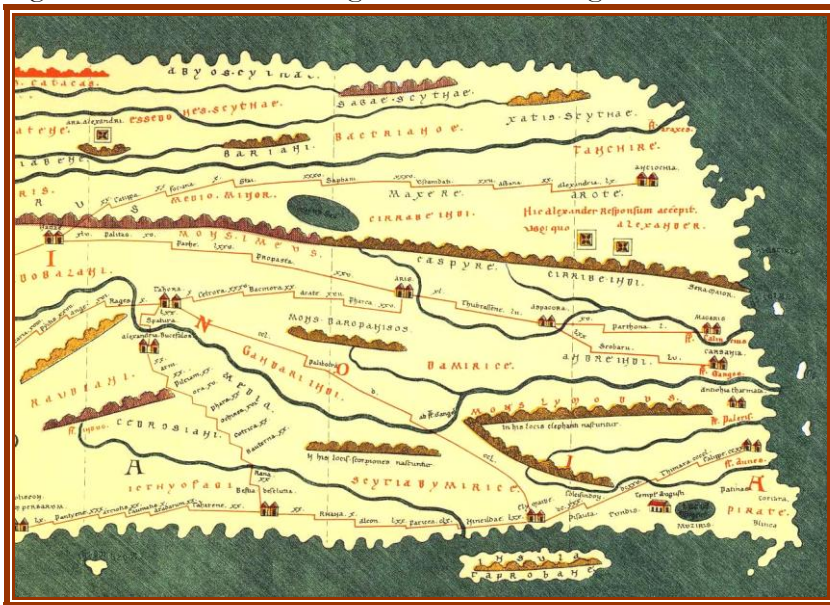


of the Ancients and the Moderns»). In 1590, Ortelius¹ attributed to the Ancients a highly accurate map of the Old World, as if the Greeks and Romans had had a precise knowledge of the coordinates of the coasts. Anyhow, Ortelius wanted to point out that the modern cartographic knowledge was much more advanced than the old one. Actually, the knowledge of the ancients was much worse than Ortelius thought (note that he describes China, «*Sinarum Regio*» as a land devoid of landlocked Ocean).

Fig. 2 – *The Far East according to the Tabula Peutingeriana*



A high level of imprecision can also be seen in the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, a Renaissance copy of a set of routes, drawn in the third century AD (Talbert, 2010). East of «*Bactria*» is not mentioned specifically as China, but only generically as «*India*»: «*hic Alexander*

¹ I sincerely thank the geographer, who in a friendly way, pointed out that some of these things are well known to geographers. The point I wanted to emphasize is that Westerners continued to have a very vague and inaccurate idea of the Far East not only before 1513 (the year of the first landing of a Portuguese ship directly into a Chinese port) but more than one hundred and almost one hundred and fifty years later: with intelligent and erudite cartographers as Ortelius, still reporting the literal descriptions of Marco Polo of over three hundred years old.

responsum accepit», where Alexander the Great received the oracular message (i.e.: in front of the Sea he realized that there were no more lands to conquer²). Some ancient authors, such as Seneca, imagined that China was not far from Spain: idea repropoed even by Roger Bacon in his *Opus Maius*, circa 1275 (Woodward, 2004, p. 31).

The lack of certainty allowed to place, in the Far East, every kind of dream or nightmare, both on a spiritual as well as on a material level. For example, the land of *Cockaigne*, with endless food and beverage: the forbidden dream of a poor Europe, hungry and always to the verge of starvation.

Fig. 3 – *the Far East as land of plenty: Eckhout, Marketstall in Indies, 1750*



However, not by bread alone does a man live. Christianity inherited from Judaism the belief that the East was the most important direction because there was the sunlight at dawn (and the divine light, also).

According to Europeans mapmakers, there had to be Jerusalem at the heart of oecumene (*Ezek.* 5, 15), and the Garden of Eden at the Far East, as a starting point (not only of human history but also of the geographic world). As reported by the French historian Jean

² The Macedonians stopped on the shores of the Indian Ocean and not the Pacific.

Delumeau (1978), Europe was a «surrounded city», or a besieged fortress. The fear of succumbing (which is still typically an European syndrome) elicited the dream of a powerful Christian king, Prester John, coming from the Far East with the task of helping the Pope and the Emperor to defeat the Muslims. The vagueness of the geographical descriptions allows identifying, case by case through the centuries, the rich legendary Christian king with the Nestorians, or with some Mongol rulers, or with the Ethiopian Copts (they also were considered «Eastern Indies» because of the neighboring Indian Ocean).

The Prester John's Kingdom was a beautiful dream (Beckingham, 1983; Zaganelli, 2000), but the East would be also considered a terrible Nightmare³. In fact, over the centuries, brave and valiant nations came from the steppes: the Huns of Attila, Avars, and Magyars. Each time, the European writers feared these people as not being human: they were the embodiment of the Apocalypse: Magyars as Magog, Huns (named «Ung») as Gog.

Fig. 4 – *Diogo Homen, Nautical Atlas, 1588: detail showing the Prester John in his throne, with a cross-shaped staff. The Portuguese mapmaker put his Kingdom in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia today)*



³ About this dichotomy see the articles collected in Castelnovi, 2013.

Marco Polo. – The apotheosis of these antithetical emotions, i.e. dreams and nightmares, is reached in the 14th century. The author is the Venetian Marco Polo, who travels to China and the Far East in the last half of the 14th century. Even 350 years later, the European cartographers continued to put in their maps the things described by Polo. Obviously those fables, useful for dreaming, were useless for practical purposes. The *Book* of Marco Polo was one of the most successful bestsellers of the Middle Ages. Some cartographers of his time used the information to adorn their magnificent atlases and world maps.

Fig. 5 – *European merchants with camels returning from the Silk Road* (detail from Abraham Cresques, *Catalan Atlas for Charles V*, circa 1375)

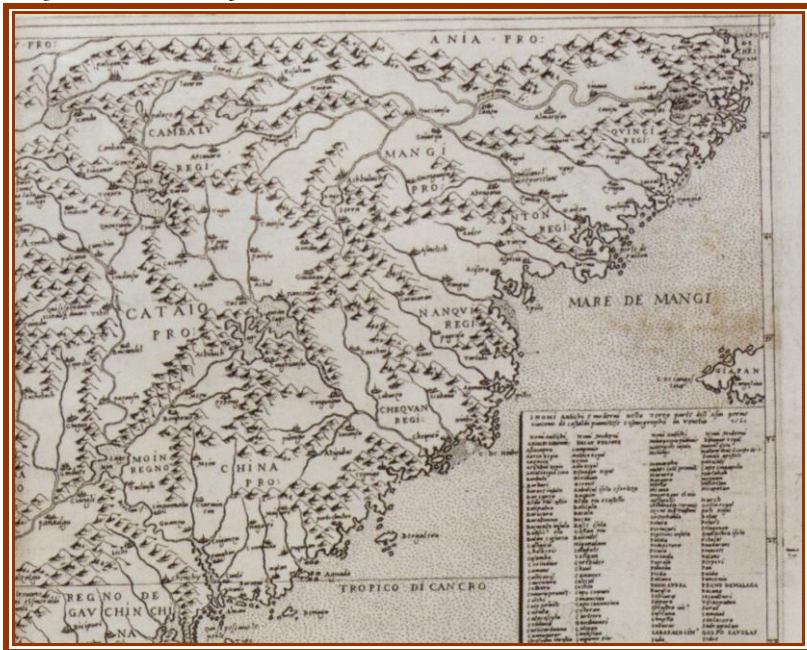


However, Marco Polo describes only a few routes, namely the roads he covered himself in his journey. That is the «odological» display of an existential experience (Castelnovi, 2010, 2014, and in press): he reports to the audience only the space he has seen, along a very thin line. For this reason, the *Book of Marvels* is not suitable for the production of accurate maps.

In addition, the wonderful descriptions of Marco Polo do not allow any verification or «falsification». The polian information could be related to any town, to any port, to any Cathay. It is difficult even to identify the capital city, or which towns he describes as the majors. So in short, we can say that the *Book of Marvels* is perfect for daydreaming, but it is not suitable to the advancement of the geographic knowledge.

In addition to the problem of the shape of the continent, there is also a problem of *«horror vacui»*. In fact, the medieval cartographers did not admit that there could be some space, left blank on the maps. If a territory was unknown, they filled it with fancy names or images of *«mirabilia»* and *«monstrua»*, i.e. marvelous or monstrous things (Van Duzer, 2012). The names were often those mentioned by Marco Polo (or from the Bible or from the *Legend* of Alexander the Great); the images were taken from legends or mythology, or from pure fantasy of the artist (monstrua). In a famous map printed in Venice by Giacomo Gastaldi, 1561, it is noteworthy the effort to combine the «polian» medieval names (Mangi, Cathay, Cambalu, «Quinci» i.e. Quinsay) with some current names near the eastern and southern coasts («Nanqui»=Nanjing, «Chequian»=Zhejiang, «Xanton»=Shandong).

