

MAPPING THE WORLD

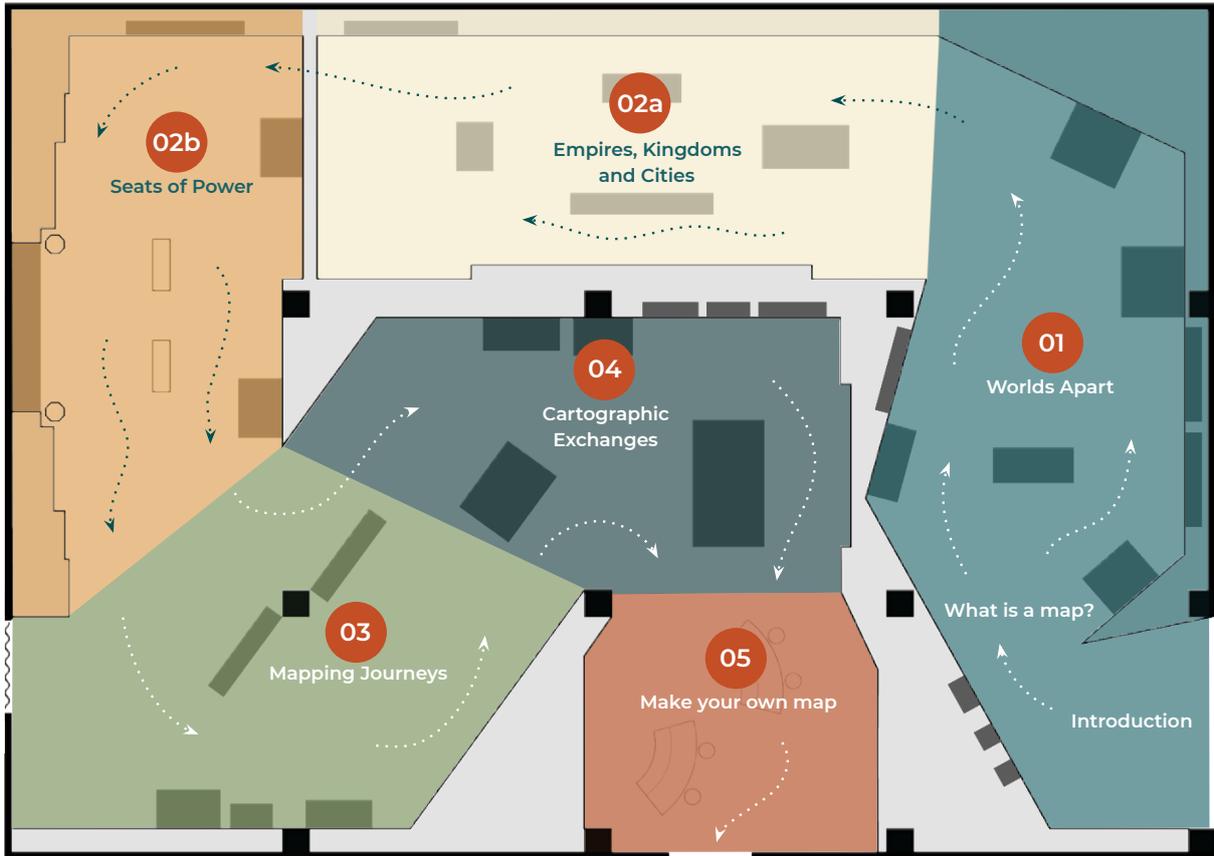
Perspectives from Asian Cartography



Exhibition Guide



EXHIBITION LAYOUT PLAN



WHAT IS A MAP?

Until recently, cartographic narratives were often focused on a Western-centric history. While European maps derived authority based on claims to scientific rationalism and objectivity, in Asia, cartographic practices that represented different conceptions of geographical reality had long flourished for two millennia. From the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean, diverse visions of the world were manifested on maps. Maps can be found on woodblock-printed scrolls, cloth paintings, ceramic ware, and other mediums, all of which serve to facilitate and further understandings of Asia and the world.

This exhibition presents fascinating but lesser-known stories of Asian mapping histories through a showcase of rare maps from the 15th to early 20th centuries. It explores the complex cultural, political and religious histories, as well as their implications on power and control, that have shaped this rich cartographic heritage.



