



ARTICLE

Giulio Aleni's map sheet: exploring the contents and materiality of the only known Ming-era print

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Abstract

Japan's Kobe City Museum holds a unique yet overlooked xylographic print of an early seventeenth-century composition that centres on a Chinese-language world map, mounted as a scroll. At first glance, the scroll seems to contain a copy of a well-known composition attributed to the Jesuit Giulio Aleni that is extant at two Italian libraries. It is known in the literature as *Wanguo quantu* 萬國全圖, after the title of only one of three constitutive parts. Detailed comparison shows that the hitherto unstudied Kobe sheet is significantly older. This observation initiates a discussion of the contents and materiality of the Kobe sheet in three steps. First, a reconstruction of intertextual connections to late Ming books based on the introductory text illustrates the function of the sheet map. Second, the origins of the maps proper are investigated, which, unlike the introductory text, can be traced back to a collaborative book project. In a last step, the afterlife of these map sheets is discussed, further illuminating the genealogy of maps that facilitated the production of the Kobe sheet. Throughout, this article highlights the local co-creation of map artefacts and the necessity to study maps in context, beyond the analysis of their cartographic contents.

Keywords: mapmaking; cartography; Ming China; Qing China; Jesuits

Introducing the artefact

The Kobe City Museum in Japan holds a large hanging scroll that centres on a world map (Figure 1).¹ It was once part of the collection of Nanba Matsutarō 南波松太郎 (1894–1995), who donated it to the museum in 1983.² The scroll mounting features two textiles: a gold-embroidered blue silk and a simple white or beige textile at the top and the bottom. The blue silk frames a print that measures 97 x 49 centimetres and consists of three vertically arranged sheets, each printed from different woodblocks and with their own title (Figure 2). The first and uppermost part is a textbox that includes an introduction to the reader entitled “Wanguo tu xiaoyin” 萬國圖小引 (“Short guide to the

¹ Shelfmark 南波-世界図-004, <https://www.kobecitymuseum.jp/collection/detail?heritage=367509>.

² Before it was donated, the map was exhibited for the first time in 1983 at Kobe City Museum. Kōbe Shiritsu Hakubutsukan 神戸市立博物館 (ed.), *Kochizu ni miru sekai to Nihon: Chizu ha kataru yume to roman* 古地図にみる世界と日本：地図は語る夢とロマン (Kōbe, 1983), p. 29. It was already mounted on a scroll in 1964. Unno Kazutaka 海野一隆, “Yaso kaishi Hitsu Hōsai no sekaizu” 耶穌会士畢方濟の世界図, *Jinbun chiri* 人文地理 16.3 (1964), pp. 322–326, here p. 325. The blue silk is embroidered with a *sayagata* 紗綾形 pattern combined with phoenixes. We thank Fujita Kayoko for this observation.

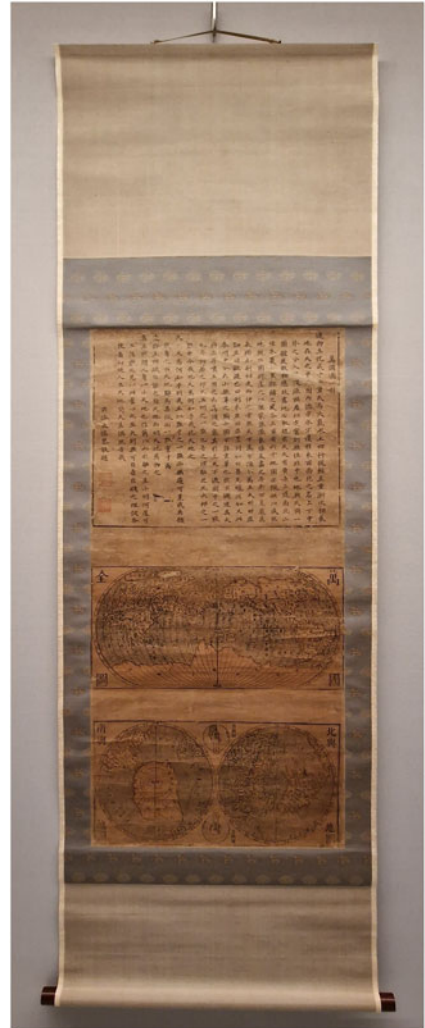


Figure 1. The Kobe scroll as exhibited at the Kobe City Museum in 2023. Photo by Elke Papelitzky.