Fig. 6 – Giacomo Gastaldi, *Il disegno della terza parte dell'Asia, Venezia, 1561, detail of the Chinese coast*



In 1579, in his map the famous cartographer Ortelius reported the exact words of Marco Polo, but two hundred years late! He wrote:

«*Urbs Quinsay habet, ut M. P. Venetus refert, 100 milia passuum in circuitu; habetque 12.000 pontes*» («the city of Quinsay has, according to Marcus Polo Venetian reports, about 100 miles perimeter; with twelve thousand bridges»). That means no better information are available to Ortelius, after two centuries.

Marco Polo never provides geographic coordinates, actually known in the West since the ancient time (Ptolemy) and used in the Middle Ages by Muslim cartographers, which he should have known at least visiting the Polo commercial emporiums on the Black Sea, or in Persia. An example of the islamic knowledge are the maps drawn by Idris in mid-12th century (Ducène, 2008).

Marco Polo not even reports of the coordinates provided by the Chinese bureaucracy. The coordinates are used in China since the time of Pei Xiu (aka Jiyān: 224-271 d. C.: Yee, 1994, p. 48; Zedda Macciò, 2003, p. 36; Akin e Mumford, 2012).

Fig. 7 and 8 – *A. Ortelius, Asia Nova Descriptio, in Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1570; and detail of the Far East*



In his *Book of Marvels*, Marco Polo mentions – only once – some maps used by sailors (from Arabia and India): «*Mapamundi* from sai-

lors of the sea.»⁴ But not even once he mentions the famous terrestrial maps of China developed since the Song Dynasty, *circa* 1137 AD (Thrower, 1999, p. 28; Yee, 1994, p. 49; Zedda Macciò, 2003, p. 35; Smith, 2013, p. 56). It's hard to believe that Polo had not ever seen a Chinese map of China. We do not know for sure: maybe these maps were used by Han officials, with a lower grade than the Mongolian officials that Polo attended. Surely, there is a big difference between Polo and Martini. Martini, in fact, was very proud of his «treasure»: books and maps⁵, made by chinese geographers. Martini wrote about a treasure of «more than fifty books» (1655, p. 148) that he carried on the Dutch ship across the ocean, namely 50 chinese books along with many chinese maps.

Fig. 9 – *Stele of Xi'an: Chinese Map carved on stone, circa 1137*



⁴ Chapter 169 about Ceylon/Sri Lanka: «*vi dico ch'anticamente ella fue maggiore, che girava III mila VI cento miglia, secondo che dice la mapamundi*» («I say that, in the past, the island was bigger, with 3,600 miles of perimeter, accordig to the *mapa mundi*»): Polo, 1975, p. 252.

⁵ «It can result extremely difficult and certainly not obvious to “read” a map that was produced in a totally different cultural milieu, where the system of knowledge, techniques, symbols and values had a different history, a diverging evolution and often opposite issues» (Salvatori, 2001, p. 10).

Mapping the coasts. – Let's do a step backward. In the 16th Century, some European sailors went to China, along the oceans of Africa and India. However, their mapping only served to navigation. Their maps describe only the coasts, and often the names are totally invented, without any contact with the inhabitants. Noteworthy, in the Portuguese and Spanish maps, a significant percentage of invented place-names were reported, later repeated by Dutch or English cartographers, or even Italian or German. A clear example: a map from Plancius, 1594.

Fig. 10 – *Detail of the Chinese Southern Sea, from Plancius, 1594*



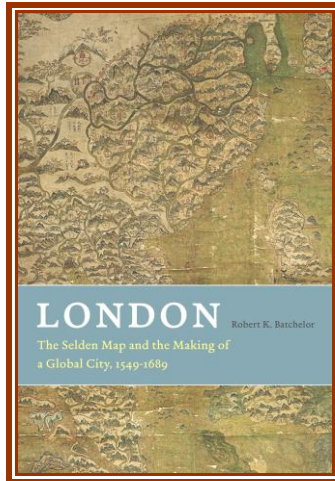
In 16th Century, the «geography of marvels» of Polo did not satisfy even the merchants: in particular, the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Dutch, who landed to China from the sea (about «connecting maritime and continental history», see Di Cosmo, 2013, p. 175). But for their travels, it was enough to draw maps of the thin coastline, without the slightest care of the Inner China (a perfect exemple can be found in two maps made by Gerritz in 1632 and 1635: see Zandvliet, 2007, p. 1440).

It appears that European cartographers were never interested in the asian maps from local production. As if «East Asians, especially the ruling classes, stayed at home» (Sivin and Ledyard, 1995, p. 23) or as if they wanted even to ignore the sailing routes of goods traded in

the ports. From an eurocentric point of view, «historians have traditionally argued that, unlike the Mediterranean or the Atlantic world, East Asia as a whole had no indigenous cartography» (Batchelor, 2013, p. 37).

Contrarywise, just in the field of chinese nautical cartography, we can remember the portolan charts drawn up at the time of the *Treasure Fleet* of Zheng He⁶. It is the so-called «*Selden Map*»⁷ with many routes, drawn around 1619 by an anonymous cartographer from Southeast Asian in Chinese language and later acquired by the famous londonian collector and appassionate of the Far East, John Selden⁸.

Fig. 11 – *Selden Map, circa 1619 (from the Batchelor's Book cover, 2013)*



⁶ Needham and Ronan, 1986, p. 170; Smith, 1996, p. 34; Levathes, 1994, p. 94; Yee, 1995, p. 54; Brotton, 2014, p. 135.

⁷ Another conventional name for this map can be *Dongxi yang hanghai tu*. Batchelor 2013, p. 58. «Others suggest that the mapmaker was a sinicized Arab who have settled in Fujian, because the map provides directions to Arab regions in the Middle East»: Nie, 2014, p. 15. See also Brotton, 2014, p. 130.

⁸ Selden, jurist and scholar, wrote a treatise against Grotius' ideas in 1636: *Mare Clausum, seu de Dominio Maris libri duo*, London, Will. Stanesbeius, 1636. In his last will the year before his death in 1654, Selden wrote: «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.» (Nie, 2014, p. 20).

Beyond the shores: the missionary and the Inner China. – Unlike merchants, who were content to beg for permission to reside and trade in some poor port cities, far from the imperial capital city (as happened, for example, in Macau), the Jesuits wanted to convert the very heart of the Empire. To them, it was important to have reliable and accurate geographic information, to organize *more militari* the spiritual conquest of China. Franciscans and Dominicans focused their efforts on the poorest people of the seaside towns of peripheral provinces such as Guangzhou and Fujien, contrarywise the Jesuits wanted to convert the Emperor, and for their strategy they needed to reach the capital city.

Fig. 12 – Michael Boym, circa 1655 (manuscript)



Martini was not the first: others jesuits were there before him. The data were gathered through their own direct experience, collating both Chinese books and maps, and already starting to translate them. One of the most active was Michele Ruggieri, at the end of the 16th century (at the age of Matteo Ricci) (Ruggieri, 1993). Another was the Polish Jesuit Michail Boym⁹, in the same period of Martini (we know

⁹ Boym, Michael, *Magni Catay: Quod olim Serica, et modo Sinarum est Monarchia;*

a manuscript map from the polish Jesuit Michael Boym, which precedes of a few years Martini's *Atlas*, but it is «just» a manuscript, without any diffusion).

As written by Dunne (1962), they were truly a «Generation of Giants»: Martini, very humbly, depicted himself as a dwarf climbing on their shoulders. But, as claimed by Merton (1965), this is precisely how the «scientific knowledge» progresses¹⁰: on the shoulders of Giants, through a continuous increase of knowledge, comparable and acceptable, that you can add one upon the other (on the contrary it is impossible to add something to the wonders reported by Polo).

We have, however, the manuscript pages of the Jesuit Michele Ruggieri, restricted only to the southern part of China; those maps anyhow, have been secretly preserved for centuries by the Jesuits in Rome, inaccessible and almost unknown (even if an important scholar, Giovanni Botero, quotes Ruggieri as a source in *Le Relationi Universali*, 1591-1596).