PLATE WITH MAP OF JAPAN

Japan, Edo Period, 1830–1843

Blue-and-white Arita ware

On loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

Blue-and-white map plates were exclusively made in the Arita kilns in Kyushu, Japan from the 1820s to 1840s. These feature designs that reflected current topics and native decorative styles instead of the earlier Chinese motifs. In this example, Japan, comprising mainly the islands Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, is located in the centre and surrounded by six land areas along the edges. They include imaginary places such as Land of Dwarfs and Land of Women as well as real territories – Hokkaido and Ryuku. Such maps affirmed Japan's national identity at a time of foreign pressures to open up for trade.



FAN WITH MAP OF CHINA AND MAP OF BEIJING

China, Qing dynasty, 19th century

Woodblock-printed, hand-coloured on paper

On loan from Private Collection, France

This fan features one map on each of its front and back leaves. On the front is the “All-Under-Heaven Complete Map of the Unified Qing Empire” (大清一统天下全图, *Daqing yitong tianxia quantu*). This map depicts the expansive territory of the Qing dynasty, which had reached its greatest geographical extent during Qianlong's reign. The back features a map of Beijing or “Map of Nine Inner City and Seven Outer City Gates and Thoroughfares” (内九门外七门三街六市街道全图, *Neijiumen waiqimen sanjieliushi jiedao quantu*). It depicts the city wall gates, landmarks, major streets and alleyways (*hutongs*) of both the Inner City and Outer City.

WORLDS APART

The cartographic traditions in Asia are as diverse as the cultures that originated from this vast continent. Different configurations of the world map emerge from each culture, shaped by its belief systems, geopolitical circumstances and intellectual heritage. The foundations of maps made in the Islamic world can be traced to Persian, Greek, and Indian traditions. In comparison, maps in India, with its schematic representations of the human world, are based on the cosmologies of the Indic religions: Jainism, Hinduism and Buddhism. All three underscore the central place of Mount Meru, around which *Jambu-dvipa*, or the human realm, is situated.

In East Asia, Japanese cartography was influenced by the transmission of these religions abroad, specifically, in the representations of *Jambu-dvipa* based on Buddhist cosmology. Meanwhile, the Korean *Cheonhado* or “Map of the World” hails from a different tradition that reflects a Sinocentric worldview.

Traditional Asian maps offer different ways of visualising the self, the known world, and lands beyond. The way different civilisations saw the world can be said to be worlds apart.

MAP OF ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE JAMBU-DVIPA (*NANSENBUSHU BANKOKU SHOKA NO ZU*)

Hotan (1654–1738, compiler), Bundaiken Uhei (publisher)

Japan, Edo period, 1710

Folded map, woodblock print, ink on paper

On loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

The scholar priest, Hotan, sought to condense the entire known world, with its multitude of countries, into a map that “can be held in one’s hands”, which is reflected in its title *Nansenbushu Bankoku Shoka no zu* (南瞻部洲万国掌菓之图).

According to Buddhist cosmology, four continents surround Mount Meru and the continent south of the mythical mountain is *Jambu-dvipa*, where humans inhabit. In this map, *Jambu-dvipa* is represented, comprising lands recorded in classical Buddhist scripture, and taking on a familiar shape with a wide top and narrow bottom. The map further reflects Western geographical knowledge by including places such as Europe, Africa and the Americas, likely due to the influence of maps by Jesuit cartographer Matteo Ricci. It represents an attempt to reaffirm the long-established Buddhist worldview while reconciling it with new knowledge of Western cartography.



WORLD MAP OF IDRISI FROM 1154 (WELTKARTE DES IDRISI VOM JAHR 1154 N. CH., CHARTA ROGERIANA)

Facsimile copy by Konrad Miller Stuttgart, 1928
On loan from Bibliothèque nationale de France

The Arab geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi (1100–1165) completed his work of geography, *Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq* (“The Book of Pleasant Journeys into Faraway Lands”) in 1154. The maps in this work originally existed as 70 rectangular sections, and were assembled to form a singular world map, as shown in this facsimile by cartographic historian Konrad Miller in 1928. Al-Idrisi’s maps, encompassing regions in Europe, North Africa and Asia, were highly realistic and uncommon for their time. Nevertheless, following Islamic cartographic traditions, the composite map is oriented with south at the top.

The text and its enclosed maps are also known as the *Book of Roger* and *Charta Rogeriana* respectively, as they were commissioned by King Roger II of Sicily. They represent an intersection between geographic knowledge of the Islamic world with that of the Europeans in the 12th century. Al-Idrisi had access to the first-hand accounts of European scholars and travellers, summoned to the King’s court at Palermo for consultation on this project. Thus, this map presents Europe, the Mediterranean, North Africa and Western Asia more accurately than the other parts of Africa and Asia, for which al-Idrisi consulted an Arabic translation of Ptolemy’s *Geography*.