maps of all countries”); the second and central part features a world map entitled “Wanguo quantu” 萬國全圖 (“Complete map of all countries”); and the third and lower part presents two hemispherical maps that are centred on the poles, respectively entitled “Bei yudi tu” 北輿地圖 (“Map of northern territories”) and “Nan yudi tu” 南輿地圖 (“Map of southern territories”), and is flanked by diagrams that explain solar eclipses and lunar occultations.³ Although the Kobe artefact as a whole bears no title, its three-pronged vertical format suggests that it was designed to be mounted onto a single hanging scroll for consultation, presentation, or preservation.⁴

³ The title of the world map consists of several parts. “Wanguo” (literally: 10,000 countries) advertises the world map on the Kobe sheet as including places far away from Ming China. The term *quantu* (literally: complete map) appeared on Ming maps since at least the 1560s and implies some form of comprehensiveness. On the titles of world maps, see E. Papelitzky, “Mapping *tianxia* and mapping the world: cosmopolitan ideas in geographic sources of fifteenth- to eighteenth-century China”, *Modern Asian Studies*, forthcoming.

⁴ The authors visited the Kobe City Museum in June 2023, when the scroll was exhibited.

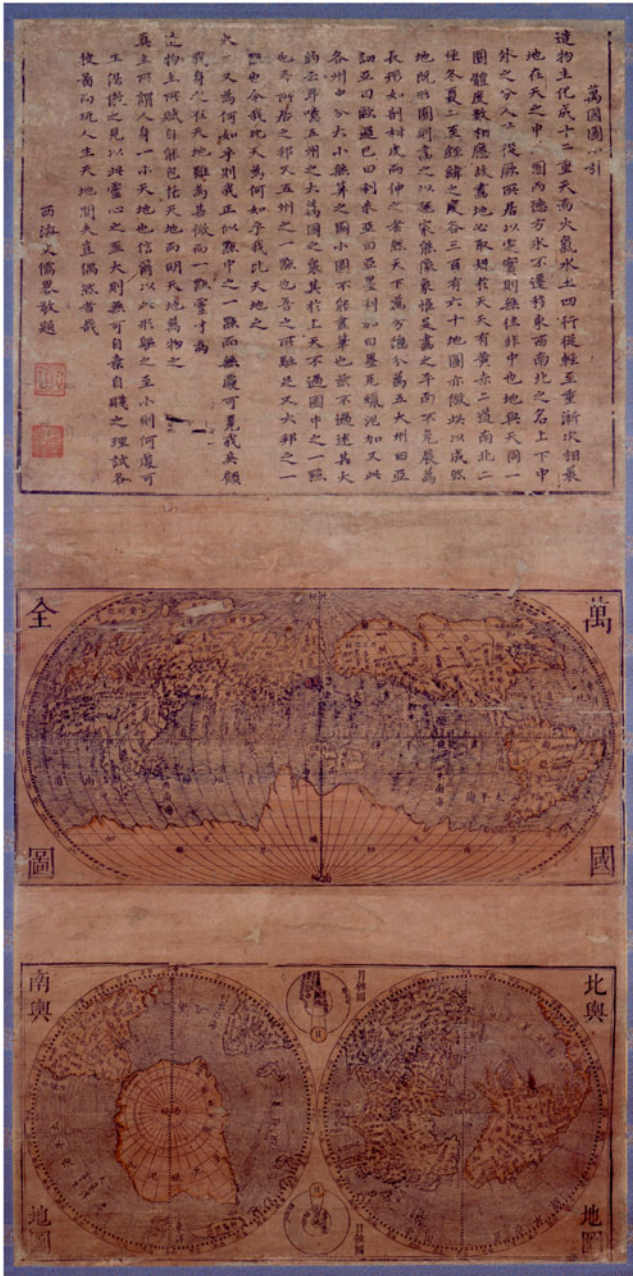


Figure 2. The Kobe sheet itself, with introductory text (top) by Aleni and featuring his personal seal (stamped, not carved), world map (centre), and hemispherical maps with astronomical diagrams (bottom). Size: approximately 97 × 49 centimetres. Colours were added to the maps. Source: Kobe City Museum.