Fig. 13 – Michele Ruggieri, *Sciansii* (Map of the Province of Shanxi), circa 1590



Before Martino Martini, other Jesuits had drawn quick sketches of the geography of China's interior, some scholars also attributed a

Quindecim Regnorum; Octodecim geographicae Tabulae, 1652 (only manuscript without dissemination). About Boym, see Miazek-Męczyńska, 2015, pp. 17-35.

¹⁰ Merton, 1965; see also Eco, 2012., p. 767.

handwritten map (now lost) to Matteo Ricci, even if there is not a real evidence. Maybe some handwritten sketches can have inspired this map, printed in England by Samuel Purchas in 1625: very poor in details, and with wrong names (as a «*Regnum Cialis*» northwest to the Great Wall). Provinces' names were split in syllables: *Sciensi*, *Sciansi*, *Pequin*, *Sciantum*, *Nanquin*, *Chequian*, *Fuchian*, *Chiansi*, *Iunan*, *Quicheu* and so on.

Fig. 14 – Samuel Purchas, *The Map Of China*, 1625



At the beginning of the 17th century, Jesuit missionaries began to show the shape of the continents to Chinese mandarins. In 1584, Matteo Ricci¹¹ drew a large world map to be hanged on the wall,

¹¹ «While the transmission of Renaissance cartography to China in the time of Matteo Ricci cannot be underestimated, the reverse transmission of geographical information about East Asia to the 17th-century geographers of Europe must also be remembered. It was owing to the solid work of generations of Chinese mapmakers that knowledge of this part of the world became incorporated in modern geography» Needham, 1959, p. 590. See also Yee, 1995, p. 184: «It is not totally clear that Ricci's introduction of Renaissance cartography into China was actually a case of transmission, since it is far from certain that Chinese mapmakers accepted European techniques. The evidence of Chinese maps from the time of Ricci's arriv-

reporting the latest geographic information on the coasts of all the four continents: Europe in the middle at the top, Africa at the bottom, America to the left and Asia to the right.¹²

Through the exhibition of such extensive knowledge, Ricci wanted to fascinate the Chinese mandarins. But they were completely disoriented: China, as the name says «*Zhongguo*», to them should have necessarily been at the center of the *Ecumene*, not to mention that with respect to the population size it should have been much larger, as in the Chinese cartographic tradition.

After the rediscovery of Ricci occurred in Italy during the age of nationalism and Fascism (thanks to the Jesuit Pietro Tacchi Venturi from Macerata, who participated actively in the creation of *L'Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*), many books today report that Ricci would have had an almost miraculous merit: he transmitted to China the knowledge of the entire world.¹³ But, as Giorgio Mangani said,

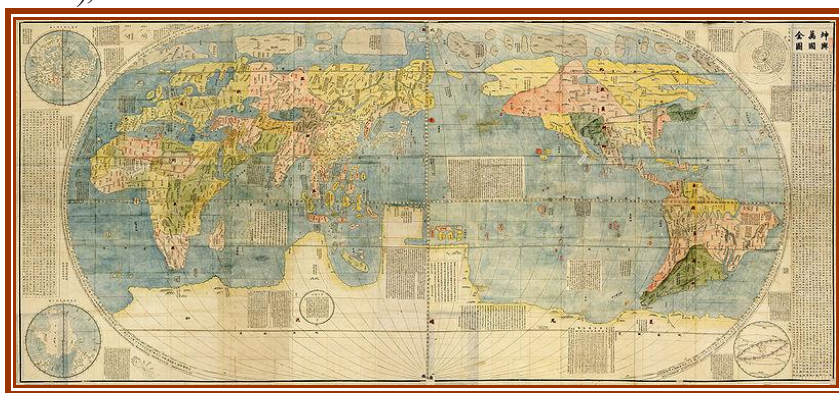
al and, as will be seen below, up through most of the nineteenth century hardly suggests a successful transmission of European cartography».

¹² Ricci wrote to convince his readers that the conversion of the entire Empire was upcoming, but historians know they have to be suspicious of autobiographical testimonies. The only source on the alleged «success» of the cartography presented Ricci is precisely the missionary himself: Ricci M., *Della entrata della Compagnia di Gesù e Christianità nella Cina* (edited 2000): about the first planisphere (eurocentred), made in 1598, pp. 373-374; about the second and the third, sinocentred, made in 1600 and 1602, pp. 551-558: «XVII - Di come il Re della Cina fece ristampare il Mappamondo che i nostri avevano fatto dentro il suo palazzo e la Cristianità di Pechino cominciò ad accenderi di nuovo fervore facendo una confraternita della Madonna» (this map measures 178 cm in high: built with six panels with base of 69 cm and a height of 178 cm: total, 416 cm to 176 (Ricci, 2000, p. 373 nota 3). Although Ricci emphasizes that the Emperor had ordered to «print» it, the Chinese made only twelve copies in the whole wide Empire, (Odifreddi, 2010, p. 30, also notes that the World Map of Ricci placed monsters and wonders as well: Blemmyae, Pygmies, Cyclops): there is no trace of an impact of those maps on the following cartographic Chinese culture. «The development of Chinese cartography during the late Ming dynasty and for the entire Qing period does not, therefore, seem particularly influenced by Jesuitic science.» (Zedda Macciò, 2003, p. 58).

¹³ Even the presumed proficiency of Matteo Ricci has been questioned: he himself confesses that he wrote in Chinese with the assistance of native collaborators, such as Xu Guangqi (Han Qi, 2015, p. 19). Spence, 1994, p. 19, wrote: «we call this the triumph of Matteo Ricci: it is also the triumph of friendship and cooperation. I wonder how we know of-ten Which scholars were helping each other.» Not to mention the role played by missionaries before Ricci, as Ruggieri, the true «first european sinologist» (Masini, 2015, p. 14).

«this interpretation is nevertheless a projection on Chinese culture and Ricci himself of a historiography of science a bit aged, which tracks the stages of evolutionary history of the discovery of the “real” world neglecting the argument, essential, that all science produces its own object rather than move closer to reality» (Mangani, 2003, p. 29)¹⁴. Ricci in China today is known primarily as a «patron»¹⁵ of the mechanical clocks (Pagani, 2004, p. 301; Caterino, 2009, p. 65; Scartezzini, 2009, p. 39).

Fig. 15 – Matteo Ricci, *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* (Map of the Whole World), 1602



Ricci pretended that all the continents drawn on the map were really solid and proven European colonies, and he did not mention that in most cases Europeans only knew the coasts while the inner mainlands were unexplored. In fact, the real colonization begins only when a mainland capital is conquered in the interior of a continent, as

¹⁴ According to Sivin (1982, p. 58), the eurocentric scholars «turn the history of world science into a *saga* of Europer success and everyone else’s failure, or at best inherently flawed and transitory success, untile the advent of redemption through modernization» (see also Santangelo, 2011, p. 8).

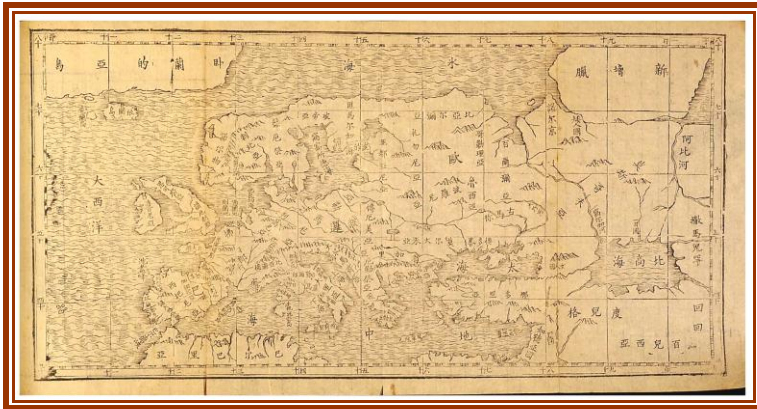
¹⁵ «Ricci even became the tutelary deity of the clocks, with whom he had caught the attention of the Chinese (including the Emperor Wanli), and for the maintenance of which had obtained access to the Forbidden City. His portrait was still exposed to the early 20th century in the workshops of the watchmakers, in an emblematic case of “*heterogony of ends*”: for a Jesuit who started to convert China, became known instead for contributing to open to the science of mechanical clocks» (Odifreddi, 2010, p. 33).

Hernan Cortes did with Montezuma in Mexico City, at the center of the Aztec Empire, or as Francisco Pizarro also did at the center of the Inca Empire, defeating Atahualpa and his generals in Cajamarca and Cuzco. But apart from these two famous examples, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the European colonies were very few, almost always concentrated on small islands or in ports close to the sea.

In 1623 another Jesuit, Giulio Aleni (Aleni, 2009; De Troia, 2011; Castelnovi, 2011), other than the maps of Matteo Ricci, added a geographic description in Chinese language.