MAP OF THE WORLD FROM *KITAB SURAT AL-ARD*

Muhammad ibn Ali al-Nasibi Abu al-Qasim Ibn Hawqal (d. 977)
15th century
Manuscript
On loan from Bibliothèque nationale de France

Kitab surat al-ard (“Book of the Configuration of the Land”) was first written in the 10th century by Arab traveller and geographer Ibn Hawqal. His work is a continuation of his contemporary al-Istakhri’s *Al-Masalik wa-al-mamalik*, that Ibn Hawqal revised and supplemented with knowledge acquired from travellers and merchants during his travels.

This world map depicts the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, with the Islamic world in the centre. Oriented with south at the top, the map follows Islamic cartographic conventions and at the same time suggests influences of the Ptolemaic tradition. Its oval shape may have been based on Ptolemy’s second projection, while the depiction of the Nile also reflects the Greek geographer’s influence. Some details in Ibn Hawqal’s work are not found in previous Arabic works, which suggests an awareness of European sources of geographical knowledge.



MAP OF ALL UNDER HEAVEN (*CHEONHADO*)

From *Haejwado*, (“Left of the Sea Map”), Korea, Joseon dynasty,
19th century.
Woodblock print on paper, hand-coloured
On loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

These two world maps are found in Korean atlases generally known as *yeojido*, a title borrowed from the Chinese mapping tradition of *yudi tu* (輿地圖, “Map of Territories”). A *Cheonhado* portrays the world with two continents, an inner and an outer, separated by an ocean. The inner continent represents the known world with China in the centre and Joseon (Korea) next to it. Countries under Chinese influence – Japan, Ryukyu, Annam and Siam – are included.

These maps were published in the late Joseon period from the 18th to 19th centuries, when Asian cartographers were challenged by Western concepts of the world. Following over 200 years of isolation of Korea, *Cheonhado* harked back to the old traditions of a familiar Sinocentric world, surrounded by the realm of the unknown. Such depictions made the larger world less complex and threatening.

EMPIRES, KINGDOMS AND CITIES

Until the 20th century, maps and mapping practices anticipated the expansion of empire. Emperors and kings commissioned extensive land surveys and cartographic projects to establish their power and articulate claims of legitimate rule over their territories. Maps were instruments of political power and government. State cartographers produced a wide array of works, including depictions of a unified realm, administrative maps, as well as plans of capital cities and royal palaces at the heart of political power.

By the 19th century, maps had become essential tools for another form of power: colonial conquest. In their sweep across Asia, European imperial powers amassed local plans of fortresses, cities and frontier zones to gather knowledge of local terrain and peoples. Colonial maps, subsequently produced in situ by indigenous mapmakers, allowed colonisers such as the French in Indochina to administer their new colonial possessions more effectively.



FRENCH COLONISATION OF VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA

Map of Khsach-Kandal

Cambodia, French Indochina, 1880s

Ink and colour on paper

On Loan from Bibliothèque de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient (Paris)

The French conquest of Indochina began in the mid-19th century. From 1858 to 1897, Cambodia, Laos, as well as Vietnam, consisting of the provinces of Cochinchina, Annam and Tonkin, gradually fell under French control. French Indochina – the collective name for these French colonial territories in Southeast Asia – was thus born.

These maps hail from a collection of vernacular maps produced by Cambodian elites at the behest of French colonial authorities. They are produced in the Indian and Burmese cartographic traditions, with inspiration from Chinese and Vietnamese models, on paper supplied by the French military.

The maps, which depict the lives of local populations, were recently unearthed from the archives of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO, or French School of Asian Studies). Headquartered in Hanoi, the EFEO was first founded as the Indochina Archaeological Mission in 1898 before taking on its current name in 1900.

There are six EFEO maps in the exhibition. Three are displayed at each time, with a rotation midway through the exhibition.

