangxi, map of Hubei and Hunan, map of Sichuan, map of Fujian, map of Guangdong, map of Guangxi, map of Yunnan, map of Guizhou, map of frontiers in Liao and Song Dynasties, map of frontiers of Jizhou (ancient Ji Prefecture), map of frontiers of Juyong Pass, Zijing Pass and Daoma Pass, map of frontiers of Xuanfu, the strategic post, map of frontiers of Datong and Yanmen Pass, Ningwu Pass, and Piantou Pass, map of frontiers of Gulan in Ningxia, map of frontiers of Shandan in Gansu and map of frontiers of the Taohe River, 24 detail maps in all, attached with descriptions illustrating military affairs, administrative offices, salt administrations and other record events.
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The “Geographic Map of the Land of China to the East”, from Zhipan’s General Records of the Founders of Buddhism, ca. 1270, Map 152. Zhipan, 32:5l-6r
Ch’onhado [Map All Under Heaven], ca. 1860, ink on paper, 45 x 45, British Library, London (#231)
Detail: China, the Yellow River and the Great Wall. Since many of the locations on the map come from Classical Chinese texts, it is no surprise that China is shown in detail. It dominates the central continent, and is labeled in red Zhongguo [the Middle Kingdom]. To the north, the Great Wall is shown bisecting the Yellow River, which is colored appropriately. A series of mountains are drawn, variously labeled as “Everlasting”, “Great” and “Kunlun”. This last range mixes reality with myth, since the Kunlun mountains, one of the longest mountain ranges in Asia, run across northern China, and as the home of various ancient gods.
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Yojido Atlas, China, 32.4 x 26.8 cm, 1789?, Library of Congress (#231)
Japanese map entitled “Daimin Kyuhen Bankoku Jinsei Rotei Zenzu” [The whole map of the great Ming Dynasty China, and its nine border lands (Chinese title)], Wang Jun Fu and Unemura Yahaku, Kyoto, 1645, 123.9 x 123 cm, British Library
Hand-colored woodcut map of China and the World, printed on multiple sheets and folding into later orange-papered covers decorated in lotus flower designs. The texts taken from the Chinese original are particularly interesting: the legend on the right gives details of the 29 strategic border crossings, and that on the left describes 33 foreign countries, with the European and African place names taken from Jesuit sources such as Ricci’s 1602 map. Other texts cover details of the 13 provinces with details on population, taxation, and commodities (#231.1)
The Sihai Huayi Zongtu [General Map of Chinese and Non-Chinese Territories within the Four seas], in Compilation of Illustrations and Writings by Zhang Huang during the Ming Dynasty, dated 1532,

The map displays the various locations of China, Korea (朝鮮) and Japan (日本國) in the East, Siberia in the North (羅荒野), Nepal (天竺) and a vast India (印度) in the South, Persia in the West (波刺斯, modern 波斯), and Rome (Daqin, 大秦) beyond the Western Sea (西海). (#231.1)
The Honil Gangni Yeokdae Gukdo Ji Do ("Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Capitals." [1]), often abbreviated as Kangnido, is a world map created in Korea, produced by Yi Hoe and Kwon Kun in 1402 (#236)
Complete Map of the Nine Border Towns of the Great Ming and of the Human Presence and Travel Routes of the Ten Thousand Countries. / 大明九邊萬國人跡路程全圖 /

Dàmíng jiǔ biān wàn guó rèn jì lùchéng quán tú. 1663 / 1680 (dated), 54 x 49 in (137.16 x 124.46 cm)

A rare 1663 (Kangxi 2) xylographic map of Ming China, and indeed the entire world, by Wáng Jīnfü issued during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (1661 – 1722). This massively proportioned map focuses on China, which, bounded on the north by the Great Wall of China, on the west by the Yellow River, and on the east and south by oceans, occupies some three fourths of the map. As is characteristic of most Chinese world maps, the less detailed surrounding regions illustrate the rest of the world, but on a much reduced and often hard to interpret scale. This world map’s focus on China to the diminishment of all other lands is neatly summed up by the 17th century Chinese cartographer Chen Zushou (#236)
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'Plan de Long-Men-Hien, près de la grande Muraille, dépendant de Suen hoa fu; Plan d’une Partie de la Grande Muraille, du costé de Yung-ping-fu, Soutenue par diverses Places de Guerre [Plan of Longguan, near the Great Wall, depending on Xuanhua; Plan of a part of the Great Wall, Lulong county (Yongping), protected by several forts]', J.N. Bellin, 1748
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Chinae olim Sinarum regionis, nova descriptio, 1584, Abraham Ortelius/Ludovico Georgio, oriented with west at the top (#410)
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Detail: the Great wall
Mercator’s China, 1628 (#410)