But he again pretended that all territories of the world were firmly under the control of the colonial Catholics, when in fact at that time in Europe the Thirty Years War was raging between Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists. 1550-1660: the european «Age of Peace» (according to Aleni) or the «Iron Century» (according to a historian, Kamen, 1971).

Fig. 16 – Giulio Aleni, *Zhifang waji*, 1623: Map of Europe in chinese



Martini's innovations. – It is very important to note that Martino Martini chooses, for his books, the most important publishers in Europe. Before him, other Jesuits had drawn quick cartographic sketches translating from Chinese, or had written very short geographic descriptions, but still in manuscript form, bound to a limited handwritten circulation, if not secret (and stored in some secret archive).

Martino Martini chooses to publish his books with major publishers, for the largest distribution. For his historical books Martini chooses the major publishers in the catholic world, in the boundaries of the german Holy Roman Empire: Antwerp in Belgium, or Munich in Bavaria. But for his famous atlas, Martini chooses Joan Blaeu, a protestant, the official cartographer for the VOC – the Dutch East India Company, in Amsterdam. That was really a revolutionary choice, with great consequences for the history of Dutch colonies (and of all the European nations). In 1641 Joan Blaeu began to publish his *Atlas Maior*¹⁶. But at that time, as you can see from the picture on the title-page, Joan Blaeu still represents allegorically the four continents, and in particular Asia is represented with Turkish clothes and a turban on the head. In 1641, clearly Blaeu did not think to China as the main land on Asian territory.

However, in 1653 Martini returned to Europe. After much consideration, he proposed to Joan Blaeu to publish together his *Novus Atlas Sinensis*. This Atlas became the tenth volume of the *Atlas Maior*. The first edition was in Latin. Immediately after, translations appeared in French, German, Dutch and Spanish.

¹⁶ Blaeu's *Atlas Maior* «marked the magnificent apex of seventeenth-century Dutch cartography. It is still the largest atlas ever produced – not so much as coffee table book or even a coffee table – almost a small coffee shop. » (Short, 2004, p. 165).

Figg. 17 and 18 – *Martini, Novus Atlas Sinensis, Amsterdam, 1655: printed always by Joan Blaeu, but with two different frontispieces (latin and Dutch)*

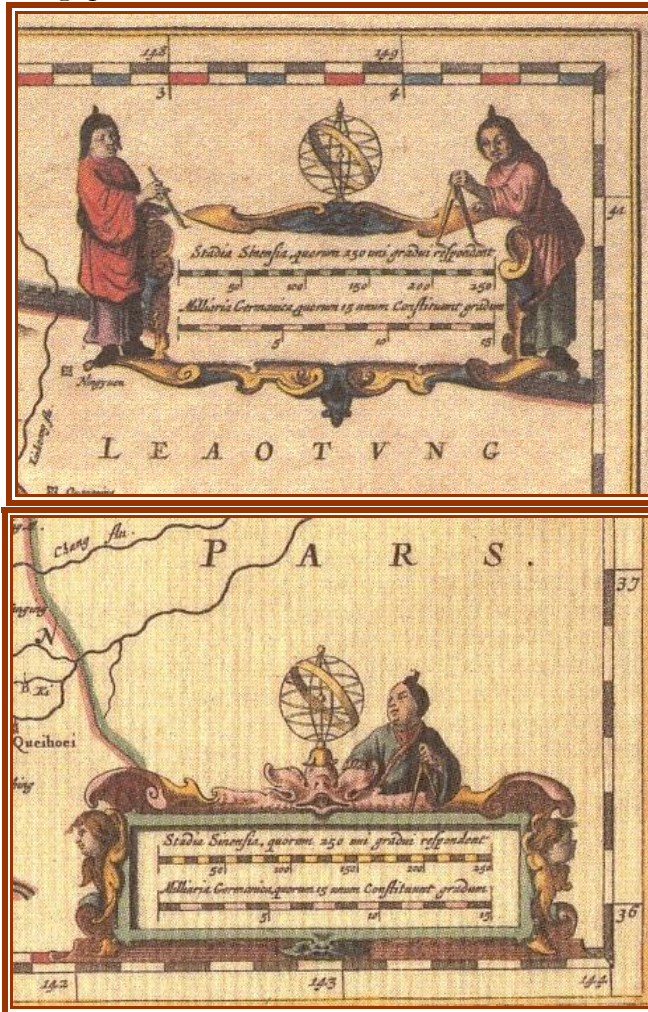


Martini offers to readers a great deal of information: 17 large maps in a squared shape, 180 pages of geographical descriptions, the exact coordinates of over 8,000 places among cities, towns, villages, settlements, fortresses, mines, temples, mountains and rivers: demography and economy: even the Great Canal. With his clear prose¹⁷, Martini accurately describes the distribution of the various ethnic minorities, obtaining data from the reports and the albums¹⁸ released by the imperial bureaucracy: breaking the myth of the historical existence of a compact and coherent China (Vogelsang, 2014). In the maps Martini showed even the Great Wall, the roads and the imperial buildings for public use: a real surprise for the European readers.

¹⁷ «Martin Martini, l'un des plus brillants de ces écrivains jésuites, et en même temps l'un des meilleurs sinologues de son temps» (Duteil 1994, p. 136).

¹⁸ Cerreti, 2001; Hostetler, 2005; Di Angelo e Giorgi, 2008.

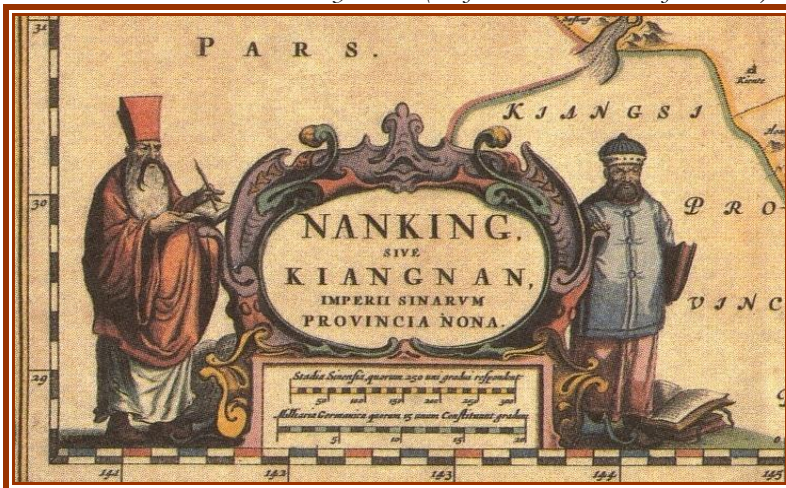
Figg. 19 and 20 – Martini, NAS, 1655. *The first Western representation of Chinese men while using cartographic tools and astronomical instruments*



But the most surprising thing was the quality of the information, because Martini did not follow the approach of Portuguese and Dutch sailors, who mapped the Chinese coasts from the sea using their own European tools. In Martini's Atlas we can see the first European representation of geographers (using cartographic tools) from a non-European race: Chinese geographers, from Far East

(muslim geographers do not count as far easterners but as westerners, because of their heritage from the tradition of greek geography). That approach was just suitable (maybe) for inhabited lands. In China, it was possible to draw upon a plethora of very specific maps made over the centuries by Chinese bureaucrats. The Martini's approach consisted of translations from Chinese books and maps. It was a very practical approach, and very useful to his readers.

Fig. 21 – *Martini, Novus Atlas Sinensis, 1655. The first representation of the primary role of books in a non-European civilization: long-bearded wise old man, and his assistant, with many books (the famous «treasure» of Martini)*



Martini is the first European cartographer able to trace with precision the boundaries of Inner China. However, in his books, he explicitly states that this is a temporary situation. Eyewitness of the sudden rise of the Qing dynasty (Scartezzini, 2011, p. 16), Martini understood that many changes would have happened in the near future. Indeed, Qianlong enlarged remarkably the borders of the empire, which reached its maximum extension. In 1662 the Qing emperor ordered also an administrative reorganization, dividing the province of Jiangsu and Anhui Jiangnan (for Martini, the «VIII Provincia») and the province of Huguang (the seventh) in Hubei and Hunan i.e. «north of the Lake» and «south of the Lake» (Lehner, 2011, p. 150).