COMPLETE GEOGRAPHICAL MAP OF THE EVERLASTING UNIFIED QING EMPIRE (DAQING WANNIAN YITONG DILI QUANTU)

Huang Qianren (黄千人, 1694–1771)

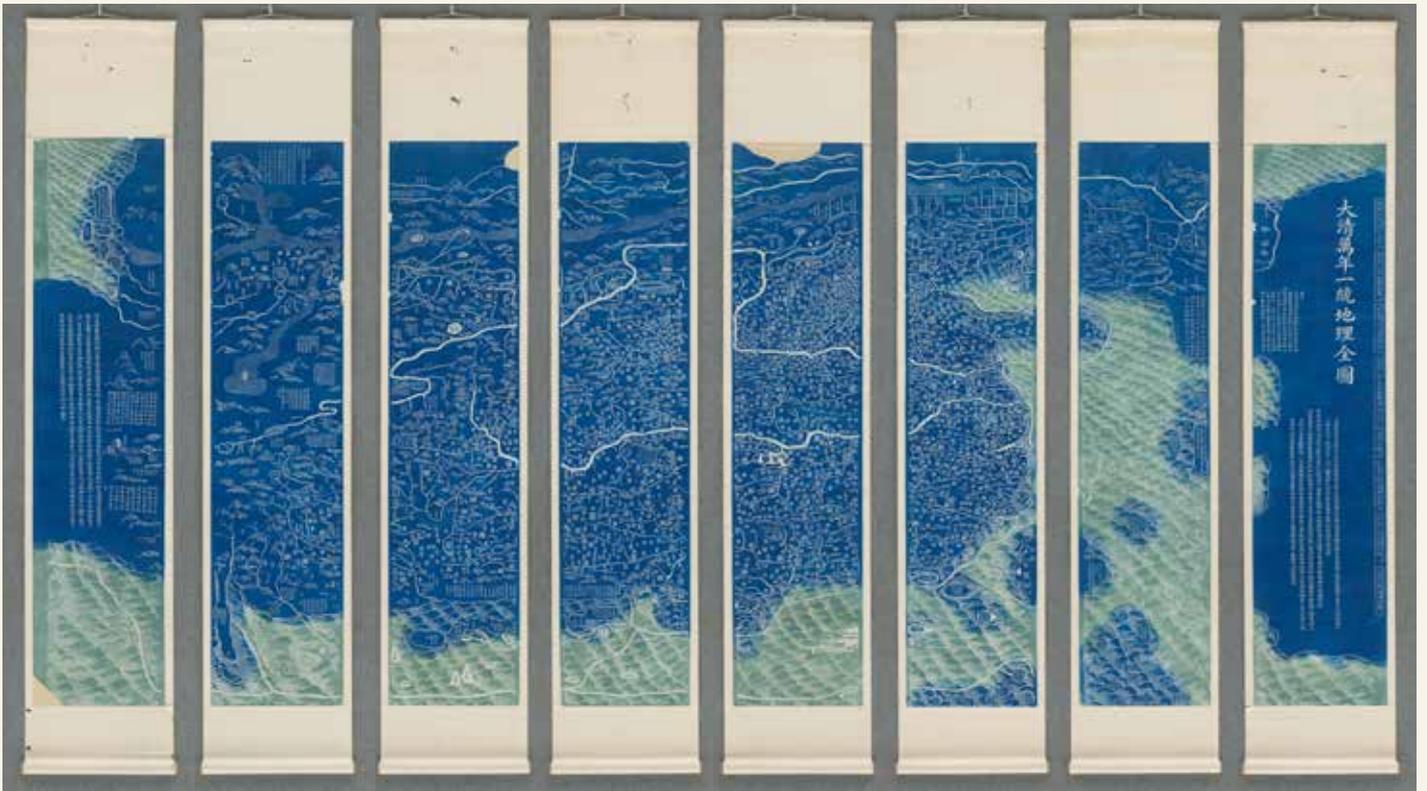
China, Qing dynasty, post-1815 reprint

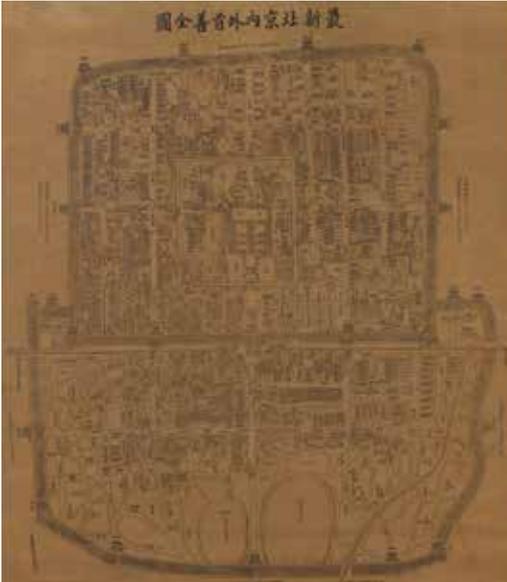
Hanging scroll, woodblock-printed blue ink on paper

On Loan from Yokohama City University Library and Information Center

This map (大清万年一统地理全图, *Daqing wannian yitong dili quantu*) is a revised and enlarged reprint of the “All-Under-Heaven Complete Map of the Everlasting Unified Qing Empire” (大清万年一统天下全图, *Daqing wannian yitong tianxia quantu*). The original map was first presented by cartographer Huang Qianren to Emperor Qianlong in 1767.