Detail: the Great Wall
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Tartaria, Jodocius Hondius (#442.2)
De Jode’s map of China is the third western map of China, based on the Barbuda model, but recast in a north-south orientation. The map coverage has been shifted north to show northeastern Tartary and inner Asia, presumably also derived from Jesuit sources, although de Jode also acknowledges Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza and Giovanni Pietro de Maffei as sources for the map. The central circle encloses a map of China, Northeast Asia and parts of western Japan including Kyushu, Shikoku, and most of mainland Honshu. The emergent shape of the Korean peninsula and Gulf of Pecheli (Bohai) are firsts on a European map. The map shows an oversized representation of the Pearl River Estuary (perhaps reflecting its importance in trade). Overall, the cartography of the Pearl River Estuary is unusually well detailed: Guangzhou, Macau, Sancian (Shangquan Dao near Taishan in Guangdong) and other places are identified. The elaborate strap-work border has four round insets showing European visions of Chinese and Japanese scenes: fish-catching cormorants; a Chinese junk with a chimney-topped cabin and fenced in area on the side of the vessel sheltering domestic birds and fowl; a Japanese worshipping a triple-headed deity; and the famous wind carts depicted on many early European maps of the region including those of Hondius and Speed. The illustrations on De Jode’s map pre-date the famous illustrations found in Theodore de Bry’s Grands et Petits Voyages and most likely derive from contemporary Jesuit reports. They provide some of the earliest detailed Western illustrations of any aspect of Chinese and Japanese life. The map also includes a nice treatment of the northern parts of India, including an early and relatively detailed depiction of the complicated and still
quite poorly understood Ganges River and its tributaries. There is also an interesting thematic treatment of the nomadic Tartar Tribes of Asiatic Russia, along with an open and inviting area to the north, showing the easternmost portion of the Northeast Passage, which would in the next several years be explored by Willem Barrentsz and others after him. This map appeared only in the second edition of De Jode’s Speculum Orbis Terrae, with two pages of Latin text describing China printed on the verso.

Detail of the Great Wall on Gerard de Jode’s 1593 map of Asia
The text on the map indicates the distance of the wall is 400 li (about 140 miles, or one-tenth the actual distance of the wall)
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The Great Wall on Giuseppe Rosaccio's 1597 world map

The Great Wall on the Seldon map of 1619
China, 1609. An anonymous manuscript that must have used authentic sources, possibly Jesuit. It shows the fifteen provinces of the Ming Empire, with their principal cities, and the Great Wall. The British Library Cotton MS Aug.I.ii.4S (#448)
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This map, Huang Ming yitong fang yu bei lan [Comprehensive view map of the Imperial Ming], is incorporated as part of Purchas his Pilgrimes, a collection of travel writings, based on the work of the famous geographer, Richard Hakluyt (1552-1616). The Purchas map of China is widely regarded as the first map of China published in the West to have been derived directly from Chinese sources. It is based upon a Chinese woodblock sheet map, which had been acquired by Captain John Saris in Bantam sometime between December 1608 and October 1609. It is possible that this Chinese map was the 1593 “Cao Map”, of which there is now only one recorded example. Squares and circles depict cities and settlements. The provinces of China are marked and boundaries shown, for perhaps the first time on a Western map. Note that Macau and Canton (Guangzhou) are both named. The vignettes in the corners depict Matteo Ricci (#441) and a Chinese couple. A predominate display of the Great Wall stretches across the northern border.
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The Chung kuo t’u [Map of the Middle Kingdom], 1653, Michael Boym (#462.1)

Detail of the Great Wall
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Tartary, John Speed, 1626 (#464)

Speed’s map includes a decorative carte à figures. Side panels depict costume figures, while above are vignettes of the cities of Astrakhan, Samarkand and Cambalu, with an illustration of a house in Nova Zemla. The Great Wall of China is clearly seen, and the interior is heavily annotated.
The Kingdom of China, one of the first English-language maps of China. Note generally correct outline of the Ming China, with many provinces labeled (Cantam/Guangdong, Quancii/Guangxi, Chequiam/Zhejiang, Quicheu/Guizhou, Fuquam/en:Huguang/Huguang, Honao/Henan, Xanton/Shandong, Xiamxi and Sancii (Shanxi and Shaanxi?). "Xuntien alias Quinzay" more or less corresponds to Beijing (the name Shuntian Prefecture was indeed in use). However, north of China proper, John Speed had also placed Cathaya, the Chief Kingdom of Great Cam, with the capital Cambalu (Khanbaliq - i.e., in fact, the same Beijing). This kind of duplication was common on the maps of the period, as geographers had not apparently yet fully identified Marco Polo’s Cathay with the China then known to Europeans, and Cambalu with Beijing. The Great Wall is depicted on the map, along with several annotations. Korea shown as an Island. Japan is also shown using a very curious depiction. The map includes a portion of India within the Ganges region, extending well into Central Asia. In addition to the wonderful views showing a sailing land craft, manner of execution and city views of Macao and Quinzay and the costumed figures of Chinese, Japanese and Pegu men and women, there are interesting notes throughout the map on various historical and mythical aspects of China, including a region where men are seduced by wonderful illusions and dirt is spun into cloth.
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