Fig. 22 – Martini, *Imperii Sinarum Nova Descriptio*, in NAS, 1655



Unfortunately, the imitators of Martini were not equally perspicacious. Moreover, often, they had no experience of travel to the Far East equal to his. For example, Kircher in 1667 repeated exactly the same division into provinces published by Martini, without giving any news of the changes that had already been imposed by the Emperor, or of the expansion that (quite predictably) the aggressive¹⁹ Qing imperialism²⁰ would have given to the empire, unlike the

¹⁹ Karl August Wittfogel (1946, p. 112) indicated four «Dynasties of Conquest»: Liao (907-1124) founded by the Kitan, Jin (1115-1234) founded by the Jurchen, Yuan (1260-1368) founded by the Mongols and the Qing (1644-1911) founded by Manchu (see also Di Cosmo, 2009, p. 452).

²⁰ «When we hear the word “imperialism”, most of us think first of various form of Western imperialism, past and current. Yet the Qing empire (1636-1911) was one of the most successful examples of imperialism in the early modern period. The Qing dynasty was founded by Jurchen peoples from northeast Asia, later known as Manchus, who conquered China in 1644 after the collapse of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). In the following years the Qing also defeated or made alliances with neighboring powers to encompass Mongolia and Xinjiang, as well as their homeland

remissive Ming. This kind of error, of course, will be imitated by later writers, still following the martinian «canon».

As a consequence, encyclopaedic dictionaries perpetuated the scheme of the fifteen provinces of China until the closing years of the 18th century. Thus, this presentation of the administrative division of China may be labeled as an example par excellence for the perpetuation of outdated information contained in encyclopaedias. Only occasionally 18th-century European encyclopaedias mention more than fifteen provinces (Lehner, 2011, p. 150).

After Martini. – After Martini, every single traveler could draw the map of his journey on a perfect representation of the Chinese lands, as we can see in this map by Johan Nieuhof from his journey from Canton to Beijing through the Great Canal: *Reys-Kaerte Vande Ambassade Der Nederlantse Oost Indise Compagnie door China aen den Grooten Tartersen Cham* (1667). Dutch Ambassador J. Nieuhof added to the map (in the correct shape of the Empire, from Martini’s Atlas) the names of each town or city that he visited on his strategic journey.

According to some scholar, the European cartographers did not report the routes on the maps of small scale, if not very rarely, in the period from ancient times²¹ to the mid-17th century: that is, until the publication of the *NAS* of Martini. Yet Farinelli recalls that «at the beginning of the seventeenth century in his *Advancement of Learning* Bacon gets angry just with the Atlas of Ortelius, then the book of European most successful, that seems to contain only “*generalities remote and superficial*”, useless for practical life: where is on it, he asks, indicating the road that leads from London to York?» (Farinelli, 2009, p.

of Manchuria, to form a cast multicultural empire. Moreover, the Qing exercised considerable influence in Tibet, annexed Taiwan, and brought under its firm control areas of southwest China that had been only nominally part of the Ming. Thus, even after its conquest of China in 1644, the Qing continued to expand its territorial reach, successfully doubling the size of the empire between approximately 1660 and 1760. » Hostetler, 2009, p. 93.

²¹ The *Pentinger Table* does not matter, because does not report the actual path of the roads but only symbolic segments, often without any relation to the mountains to cross.

XII; see also Rossi, in press).

The first maps mainly made by Portuguese cartographers are restricted to meet the necessities of navigation. For merchants, the only important thing is being able to find the route to the port of destination, load ships with the fleet, and then find the return route to Lisbon. Nautical charts and pilot books were instrumental to the «haven-finding art». Western cartographers' maps have some characteristic elements: very precise design of the coastline, with astronomic surveys carried out by triangulation and with the compass; complete ignorance of local place names and geographical knowledge²² about the sea-coast of the Chinese empire; complete ignorance of the location of the cities in the interior of the continent, or shape of the rivers, or the location of mines and resources and so on. It was wrong even the location of the missions of the Jesuits or the Franciscans, who in many cases were just the main informants of cartographers. The location of mines, or spices, or towns in the Inner China is often fortuitous. This kind of European cartography was perfectly suited to that

²² Instead, we know that European sailors attributed much value to maps and atlases written in any sort of European language (excluding arabic or chinese): perhaps for the convenience of reading the names written using the Latin alphabet, or to the same conventions in the symbols and map projections. For example, it is known that the maps were considered a precious pirate booty: in the 1681 the buccaneer Bartolomew Sharp captured the spanish ship *Santa Rosaria* off Guayaquil, in the Eastern Pacific, and noted in his *Journal* «in this prize I took a Spanish manuscript of prodigious value. It describes all the ports, harbours, bayes, sands, rocks and rising of the land, & instructions how to work a ship into any port or harbour between the Latt. of 17 15 N and 57 S. They were going to throw it overboard but by luck I saved it. The Spanish cried, when I gott the book» (quoted by Rennie Short, 2004, p. 111). Sometimes, however, the Europeans have shown a silly exhibitionism of their map (in the style of Matteo Ricci): «in 1597 a rich Spanish galleon fetched up on Japanese shores. The Japanese wanted to keep the cargo. The pilot appealed to the *taiko* Hideyoshi, chiefest of warlords, and sought to intimidate him with the might of His Master King Philip. Taking out his globe, he showed the worldwide extent of Spanish dominions, from the Americas to the Philippines. “How as a small nation has such extensive dominions?”, asked the *taiko*. “Oh – said the incautious seaman – His Very Catholic Majesty would first send out priests to christianize the population, and these converts would then help the Spanish forces in their conquest.” With that kind of encouragement, Hideyoshi refused to return the cargo and ordered the crucifixion of twenty-six Christians, seventeen of them Japanese, the Jesuits and Franciscans from others Europe.» (Landes, 1998, p. 354).

kind of colonization, during which there was just a trading with few ports along the coasts. It was a suitable mapping for an economy of the «hit and run» imperialist capitalism, which merely survive on the earnings of the business (which are a kind of robbery). Maps were suitable for thieves or for spies.

Obviously, those maps have many similarities with the charts used in the Mediterranean during the Middle Ages, with difference between coast and interior. The coasts were represented in a very detailed manner, as many anonymous sailors corrected them continuously, monitoring faults. Indeed, it was possible to have the portraits of the vertical profile of the coasts, with the representation of the mountains visible from the sea (a peculiar Dutch tradition: applied even in Italia, see Castelnovi, 2007). Instead, the interior was schematically drawn²³, often out of scale: it was not a realistic representation, such as for the coasts, but rather allegorical or symbolic.

Often the European sailors assigned new names to the elements explored in the coasts, completely ignoring²⁴ the names assigned to places by the locals. Spanish and Portuguese have baptized many headlands, islands and rivers in the Americas, using names of saints (such as «Santo Domingo»), or the date of the unveiling («Rio de Janeiro»), or the name of some person or place in Europe («Isabella», «Nueva Granada», «Formosa») or some image that accidentally struck the imagination of the discoverer (the memorable tale of the name «Labrador»). In any case they were absolutely new, abstract names

²³ «Landkaarten, zoals die in Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis* van 1655, gaven natuurlijk niet een realistisch beeld van het landschap» (Blussé e Falkenberg, 1987, p. 61) (terrestrial Maps, such as those in Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis* in 1655, obviously did not give a realistic image of the landscape.)

²⁴ Such an approach might seem legitimate among American savages (considered devoid of civilization) but certainly not on the coasts of the oldest and richest Empire in the whole World. «There is a timeline printed in the Montreal Official Tourist Guide (2006); it begins with an entry beside the date 1535, “Jacques Cartier, who discovered Canada, returns upriver to the island that will later bear the name Montreal. - It goes on - Impressed with the mountain, he climbs it and calls it Mont Royal.” It is a story that explains and signify a city's birth in history. A similar tale is told for many cities and places around what they called the New World: heroic exploration by a founding father (or fathers) follows by an act of naming that marks a beginning in time and an origin in space. It is the dominant creation myth forged by Europeans for their New World» (Short, 2009, p. 9).

alien to the local culture. This is perhaps permissible when browsing semidisabitate or desert areas, such as Greenland, but it is inconceivable during the mapmaking of the Chinese coasts, which is, still nowadays the most densely populated territory in the World.

A need to control: the relations between the VOC and Martini, trust and business risk. – Many clues lead us to believe that Martini was not «kidnapped» or «taken prisoner» by Dutch Protestants, but rather that he had agreed to a favorable treatment in exchange to important geopolitical information (Castelnovi, 2012, page, and Castelnovi, in press). Certainly, in his famous book printed in the catholic Antwerp in 1654 (*De Bello Tartarico Historia*) Martini claimed to have been taken «prisoner»: «*captus*». But he did not provide any explanation on the fact that they hosted and carried him free of charge, without stealing his precious books, indeed, allowing him to consult them with tranquillity²⁵, and to integrate them with Japanese²⁶ archipelago's Dutch maps.