Such “All-Under-Heaven” maps were produced as ideological tools to justify Qing expansionist policies and record administrative changes in the growing multicultural Manchurian empire. This map depicts the administrative divisions and units, each with their own cartographic symbols, internal frontiers and tributary states. It signified the unification (一统, *yitong*) of the Qing empire, which had reached its greatest extent during Qianlong’s reign (r. 1736–1796).





LATEST COMPLETE MAP OF THE INNER AND OUTER CAPITAL OF BEIJING (*ZUIXIN BEIJING NEIWAI SHOUSHAN QUANTU*)

Ziqiang Publishing House (自强书局)

China, Qing dynasty, c. late 19th century

Lithograph, ink on paper and mounted on hanging scroll

On Loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

This “Latest Complete Map of the Inner and Outer Capital of Beijing” (最新北京内外首善全图 *Zuixin beijing neiwai shoushan quantu*) draws from the oldest detailed extant map of the city – Emperor Qianlong’s Complete Map of Beijing (乾隆京城全图, *Qianlong jingcheng quantu*), produced by Chinese official Hai Wang (海望), court painter Shen Yuan (沈源), and Italian Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione in 1750. Shown here is Beijing’s appearance during the reign of Emperor Guangxu (r. 1875–1908), including new mansions, the embassy zone and a railway south of East Chang’an Street.

Maps of Beijing typically outline the four main city sections – the Forbidden City (紫禁城, *Zijin Cheng*), the Imperial City (皇城, *Huangcheng*), Inner City (内城, *Neicheng*), and Outer City (外城, *Waicheng*) – and important landmarks. The Forbidden City is centred on the main north-south axial avenue at the heart of Beijing, paralleling the cosmic centrality of the emperor, or “Son of Heaven” (天子, *tianzi*), around which the world revolved. Often, the city’s iconic “keyhole” shape is featured, which was created when the early Qing government removed some northern sections and added the Outer City to the south.



MAP OF BENARES

India, Mughal dynasty, c. 1750–1850

Pigments on cotton

On loan from Indian Heritage Centre

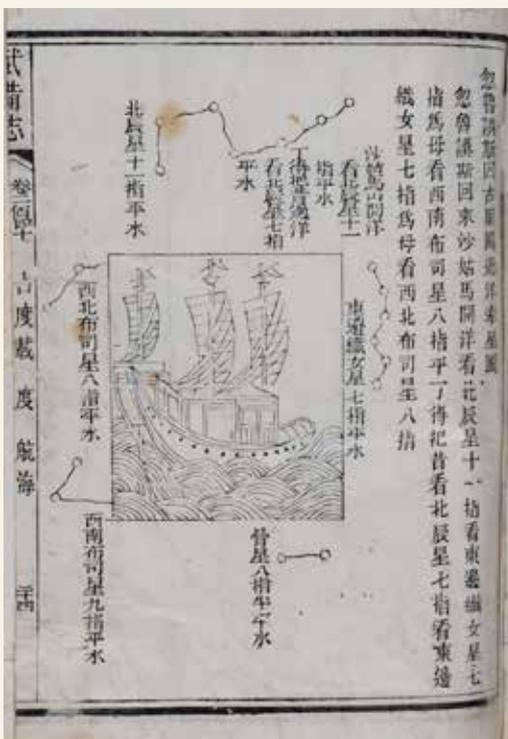
This map is a cloth painting (*pata*) of Varanasi, also known as Benares or Kashi, one of the seven holy cities in Hinduism. Situated at the banks of the holy Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh, northern India, this ideally located site attracted pilgrims with its temples and shrines, including the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Today, millions of Hindu pilgrims continue to bathe in the Ganges River at sunrise for the cleansing of sins. Some pilgrims are cremated by the river, and their ashes subsequently scattered into the river, as they believe that cremation at Varanasi allows their souls to achieve enlightenment and escape the cycle of reincarnation (*moksha*). This annual pilgrimage centres on the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, depicted on the first row facing the river in the painting.