5.3

Detail: the Great Wall

General map of Shanxi Town with the intersection of two sections of the Great Wall
Map of Yangzi Qiyu Map. Here the Great Wall is very prominent and stretches in a general path across China. This map details the administrative areas of the whole country under the jurisdiction of the Ming Dynasty. Provincial administrative boundaries are drawn with prominent red lines. The residential land uses standardized graphic symbols, and the features and landscapes are represented by the image writing method. It is an earlier existing picture with rich content and detailed administrative district names in China. It is a Ming Dynasty. Representative map. A 168 × 180 cm
Liang Zhou’s Qiankun wanguo quantu gujin renwu shiji [Universal Map of the Myriad Countries of the World, with Traces of Human Events, Past and Present] c. 1600. Where the Great Wall extends across the top of the map.
Chi'inha kogum iaech'ong p'ylam to: hand-copied in color; made by Kim Suhong in 1666; 110 x 77.5 cm; in the collection of Yi Ch' an., Kim Suhong's postscript and "Nojong ki" (Record of Distance) and the titles which are at the top of the original map are
omitted. On the woodcut version, the Korean peninsula is marked as "Chosen." In this version, however, it is indicated as "Kijaguk (Land of Kija)," and Mt. Halla of Cheju Island is added. The rivers and seas as a whole are colored in dark blue, and in a corner of the sea, it says "rnangmang daehae" (boundless ocean). Detail of the Great Wall on this map is shown below.
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Asia, Overton, 1668 (#478.2)

Detail: the Great Wall
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

China 1697

The Great Wall on the map of China by Johannes Nieuhof, 1673
Lidai-fenye-zhijie-Gujin-ren-wu-Shiji, 1679, Lu Junhan (#481.2) showcases Ming-dynasty China at the center and indicates its two imperial capitals of Beijing and Nanjing, thirteen provinces, the Great Wall, and significant mountains and rivers. On the map also the texts describe the relics of persons and events, past and present. The text at bottom of the map describes the two capitals and 13 provinces of the Ming dynasty including their names, numbers of families and population, the production of rice, wheat, raw and processed silk, cotton, copper, horse fodder and salt, etc., as well as the distances between provinces.
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Lidai Fenye Tu Gujin Renwu Tuji, 1679, Lu Junhan (#481.2)
Detail from an early 18th century map on the Great Wall representing the section extending from Shanhaiguan to Luowenyu (about 600 km)
Naaukeurige Kaart van Tartaryen Soo als dat door W. de Rubruquis doorreyst is in 't Jaar 1253, Pierre vander Aa, 1707 (500.91)

Detail: the Great Wall
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Detail of the map for Zhidi yu tu from the 1722 Huang yu quan lan fen sheng tu [Kangxi provincial atlas of China] showing the Great Wall in the northeastern province
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

5.3
Anonymous Traditional Korean Manuscript Map of China and Korea from a Chonha-Chido. from the early 1800s. The map comes from a traditional Korean manuscript atlas. It shows China with the Yangtze River, the Yellow River and the Great Wall. The Korean peninsula is shown in the east.
The Great Wall on a map of China from a Korean manuscript Atlas, Ch’onha-Chido, late 18th century
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

The Great Wall in the Ch’onha do chido, a 1770 copy of Giulio Alemi’s Wanguo quantu, 1623
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Chōi Ichiran [Map of China and Outlying Countries] by Seitaen, 1835, woodcut print, 65.5 x 58.5 cm

Detail of the Great Wall
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Thibet, Mongolia and Manchouria, John Tallis, 1851 (#801.26)
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Asia, John Tallis, 1851
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

Detail vignette from “Tibet, Mongolia, and Manchuria”, from John Tallis’ atlas of the world (1851)
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

A section of the Continental Map with Scenes of Forty-Eight Foreign People (America & Europe), late 18th century, manuscript (a pair of six-fold screens), Kobe City Museum

Detail of the Great Wall
Most people think of the Great Wall of China as a single continuous structure, built by a ruthless emperor, hundreds or even thousands of years ago and constructed to a well-defined overall plan. However, in reality, the Great Wall was started before China had become a unified state over 2,000 years ago. As various Chinese dynasties came and went, they built various sections of the wall in the north of China to protect the frontier.
Some of these constructions were bigger than others. Some have lasted through the times and others have become lost. Some sections of wall were built and rebuilt along nearly the same line, but in some places sections of wall were built hundreds of miles from earlier or later walls. Also, at no time was there a single structure spanning the whole east-west distance. There are lots of sections of wall, like a dotted line, running across the most strategically important locations. Today they put the Great Wall’s total length at 8,851.1 km (about 5,500 miles).
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China
Maps Displaying the Great Wall of China

5.3