The introductory text on top of the sheet includes clear indications of authorship. A signature is placed within the framed text box at the end of the text: “respectfully presented by Ai Rulüe from the Western Seas.” It confirms that the text was authored by Giulio Aleni (1582–1649)—a European missionary to China who had adopted the Chinese name Ai Rulüe 艾儒略. Below this statement are the impressions of two seals in red ink; one of them features the acronym IHS, in reference to the Society of Jesus, and the other features Aleni’s Chinese name (Figure 3). Throughout, the introduction



Figure 3. Left: The inked stamp of the Jesuits (above) and the inked personal seal of Giulio Aleni. The latter reads “Ai Rulüe yin 艾儒略印” (“Stamp of Giulio Aleni”). Detail from Figure 1. Right: The printed stamps on the Braidense sheet. Detail from Figure 4.

places characters that refer to the Christian god higher than the upper margin of the text-block—a practice that was commonly deployed for referring to the emperor in imperial China. This practice exists in multiple nuances of deference, ranging from leaving a one-character space before terms that reference an emperor to starting a new line and elevating the term, as shown on the Kobe sheet. Chinese Christian texts that were produced in the early seventeenth century usually deployed the former practice to refer to the Christian god.⁵ The Kobe sheet is therefore unusual in that it deploys the latter, more deferential, practice. The printed statement of authorship in combination with the stamped personal seal of Aleni and the unusual referencing to the Christian god suggests that the missionary personally initiated the production of the Kobe sheet and that it was deployed in the context of his proselytising work as a Jesuit missionary in seventeenth-century China.

As a Chinese artefact that was authored in part by a Jesuit missionary, the Kobe sheet connects to a well-studied series of sinographic world maps that are often attributed solely to European Jesuit missionaries who were active in China after 1584. While the literature does not take into account the Kobe sheet, it focuses on three highly similar sheets that are kept at two Italian libraries, all of which are assumed to have been produced by Aleni.⁶ Two of them—one held by the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense in

⁵ This practice is known as *taitou* 抬頭 or *taixie* 抬寫 in Chinese. In the prefaces of Ming texts, it is most common to start a new line and elevate terms that refer to the emperor in the upper margin, whereas leaving a one-character blank space is often reserved for the main text. E. Papelitzky, *Writing World History in Late Ming China and the Perception of Maritime Asia* (Wiesbaden, 2020), pp. 63–64. In contrast, and with few exceptions, Chinese Christian texts from the period usually employ the latter method, even in prefaces. One exception is *Wushi yanyu* 五十言餘 (1645), co-authored by Aleni, which in one preface starts a new line for references to the Christian god, but without elevating the terms in the upper margin. Aleni et al., *Wushi yanyu*, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9818049r>, ti *Wushi yanyu*, 1b. Furthermore, the first preface (dated 1601) in one surviving copy of Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (National Archives of Japan, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/3671477>) makes a distinction between references to the emperor (new line, elevated in the upper margin) and the Christian god (in-text blank space).

⁶ Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, AB XV 34; Vatican Library, Barb.or.151.pt.1–2, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.or.151.pt.1/0005; https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Barb.or.151.pt.2. These maps have been discussed

Milan (mounted as a scroll, Figure 4) and one by the Vatican Library (unmounted, Barb.or.151.pt.2)—are divided into three parts with the introduction at the top, the world map in the middle, and the two hemispheres centred on the poles at the bottom, just like the Kobe sheet. The Vatican library also holds a second sheet that is in two parts without the two hemispheres (Barb.or.151.pt.1). On the world map, they refer to the Chinese state as *Da Qing Yitong* 大清一統 (The Unified Great Qing, after the Qing state, 1636–1911), although the seas to the east of East Asia are labelled *Da Ming Hai* 大明海 (Great Ming Sea, after the Ming state, 1368–circa 1644) (Figure 4). This naming of China shows that the printed sheets that are kept at the Italian libraries were produced or amended after the fall of Ming China and the subsequent establishment of Qing rule in the later 1640s. The Kobe sheet, on the other hand, names both China and the seas to its east as *Da Ming* 大明 (Great Ming), indicating that it is older than the Braidense and Vatican Library prints.