MAPPING JOURNEYS

From the 13th century, a boom in overland and coastal shipping routes brought explorers, merchants, scholars and religious pilgrims across Asia and the world. Explorers like Venetian merchant Marco Polo (1254–1324) and Ming Admiral Zheng He (1371–1433/35) traversed the Silk Road and crossed the oceans, amassing a wealth of geographical knowledge that later found their way into publications and cartographic documents.

Itinerary maps borne from these cultural encounters were essential tools for land and sea navigation. From the emperor to the traveller, maps of different journeys were also symbolic, visually representing connections between territories, and charting human relationships to places of significance.



CELESTIAL NAVIGATION CHART FROM *WU BEI ZHI*, CHAPTER 240

Mao Yuanyi (茅元仪; 1594–1640)

China, Qing dynasty, late 19th century reprint

Woodblock-printed, double-leaf bound book

National Library, Singapore

Donated by Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations

B26078782G

First published in *Wu Bei Zhi* (武备志) during the late Ming dynasty, the *Mao Kun* map (茅坤图) was a 40-page set of navigational maps based on the nautical charts of Zheng He (郑和; 1371–1433/35), a Muslim admiral and eunuch of the Ming dynasty.

Under the orders of Ming Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424), Admiral Zheng He embarked on seven naval expeditions between 1405 and 1433. These Ming imperial voyages opened links for trade and tribute from Southeast Asia to the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, and important trade hubs in the Middle East like Hormuz.

Shown here is one of four cross-ocean celestial maritime navigation diagrams (过洋牵星图, *guoyang qianxingtu*) from the *Mao Kun* Map. They cover the route between Sumatra (苏门答刺, *Sumendala*), Ceylon (锡兰山, *Xilanshan*; present-day Sri Lanka), and the northernmost Indonesian island of Rondo (龙涎屿, *Longxianyu*), named “Ambergris Island” in Chinese after its namesake produce.

MAP FROM THE OCEAN (PERSPECTIVE) OF THE FIXED APPEARANCES OF THE STARS IN THE SKY (XINGYE DINGXIANG FANGYANGZHITU)

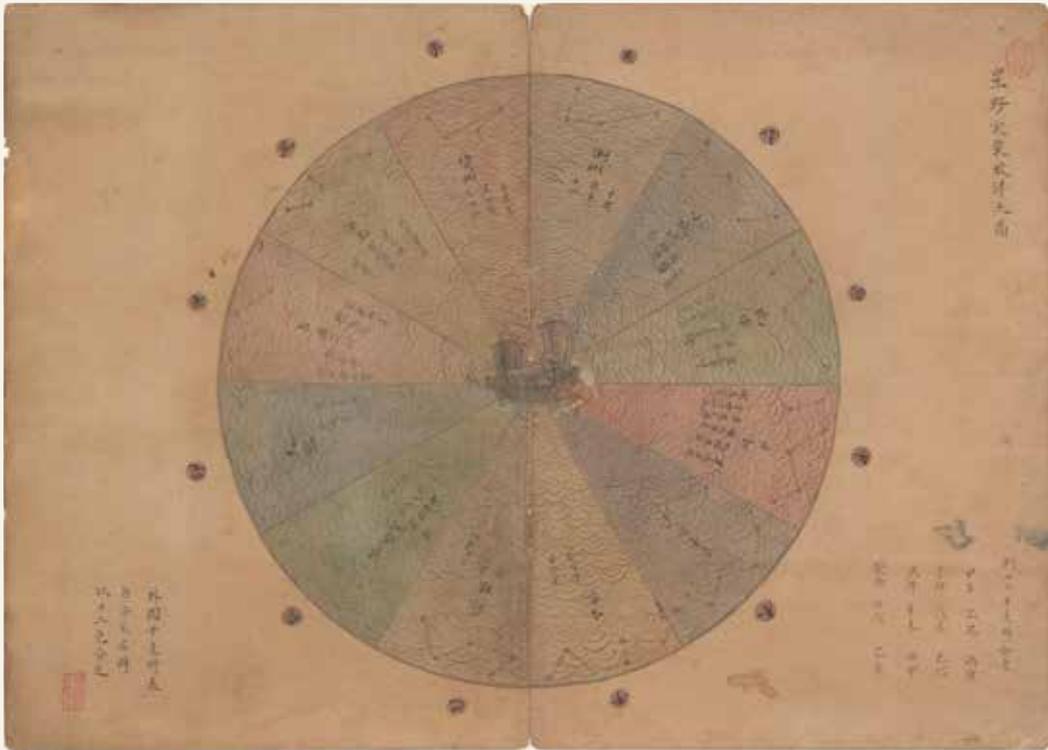
China, Qing dynasty, c. 18th century

Folded album leaf in ink, colour on paper

On loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

This privately commissioned maritime map (星野定象放洋之图, *xingye dingxiang fangyangzhitu*) depicts a celestial diagram divided into 12 radial sections, each symbolising one of the 12 directions on a Chinese compass. At its heart is a Chinese junk at sea, buoyed by stylised waves.