Those who study the 17th century know that in that period triumphs «*la dissimulatione onesta*»²⁷: Machiavelli had already written a long time before that «the end justifies the means», Guicciardini had already described as hypocrisy the main virtue of the good diplomat, and Baltasar Gracià – also being a Jesuit – had theorized the importance of the utmost refinement lies in social relations.

According to David Landes, the Dutch also present in Asian seas were masters of deception and hypocrisy, able to compete in cunning with Arab and Chinese: «from this experience of combat and commerce, the Dutch drew certain lessons: no one could be trusted, not even one's fellow Christians (they had good reason to know); and Asians in general and Muslims in particular were considered lying,

²⁵ On a Portuguese ship, was not possible for a priest, like Martini, to have silence and tranquility, also due to all the tasks usually assigned to the fathers Jesuits by a catholic crew: to say Holy Masses, hear confessions, organize theatrical performances with religious themes, preaching in the recurrence day of each saint, and so on (a list for Martini, *Opera Omnia*, I, 1998, p. 117-120).

²⁶ Many scholars claim that Martini retrieved all his data from Chinese sources, but the text of the NAS for Japan speaks explicitly of sources from VOC, and many place names on the map are in Dutch: De Peuter, 2011; Castelnovi, 2012.

²⁷ The Italian phrase is taken from the title of a Neapolitan thinker, Torquato Accetto (Napoli, 1641).

thieving scoundrels»²⁸.

Even the accommodating approach of the Jesuits in China was part of this baroque style (and accusations against the Jesuits moved by the Franciscans and the Dominicans focused on the hypocrisy and the lie). Of course I do not say that Martini read the books of Accetto or Gracià²⁹; but we should not be surprised if he had «taken advantage» of the freedom offered to him with this Dutch «captivity», to freely write his books. He could be described as an «opportunist» behavior³⁰. In fact, a very common complaint among the missionaries (not only the Jesuits) was that the information that they sent were subject to heavy censorship or were left as completely unpublished manuscripts (if not destroyed³¹).

²⁸ «The VOC recruited to its lower ranks the dregs of Dutch and German society; at the higher levels, the company got the greediest of the greedy. Batavia had a murderous reputation, and no one with a modicum of survivor instinct cared to stay long in these pestilential lands whence few returned. These men had to get rich fast. How to tame this understandable voracity? The company thought to inculcate habits of modesty by the exercise of parsimony. It paid niggardly wages. This, needless to say, proved a bad tactic. Greed elicits greed, and the meanness of the company's directors brought out the worst in its representatives. In the end, these were far more concerned with their own enrichment than with serving their masters back in Amsterdam. A good lawyer would say in their defense that they had no choice. They had to find ways to make money; they had to steal if necessary. And so they did.» (Landes, 1998, p. 145).

²⁹ The most important books of the spanish Jesuit, as *Arte de ingenio, tratado de la agudeza*, Madrid, Sanchez, 1642, e *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, Huesca, Noguez, 1647, were printed while Martini was halfway around the world in Manchu war.

³⁰ «Martini's rationalization of the Manchu conquest of China is an opportunistic fact, to put in a good light at the Europeans the "Tartars" with whom the Jesuits had good relations: do not forget that the main mission of Martini was the defense on the Question of Rites, the that would justify its interpretation of the Qing victory as divine punishment (almost a Crusade) against Ming, guilty of obstructing Christianity.» (Di Cosmo, 2009, p. 474). «*Ut Divinam Providentiam admiremur, quae tunc acre bellum Sinis movit, quando Christianam pacem neglebant, et eo anno fecit ut Tartari radices illas in Sinico imperio sigerent, ex quibus tantum postea creverunt, ut Taimingam [Da Ming] familiam extirparent, ac Sinicum fere totum occuparent imperium, quando aliqui inter Sinas Christianam rem radicitus extirpare cogitabant*» (Martini, DBTH, 2654, p. 30).

³¹ In 1664 the austrian missionary Grueber came back from Tibet and gave his precious handmade drawings to Athanasius Kircher in Rome. In a letter from Danzig, a hopeful Johanes Grueber wrote: «as regards the geography, although I have made a good manu notes I cannot tell you anything at present, having left everything with father Kiercher at Roma, who is engaged in publishing it... All will

The Portuguese had propagandized another kind of monopoly, an exclusive trade, which they said it had been assigned to them by the emperor of China himself to prevent access to other Europeans. Martini spoke explicitly on this issue. For example in the chapter in which he describes – apart from Macau – the cantonese port of Guangzhou he clearly says that the city hosts all kinds of goods all over the world. Martini noted that «it is granted only to the Portuguese to come twice a year», but also records that the port will also «meet merchants Siamese, Cambodians, and coming from neighboring regions» (Martini, *NAS*, 1655, p. 134, translation 2002, p. 734). Nevertheless, in a letter³² sent April 2, 1655 to the Congregation *Propaganda Fide*, in which he stated that it was appropriate to seek an «overland route» to free themselves from the Portuguese maritime monopoly: raising, perhaps in an instrumental way, the argument that Protestants were raging pirates in those seas, almost as if they had absolute control over Indonesian Straits. Martini, in words, pretended to fear Protestants, but in fact did not hesitate to choose them for his return to China from Rome first travelling on a Dutch ship, and after on an English vessel.

Immediately after Martini's permanence³³ at the VOC (first in Batavia and on the ship, and finally in Amsterdam) and then at the court of the Habsburgs in Austria, there were two important expeditions just outside the Portuguese *Patronal*. An overland expedition: from the

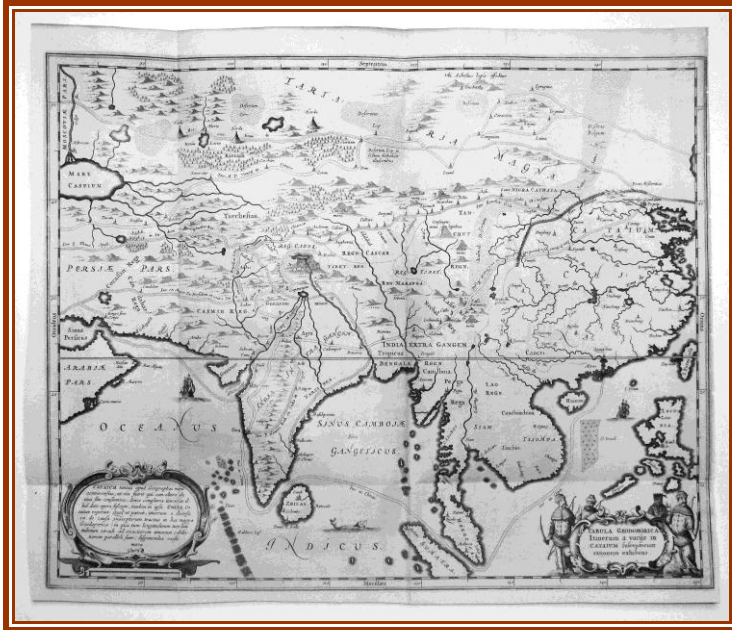
be printed at Vienna by order of his Imperial Majesty and will soon see the light» (quoted by Wessels, 1924, p. 164). But, after a quick selection from the famous polygraph, «unfortunately the vast majority of Grueber's sketches were lost» (Strasser, 2012, p. 201). Another example of the Kircher's *modus operandi*: in 1637 he speculated about a pair of Nestorian stele, in 1655 Martini followed the Kircher's suggestion, and in 1667 Kircher published them as a proof of the Martini's words (Bertuccioli, in Martini *Opera Omnia*, 3, 2002, p. 425 n. 14).

³² Martini, *Opera Omnia*, volume I, pp. 285-295.

³³ Martini did not fear the Dutch as competitors in the conversion: in fact, in a letter written in Rome on 8 October 1654, and directed to the Jesuit theologian Lorenz Forer (a fierce opponent of Protestantism in Germany, academic in Regensburg), Martini pointed out that the Dutch missionaries, Calvinists, went to the Indies only to care for their fellow citizens, completely ignoring any attempt to convert the indigenous natives: «*audivi ab ipsis se "tantum missos ad oves quae perierant domus Israel", hoc est pro Hollandorum bonum, et non ad Indorum conversionem, unde, non modo non excurrunt ad eos qui non sunt sub eorum potestate, sed nec diligentiam adhibent ibi ubi vim habent coactivam, puto quia olim tentaverunt et se nihil efficere posse cognoverunt.*» (Martini, *Opera Omnia*, 1, p. 269).

mountains of Austria to the mountains of Tibet. And an expedition by sea from the port of Amsterdam to the port of Canton to achieve, through the Grand Canal, the capital Beijing. Meanwhile, various factions within the Church fed suspicions. Franciscans and Dominicans (often Portuguese) accused the Jesuits of providing false information: the number of Chinese converts, on the existence of Nestorian communities, on imperial benevolence, and even on the maps. Therefore, the information offered by Martini had to be subjected to a verification procedure.