Further comparison of the Braidense (Figure 4) and Vatican sheets in three parts to the older Kobe sheet reveals that the two hemispherical maps are nearly identical whereas the world maps contain important discrepancies.⁷ The totality of place names on the world map, for instance, does not match: the later Braidense print misses several place names and features alternative characters (Figure 5).⁸ However, the introductory text is where the most significant differences can be found between the earlier Kobe sheet and its Qing-era renditions. First, the later Braidense sheet uses a different manner of highlighting terms that refer to the Christian god: instead of elevating the terms in the upper margin as on the Kobe sheet, a one-character space is left blank before the terms—a more common practice that was deployed in Chinese Christian texts, as discussed above (compare Figures 2 and 4). Second, several significant textual changes were introduced. The concluding sentence in particular differs completely from that on the Kobe sheet (see the Appendix for a comparison of the two texts).⁹ The redacted introductory text as found on the Qing prints was later included in the *Tianxue jijie* 天學集解 (Collective Commentaries on Heavenly Learning)—an anthology of prefaces that was likely compiled in the 1690s but contains prefaces that mostly predate 1665.¹⁰ Combined with

by Huang Shijian and Gong Yingyan: Huang Shijian 黃時鑒, “Ai Rulüe ‘Wanguo quantu’ AB erben jian du houji” 艾儒略《萬國全圖》AB二本見讀後記, in *Huang Shijian wenji 3: Donghai Xihai, Dong Xi wenhua jiaoliu shi (da hanghai shidai yilai)* 黃時鑒文集 3: 東海西海, 東西文化交流史 (大航海時代以來) (Shanghai, 2011), pp. 273–280; Gong Yingyan 龔纓晏, “Ai Rulüe ‘Wanguo quantu’ yanjiu” 艾儒略《萬國全圖》研究, *Aomen lishi yanjiu 澳門歷史研究* 4 (2015), pp. 54–72.

⁷ In contrast to their world map and in line with the Kobe sheet, the Braidense and three-part Vatican sheets refer to the Chinese state as *Da Ming Yitong* and not *Da Qing Yitong* on the hemispherical maps. The only difference in the contents between the two hemispheres on the Braidense and Kobe sheets is an island, labelled as *Shayu dao* 沙魚島 on the Kobe sheet but with the first character missing (left uncarved) on the Braidense sheet.

⁸ The Braidense sheet uses a non-standard, simplified form of the character *guo* 國, which is written as 国 in most instances (this is not the same as the current simplified version of the character 国, which includes the component 玉 rather than 王). Using 国 instead of 國 was already a popular simplification during the Tang. See E. Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, enlarged sixth edition (Cambridge, MA, 2022, consulted digital version via Pleco), section 2.8.3.

⁹ On the older Kobe sheet, the last sentence reads: 試各披圖而玩人生天地間夫豈偶然者哉 (“if, whenever we unfold a map, we try to appreciate human life between heaven and earth, how could [we think] it is all coincidence?”). On the Qing-era reprint, it reads 果知乎此則天地在目豈徒然哉 (“If we know this, then heaven-and-earth is within view. Well, how can it (all) be in vain?”). See the Appendix.

¹⁰ The *Tianxue jijie* is extant as a manuscript held by the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg. Ninety per cent of the prefaces contained in the compilation date to the period between 1599 and 1665, with a smaller number of prefaces authored between 1668 and 1679, but at least one dates from 1689. A punctuated version of the text is found in Xie Hui 謝輝, *Ming Qing zhi ji Xixue hanji xuba mulu ji* 明清之際西學漢籍序跋目錄集 (Shanghai, 2021), pp. 268–269. On the *Tianxue jijie*, see A. Dudink, “The rediscovery of a seventeenth-century collection of Chinese Christian texts: the manuscript *Tianxue Jijie*”, *Sino-Western Cultural Relations Journal* 15 (1993),



Figure 4. A post-1645 Qing print in three parts with added colour, not dated. Size: approximately 115 × 60.5 centimetres. Compare with Figure 2. Source: Ministry of Culture, Pinacoteca di Brera, Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, Milan.

the fact that the Vatican and Braidense sheets were most certainly produced after 1645, this suggests that the redacted introductory text dates to the period between 1645 and 1700—likely even to the two decades between 1645 and 1665.

pp. 1–26. The version of the preface from the Kobe sheet is also preserved in another compilation of prefaces—an edition of the *Juejiao tongwen ji* 絕微同文紀 (*juan* 2, 99a–111a) held by the National Library of Japan, printed after 1627. A scan is available online at <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/3610964>.