Each radial section contains characters detailing the compass direction, location and its description, as well as a depiction of the constellation associated with the relative direction. The traditional Chinese time standards are shown outside the diagram. This map is read anticlockwise, starting with the *zi* (子) section (in light red) and ending with the *hai* (亥) section (in brown). For example, the *zi* direction points to *Qiongzhou* (琼州), referring to Hainan Island (海南岛), as well as the constellation of Cassiopeia (閩道, *gedao*). When viewed as a whole, this maritime map provides the coordinates of the Chinese junk and situates it just northwest of the Philippines, out in the South China Seas.



IMPERIAL ANCESTRAL GRAVE VISIT MAP (MUKDEN-I DEDUN UDEN-I NIRUGAN)

Office of Imperial Diaries (起居注馆, *Qijuzhuguan*)

China, Qing dynasty, 1778

Accordion-folded book map, ink and colour on paper

On loan from MacLean Collection, Illinois, USA

Written in Manchu and Mandarin, this map is a detailed route of Qing Emperor Qianlong's (r. 1735–1795) third eastern imperial tour (巡幸, *xunxing*) in 1778. It records his route (depicted as a straight red dotted line) and its stops. The map's Manchu title translates as "Map of the day and night stations of Mukden".

These imperial tours serve many purposes that included hunting, military exercise and inspection of the Qing realm. Like other historical northern political powers, travel was integral to the Manchus, who conquered territories on horseback. Eastern tours to the auxiliary Manchu capital of Mukden (盛京, *Shengjing*) and the imperial graves of the ruling Aisin Gioro (爱新觉罗) clan allowed Qing emperors to demonstrate their filial piety to their ancestors, and by association, their virtuous and legitimate rule. These tours also served as imperial inspections to assert Manchu political rule in opposition to that of the Han Chinese.



Spanning 608 cm in length, this itinerary map is read from left to right.



Close-up of the start of the journey: Qianlong's journey begins at Beijing, labelled as Gemun Hecen ("Capital City") in Manchu.



Close-up featuring the final destination — the Eternal Tombs Memorial Complex (Yongling, 永陵, Enteheme Munggan)

CARTOGRAPHIC EXCHANGES

The history of cartography is characterised by the exchange of geographical knowledge and mapping practices between civilisations. The Jesuits' mapmaking endeavours in China from the late 16th to early 18th centuries furnish a fascinating example. Through his maps, Matteo Ricci presented a completely new vision of the world to China and left his mark on Chinese cartography. French Jesuit cartographers, in collaboration with their Chinese counterparts, also conducted comprehensive surveys of China and produced the *Kangxi Atlas*, which in turn created a tremendous impact on European perspectives on China.

When Jesuit maps found their way to Japan, they too exerted a great influence on Japanese cartography. Ricci's *Map of the Myriad Countries of the World* (坤輿万国全图, *Kunyu wanguo quantu*) was one of the most widely circulated maps in 17th century Japan and spawned a simplified Japanese version *Konyo bankoku zenzu*.

Yet cross-cultural fertilisations in cartography were not always comfortable, as they brought different worldviews into conflict. The Jesuit maps received mixed reactions in East Asia, as they challenged long held Sinocentric outlook and Buddhist cosmology.



A MAP OF CHINA, CHINESE TARTARY AND THE KINGDOM OF COREA FROM *THE GENERAL HISTORY OF CHINA: CONTAINING A GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, CHRONOLOGICAL, POLITICAL AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EMPIRE OF CHINA...*, VOLUME 1

(Map) Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville (1697–1782)

(Book) Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743)

London: J. Watts, 1739

Collection of National Library Singapore

B29265401G

In early 18th century, Qing Emperor Kangxi commissioned French Jesuits to undertake a survey of the Chinese empire. Within a decade from 1708 to 1717, the French and other European Jesuits, in collaboration with their Chinese colleagues, produced a complete and scientific atlas based on their survey, which is known as *Huangyu quanlan tu* (皇輿全覽圖, "Overview Maps of Imperial Territories"), or the Kangxi Atlas.