Fig. 23 – *Athanasius Kircher, Tabula geodoborica [sic] itinerum a varijs in Cataium susceptorum rationem exhibens, in China Illustrata, 1667*



I will not analyze in depth the story of the Austrian expedition: it was almost a failure, even though it was followed one of two routes suggested by Martini³⁴ in its letter (*Opera Omnia*, p. 285).

³⁴ In its letter of April 2, 1655 at *Propaganda Fide* (*Opera Omnia*, I, p. 287), Martini noted two possible land routes, both starting from the Persian city of Isfahan: the first, crossing the Uzbek territory to Samarkand, pointed straight at the Great Wall

The Jesuit General decided to send an exploratory party overland from Rome to Beijing to ascertain whether a land route might be a viable alternative. The newly published atlas *Novus Atlas Sinensis* by Martino Martini greatly facilitated such plans. Thus in early 1656 the Jesuit General sent detailed instructions for an overland journey to two young Austrian Jesuits, Bernhard Diestel (1623-1660) and Johannes Grueber (1623-1680)³⁵. They were to take the northerly route, the old Silk Road, and had to document their itinerary so that mission stations could subsequently be established (Strasser, 2012, p. 199).³⁶

The two missionaries tried to reach the christian communities of northwestern China, near to the Nestorian Stele³⁷ described by Martini in the Shaanxi Province (Martini, 1655, p. 45; 2002, p. 401).

Nevertheless, the terrestrial Silk Road was so long and so difficult

in the city of Suzhou (now Jiuquan where he died from Bento Gois) in Gansu Province, and Ganzhou (now Zhangye). The second route, involving Tibet and India of the Mughals. Grueber and Dorville were detained from unexpected wars in Persia: Grueber only passed through the second route on his way back to Europe.

³⁵ An account of those efforts in the Ogilby's edition of Nieuhof's book, from the Kircher's ummary: Section II. Another voyage from China to the Mogor, performed by the Fathers of our society, Father Albert Dorville, and Father John Gruberus, pp. 354-355; Chap. III. Of the various habits, manners, and customs of the men of those kingdoms, which were observ'd and drawn by the aforesaid Fathers, Albert Dorville, and Gruberus, as they pass'd through them., pp. 356-363; Chap. IV. Of the voyage attempted by Father Amatus Chesaud, a French-man, superior of the residency of Isphahan, for the discovery of an easie and ready passage into China, extracted out of his letter written in the Persian language, and directed unto Father Athanasius Kircher., pp. 363-364. See also Duteil, 1994, p. 68-70, with a list of 24 attempts (of which only 11 completed) to reach China with a terrestrial journey, from 1602 to 1703.

³⁶ Strasser argues that the initiative was undertaken because the navigation to China had become too dangerous for catholic missionaries on Portuguese vessels, because of the growing aggressiveness of Protestant (Dutch and English) warships and privateers.

³⁷ The *Nestorian Stele*, made in the 8th Century, was discovered by the jesuit Alvaro de Semedo in 1625. About the real existence of this monument, Martini in good faith quoted a twenty years earlier book by Kircher, *Prodromus Coptus*: instead Kircher quoted Martini as if it had been an «eye-witness»; while, as we know, Martini had never been there: «even more circularity, in the same chapter Kircher cites the authority of Martini's *Novus Atlas Sinensis*, even though that account had been largely taken from Kircher's own *Prodromus coptus* of twenty years earlier!» (Keevak, 2008, p. 47).

even for the wars between the local nations (while the Polo's family traveled in the age of *pax mongolica*). A border war between Persian Empire and Afghan tribes prevented them from pursuing their over-land search; they were forced to travel on the well-known caravan route to Hormuz (the famous Persian port, open to international commerce) and from there they took boats to the Portuguese Macao.

After three years they finally reached Beijing in August of 1659, where Grueber began his work as a mathematician for the imperial court while Diestel soon died from exhaustion. Thanks to the intercession of Adam Schall, Grueber and a new travelling companion received imperial letters of protection that were to facilitate their return to India via Tibet and Nepal. And indeed Grueber and the Belgian Albert d'Orville (1621-1661) reached Lhasa after a six-month trek on 10 October 1661. Emperor Shun Chih's protection enabled them to remain in the Tibetan capital for one month and observe life and customs there (Strasser, 2012, p. 199).³⁸

The VOC Embassy to Beijing: Johan Nieuhof. – Fortunately, we have a book that describes the journey of the ambassador Nieuhof, even with a good map showing the exact route taken from Guangzhou to Beijing.

Johan Nieuhof had died during another voyage of exploration in South America, and the author of the publication, printed in 1665, was his brother, Hendrick Nieuhof³⁹.

³⁸ «They are the only Europeans of modern times who have traversed this route» (Wessels, 1924, p. 164).

³⁹ The Nieuhof's book was quickly translated and printed into many editions. Dutch: Amsterdam, 1665, 1669, 1670, 1680, 1693, and Antwerp, 1666 (an expurgated Roman Catholic edition); German: Amsterdam, 1666, 1669 and 1675; English: London, 1669 and 1673; French: Leiden, 1665; Latin: Amsterdam, 1668. For the bibliography of these editions, see Tiele, 1884, pp. 179–80. A French translation by Jean le Carpentier, under the title *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers L'Empereur de la Chine*, was printed in Leiden the same year as the first Dutch edition. In 1666, van Meurs brought out a German translation, while another Dutch version with considerable deletions and additions was printed in Antwerp. A Latin translation under the title *Legatio Batavica ad magnum Tartaræ Cham* followed in 1668, and the first English translation was edited by John Ogilby in 1669.

As the title indicates, this book offers an overview of the Dutch embassy's visit in China and an accurate description of China. The greatest selling-point of this book conveyed by the title is the more than 150 finely engraved illustrations depicting a comprehensive range of aspects of China, including cityscapes and architecture; people and their costumes; customs; flora and fauna, and so forth (Sun, 2013, p. 5)⁴⁰.

Fig. 24 – *Johan Nieuhof, Dutch patrician (1618-1682)*



Johan Nieuhof was a Dutch patrician, who had worked as diplomat and ambassador in South America on behalf of the East India

⁴⁰ «Jacob van Meurs had obtained the privilege granted by the States of Holland for fifteen years to publish this book, not only in Dutch, but also in French and Latin editions. He also published many other travel accounts about China, including Athanasius Kircher's *China Illustrata* (1667), Olfert Dapper's *Gedenkwaardig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye op de kuste en in het Keizerryk van Taising of Sina* in 1670. The same publisher of the three significant books on China in the seventeenth century, to a large extent, explains their close connection. Moreover, in 1682, his workshop also published Nieuhof's books on East India and Brazil».

Company: a multinational corporation before its time, formed by a federation of companies with headquarters in each of the major cities of the United Provinces. Obviously, the largest company was in Amsterdam, but they recognized equal dignity even at the other companies, like the one that was based in Delft (immortalized by the famous landscape painted by Jan Vermeer in 1660: see Brook, 2008, p. 18).

The «*XVII Herrem*», or the Gentlemen-managers of the Dutch East India Company, in fact, did not totally trust Martini, because he was an Italian, a Catholic and a Jesuit priest. Therefore, the VOC asked Nieuhof to check the coordinates and size of each town. His embassy was conducted for the Company (not for the Republic), as we can read in each page of his book. This does not seem strange to Chinese officials: in fact, they had no respect for the so-called kings and emperors of the «barbarians came from the south» (*Nambam*), provided they presented them as supplicants under the Imperial Chinese tributary system.⁴¹

Fig. 25 – *Johan Nieuhof, Reys-Kaerte Vande Ambassade Der Nederlantse Oost Indise Compagnie door China, 1665*



⁴¹ Instead, the behavior of English ambassador McCartney, which refuses to bow down in deference to his king George III seemed arrogant to Chinese Court.

After a brief discussion of the geographic knowledge among the ancients, Nieuhof indicates «the Jesuit Martinii Martinus, Man of great Learning and Skills in the Antiquities of China» (Nieuhof, 1667, p. 5), as the main modern *Auctoritas*, about the *vexata quaestio* of China's name in several languages. Nieuhof referred the Martini's identification with the legendary polian «Cathay», whose memory was so strong among the Dutch merchants.