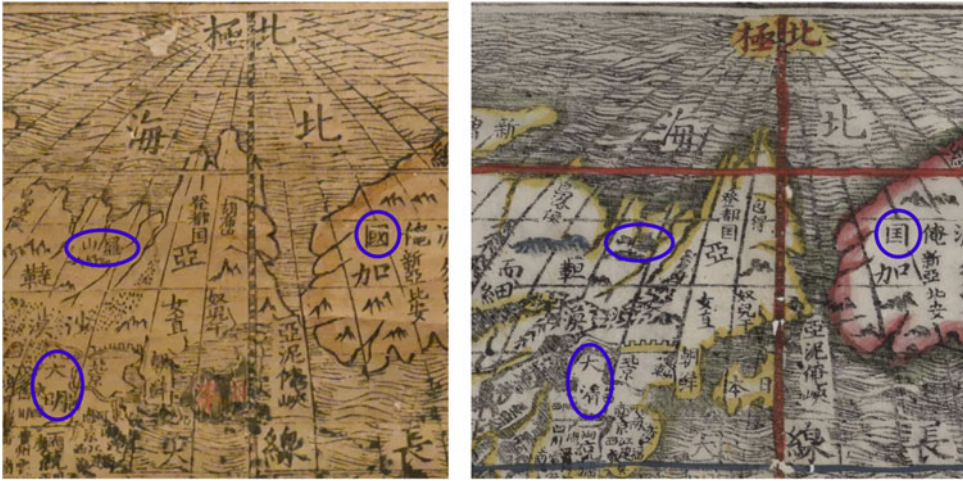


Figure 5. Details of the Kobe sheet (left, from Figure 1) and the Vatican Qing-era sheet (right, Vatican Library Barb.or.151.pt.1). Notice, for example, how the desert is carved in a much more simplified manner on the Braidense sheet; how the toponym Luoshan 羅山 all but disappears; how the character for state, written as *guo* 國, is simplified as 国; and how the name for the Chinese state, Da Ming 大明, is replaced by Da Qing 大清.

The most significant difference that distinguishes the Kobe sheet from the later Qing-era examples is the presence of Aleni's personal seal, which features prominently on the Kobe sheet, printed in red ink below the seal of the Jesuits. Conversely, Aleni's seal is missing from all later Qing-era copies. Although the Braidense and Vatican sheets, which were printed in the period after 1645, feature two Jesuit seals instead (Figure 3), they are both printed rather than stamped, which in itself was not uncommon at the time, for example in the prefaces of printed books.¹¹ Taken together, and given the fact that personal seals were only used in a personal capacity, we can assume that the Kobe sheet constitutes a print that was distributed by Aleni himself. This means that the later Qing-era sheets, in contrast, were likely produced in order to emulate the earlier Kobe sheet. Together with the analysis above, it is indisputable that only the Kobe sheet, as an original Ming-era artefact that was printed before the advent of Qing rule over China in the mid-1640s, is directly linked to Giulio Aleni.

A thorough analysis of the Kobe sheet can therefore contribute to the literature, not only by paying close attention to the role that Giulio Aleni played in assembling the three constitutive parts of the artefact, but also by analysing the materiality of the sheet. Previous analyses of the Qing-era sheets focus heavily on the world map entitled “Wanguo quantu” that occupies the middle of the three parts: an early Chinese-language map of the entire world that features a projection and includes the Americas. This strong focus on one-third of the sheet has positioned it in a direct line of descent from the famous *Kunyu wanguo quantu* 坤輿萬國全圖 (*Complete Map of All Countries on Earth*)—a multi-scroll world map that was produced in 1602 with the assistance of Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610).¹² The assumption has been that, by placing this so-called “Aleni map”

¹¹ We consulted the Chinese Christian Text database (<https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/chinese-studies/english/cct>) to trace the use of personal seals.

¹² Huang Xiu Feng and G. Cretti, *La Cina nella cartografia da Tolomeo al XVII secolo: i mappamondi di Matteo Ricci e Giulio Aleni* (Macerata and Brescia, 2011); C. Dong Yu, Lu Huizhong, R. Ranzi, et al., “A new digital comparison of the Chinese world maps of Giulio Aleni and Matteo Ricci”, *e-Perimetron* 15.3 (2020), pp. 130–138; P. Demattè, “Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam: Jesuit mapping in China by Giulio Aleni, Francesco Sambiasi, Niccolò Longobardi, Manuel

in the shadow of the formidable “Ricci map”, Aleni drew from the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, “updating” it in line with the latest maps from Europe and reducing it in size and contents. Although it remains possible that the original model of the world map on the Kobe sheet stands in a direct line of descent from the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, with which it indeed shares part of the title, it is clear that all extant printed versions are linked directly to a rather different project¹³: a book on world geography entitled *Zhifang waiji* 職方外紀 (*Record of Everything Beyond the Administration*), which was co-authored by Aleni and first printed in 1623. By exploring the hitherto unstudied Kobe sheet, this article seeks to complicate questions of authorship, materiality, and consumption by contextualising the production of the Kobe sheet within a web of intertextual and material connections.