Information from the atlas spread to Europe, thanks to the Jesuits. In France, Jesuit historian Jean-Bapiste du Halde collected the missionaries' reports and commissioned royal cartographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville to make maps and compile them into an encyclopaedic publication in 1735. The English translation by Richard Brookes (1739) is on display in the exhibition.

MAP OF THE MYRIAD COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD (*KONYO BANKOKU ZENZU*)

Japan, Edo period (1603–1867), date unknown

Manuscript folded map, ink and colour on paper

On loan from Yokohama City University Library and Information Center

Matteo Ricci's 1602 world map *Kunyu wanguo quantu* (坤輿万国全图) introduced European world mapping practices to Ming China and East Asia. Copies were sent to Japan and adaptations of the map, such as the one in the exhibition, were made. Ricci's map was widely circulated in Japan and exerted a strong influence on Japanese cartography and cosmological thinking.

While this Japanese adaptation shares the same title as Ricci's original, it is a much simplified, stylised version of the latter. A comparison with *Kunyu wanguo quantu* reveals that it shares the overall key features such as the major circles of latitude; the five continents and demarcation of countries; as well as numerous geographical and socio-cultural descriptions of various lands. While the textual data in this map is written in Chinese, katakana script accompanies most place names.

Richly hand-coloured and attractive, the *Konyo bankoku zenzu* was most likely ornamental apart from its intellectual functions. On the other hand, Ricci's original map, a monochromatic woodblock print, is extremely detailed, informative and devoid of embellishment. It also contains significantly more data than this Japanese adaptation.





A COMPLETE MAP OF NINE BORDER TOWNS, NATIONS, HUMAN PRESENCE, AND TRAVEL ROUTES OF ALL UNDER HEAVEN (*TIANXIAJIUBIAN WANGUORENJI LUCHENG QUANTU*)

Wang Junfu (王君甫)

Suzhou, Qing Dynasty, 1663

Folded map, woodblock-printed, hand-coloured on paper

On loan from Yokohama City University Library and Information Center

In the late Ming era, Jesuits brought the concept of a world comprising five continents to China. This map (天下九边万国入迹路程全图) is one of the hybrid world maps that integrated both traditional Chinese and European cartographic models.

This map essentially reflects a Sinocentric focus where China is the world or “All Under Heaven”, thus occupying most of the map. Depicted in great detail, China comprised two capitals (Nanjing and Beijing) and 13 provinces of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), even though the map was published during Qing Emperor Kangxi’s reign (r. 1661–1722). Foreign regions are scattered around the edges of the map as small, insignificant places. They included Europe and West Asia (top left), Africa (middle left), North America (top right) and South America (bottom right). Some mythical places such as Land of Women and Land of Giants are also represented – a legacy of the ancient geographical text *Shanhaijing* (山海经, “Classic of the Mountains and Seas”).



MAP OF NAGASAKI, HIZEN PROVINCE (HIZEN NAGASAKIZU)

Kojudo (耕寿堂, first edition), *Baikodo* (梅香堂, revised edition)

Nagasaki, Edo period, mid-19th century

Folded map, woodblock-printed, colour on paper

On loan from Private Collection, France

This map of Nagasaki belongs to a genre of woodblock prints called *Nagasaki-e*, which were popular during the Edo period. They depict scenes of the port city which often include foreigners or foreign objects, satisfying the curiosity of the Japanese public during a time of national isolation.

The depicted area includes Dejima island at the centre, Nagasaki city and harbour, as well as mountains opposite the harbour. Dejima was constructed in 1634 as part of Japan’s isolationist policy to concentrate Western (mainly Dutch) presence exclusively in the artificial islet and restrict foreigners from mainland Japan. The Dutch East India Company established a trading post on Dejima, which became the centre of Dutch Studies, or *Rangaku*, in Japan. As part of their trade, the Dutch shipped a large number of European maps, charts and globes to Japan, which were used by feudal lords and the Edo government.

THANK YOU FOR VISITING THE EXHIBITION.



Visit www.go.gov.sg/mtw for more information about the exhibition.



Visit www.go.gov.sg/mtwprogs for the full listing of programmes, workshops and guided tours.

Presented by:



In partnership with:



In association with:



Supported by:

TEMASEK

TK TIKEHAU CAPITAL