The VOC sent Nieuhof to the head of an embassy in Beijing. He traveled with Martini's books in hand: we know for sure, because Nieuhof repeatedly quoted several books in his text.

Nieuhof's book begins with a general description of the land, its location, and the names by which it is called. The problem of the identification of China with Cathay is carefully explored, with quotations taken from every author who had ever dealt with the problem. Following this comes a description of the individual provinces, again condensed from Martini's *Atlas*. The Manchu conquest, almost exactly as described in Martini's *De Bello Tartarico*, is included in the section on Chih-li province. Next comes a long section on Chinese religion and philosophy, most of which was taken from Trigault, Semedo and Martini. A formidable amount of history is also included in this section, based almost exclusively on Martini's *Sinicae Historiae*. The remainder of the volume includes relatively short chapters, which describe in turn the rivers, lakes, streams, mountains, trees, flowers, beasts, birds, and fishes of the Empire. Most of this material comes from the provincial descriptions in Martini's *Atlas*, but the chapters on fauna and flora were extensively augmented by material from Willem Piso and the Polish Jesuit Boym. The volume ends with a chapter in Chinese language and writing, compiled from the standard Jesuit accounts (Lach, 1970, p. 491).

There have been several critics who have questioned the excess of «marvelous» in Nieuhof's book (Sun, 2013). Even in his map, we find the design of impossible elephants in a northern latitude. This type of error, however, is not attributable to Martini nor to the mechanism of falsification. The Dutch historian, Leonard Blussé, suggested that the errors were due to the brother of Nieuhof, editor of the practical

aspects of the book.

Contrariwise, these errors, indeed, indicate that the map of Nieuhof is accurate only along the road, but it is imprecise in all other areas. In detail: unlikely elephants in the province of Shanxi (northern and mountainous) where Nieuhof had never been. Less serious error of «camels» with just one hump in the coastal province of Shandong, far away from the caravans of the Silk Road; or «horses» in the province of Fujien.

Figg. 26 and 27 – *Elephants in Shanxi, Camels in Shandong, and Horses in Fujien, according to Nieuhof's Map, 1665*

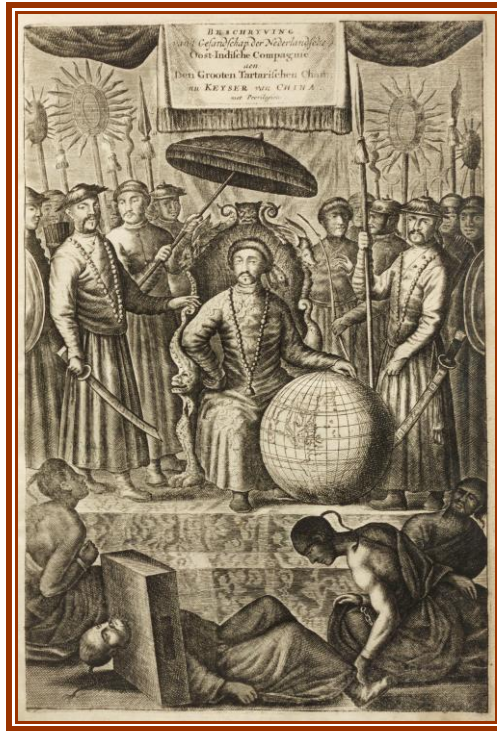


The VOC had developed long ago a real system to gather geographical information from its employees. In 1610, the instructions were contemplating a series of obligations.

The rutter, already begun by him, with all places, regions, islands, and harbors relevant for the Asian navigation, will be produced and improved; all logbooks that he already received and which he will receive from now on through the directors, will have to be stored in the East India House [in Amsterdam]; he will keep a complete catalog of the logbooks, which has to be updated every six months; he will correct the standard charts only after the directors have approved the corrections; on his death his widow or heirs will hand over all the papers in his possession; the directors are allowed to inspect his belongings and request anything they find relevant, without hindrance; all charts for the VOC shall be made at his order by trustworthy persons, as much as possible in his house; no charts should be sent or made outside the city; he will report every six months on the progress of his work; he will publish nothing without the permission of the directors; he should observe secrecy about his work; he will receive a yearly salary of 300 guilders in addition to the payments for the charts themselves⁴².

⁴² VOC's Instructions, 1610 circa, as quoted by Zandvliet, 2007, p. 1438; see also Zandvliet, 1998, p. 88. A feature (and defect) of these instructions to the Dutch agents and pilots of VOC, is that it excludes any contribution from the natives.

Fig. 28 – Frontispiece from the first Dutch edition of Nieuhof's book, 1665



Ten years later, in 1665, the brother of Johan Nieuhof, Hendrick, published the book. In the same year, Jean le Carpentier translated the book into French. That confirms that the French were very interested in China (in 1656 they had also translated the Martini's Atlas). At the beginning of the 18th century, the French will be the first to draw a large map of China.

In 1668 a professor at Leyden University, Georg Horn, translated the first edition from Dutch into Latin.

Figg. 29 and 30 – Frontispiece from the first french translation (1665, by Jean le Carpentier) and Latin translation (1668, by Dutch Georg Horn)



The publication of the manuscript on the war between the Ming and the Manchu, written by the bishop Juan Palafox y Mendoza (died in 1659), confirmed the French interest in everything concerning China. It was translated into French in 1670 and in English in 1671.

The Nieuhof's book was translated into German in 1666; in 1669 famous cartographer John Ogilby also translated it into English.

Those quick editions and translations confirm that Europeans were very interested in China: especially the Protestants, after the end of the Portuguese monopoly on the news. However, it was never translated into Spanish, nor Portuguese. Evidently, for the knowledge of Inner China, the two great Catholic powers preferred to rely solely on reports by missionaries and merchants settled in Macau.

Fig. 31 – *Frontispiece from the first English translation (Ogilby, 1669)*

Other cartographers continue this capillary action of control and massive verification. In 1737, finally, the official royal cartographer Jean Baptiste D’Anville printed a magnificent general map of China and Asia, confirming or updating the data provided by Martini, and verified by Nieuhof.

We all know that the geographical knowledge is always used to prepare the wars: already only a hundred years after these maps, the British (and then, all Westerners Empires) will attack the Chinese Empire, with the *Opium Wars* (1839-1842; and 1856-1860): so named because the Westerners wanted to be allowed to sell drugs in Chinese ports.

The victory depended on the geographic knowledge, provided by perfect and reliable maps from Martini and Nieuhof. D’Anville had also created a map for each Province of the Qing Empire.

We can therefore say that, after sixty years, the Martini’s maps had been «overcome» and made obsolete by the advancement of the geographic knowledge. That’s the main difference between the *Book of*

*Marvels of Marco Polo and the Novus Atlas Sinensis of Martini*⁴³.

Fig. 32 – J. B. D'Anville, *La Chine, la Tartarie et le Thibet*, Paris, 1737



The *Book of Marvels* is, even now, a wonderful text for the imagination, a literary work of the first level, for his power of persuasion and his style, engaging and charming. Nevertheless, it is useless to build additional knowledge or to draw a map.

Instead, the *Novus Atlas Sinensis* permits to verify every single step. Each information is accurate and precise but, most of all, is available to falsification and for any update.

By its nature, like any scientific information, it must be «outdated» by the advances of knowledge. Martini was, in fact, aware of being *a dwarf on the shoulders of giants*, and that other scholars would go up on his shoulders to look over (as said from medieval theologians, such as Bernard of Clairvaux).

Today, the *Novus Atlas Sinensis* can be used only as a historical document (a role of great importance to scholars or diplomats en-

⁴³ See also Castelnovi, in press.

gaged in geopolitics, but that does not serve the common readers) because its function has been fully paid.

Martini had the merit of showing the geography of China in a concrete way, without giving too much to the imagination: his approach can be very useful, even today, to look to real China avoiding distractions, dreams, nightmares, rhetoric and ideologies.

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Falsification in Geography: from Polo to Nieuhof. – All true scientific progress needs controls. Verification and falsification are the guarantee of the reliability of information. For centuries, Europeans have been content to vague and unreliable descriptions of Far Asia. The classic example is of Marco Polo's *Book of Wonders*; but many descriptions of Inner China from the 16th century are similar: only the sea-coast were verified (since the medieval portolan charts and pilot books). The first author was really reliable for the inner land was Martino Martini, in the mid-17th century; his detailed data and coordinates were immediately checked and confirmed by others (before D'Anville in 1737), such as Diestel, Grueber, and especially the Dutch patrician Johan Nieuhof.

Keywords. – western cartography of China, history of cartography, falsification (Marco Polo, Matteo Ricci, Martino Martini, Johan Nieuhof)

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