Intertextualising the introductory text

The introductory text that occupies the upper third of the Kobe sheet begins with the term *zaowuzhu* 造物主, which is the Chinese equivalent of “the creator”. The term is elevated above the upper margin of the text, which follows a deferential textual practice already discussed above. What follows is a narrative that lays out the concept of a world map in the geometrical tradition of the Renaissance, whereby a perfect globe is mathematically projected onto a flat surface (a punctuated version of the Chinese text appears in the Appendix):

The Creator made the 12-layered heaven and the four elements of fire, air, water, and earth, each encompassing the other, from light to heavy. The earth is in the middle of heaven, its shape is round and its virtue square.¹⁴ It never moves. Terms like east, west, south, and north, as well as the difference between up, down, centre, and periphery, are fixed by people all blindly relying on where they reside, when in reality there are no directions and there is no centre. The earth and heaven are the same in their roundness, their degrees correspond. So, when drawing the earth, we must obtain the rules from heaven. Heaven has two lines, the equator and ecliptic; two extremities, south and north; two solstices, winter and summer; and degrees of longitude and latitude, 360 each. A map, too, should imitate this and be made like that. Since the earth is round, drawing it as a ball can best resemble its appearance. Only because it is drawn on a flat surface, one cannot avoid laying it out as a rectangle. It is as if cutting open an orange peel and stretching it out.

Aleni here describes the basic concepts of mapmaking in the geometrical tradition: the spherical earth, structurally associated with the spherical heavens, is projected onto a

Diaz, and others”, in *Reimagining the Globe and Cultural Exchange: The East Asian Legacies of Matteo Ricci’s World Map*, (ed.) L. Hostetler (Leiden, 2024), pp. 178–201. For a new history of the *Kunyu wanguo quantu*, see M. Cams and E. Papelitzky (eds.), *Remapping the World in East Asia: Towards a Global History of the “Ricci Maps”* (Honolulu, 2024).

¹³ Technical and stylistic differences confirm their different origins: the world map on the Kobe sheet, for example, positions China between *circa* 108 and 133 degrees longitude, while the *Kunyu wanguo quantu* positions China between *circa* 120 and 150 degrees longitude.

¹⁴ Aleni’s Chinese contemporaries commonly understood the shapes of heaven and earth as “heaven is round, earth is square” (*tian yuan di fang* 天圓地方). By explaining that Earth’s “virtue” is square, Aleni does not dismiss this understanding completely. The *Xifang dawen* contains a related discussion in which Aleni justifies the roundness of earth as follows: “When the Book of Changes says that the earth is square, it refers to its virtue, not its shape.” J. L. Mish, “Creating an image of Europe for China: Aleni’s *Hsi-Fang Ta-Wen* 西方答問”, *Monumenta Serica* 23 (1964), pp. 1–87, here p. 67.

flat surface “as if cutting open an orange peel and stretching it out”. The sphericity of the earth as visualised through maps is a theme that also appears in a book entitled *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 (*Diary of Oral Admonitions*, printed in the mid-1640s) of which the first two parts consist of conversations between Chinese Christian Li Jiubiao 李九標, Aleni and others at the first Jesuit residence in Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province. Although the text takes the form of a diary, and records events from 18 March 1630 to 28 November 1631, the printed work was the result of more than a decade of editing and is therefore best understood as a prescriptive account of local Jesuit teachings by a Chinese convert.¹⁵ On 27 April 1630, the following conversation is purported to have taken place:

On the fifteenth, Master Lu was walking at his leisure in the outer hall. He was looking intently at the map. I asked the master: “Maps exist in different forms. I think that it is necessary to have planar ones, hemispherical ones, and partly planar ones, so as to fully capture the globular shape [of the earth].” The Master said: “Those made in a round shape are even better, making it easier to see things. He then produced a wooden globe, so small that it fit in his hand. What was painted on it was not different from a map, but because of its round shape you could see at a glance what is meant when they say that there are people living on all sides and the soles of their feet are facing each other.”¹⁶

Master Lu here refers to Lu Ande 盧安德, the adopted name of Andrius Rudamina (1596–1631), Aleni’s assistant in Fuzhou. It confirms that a world map was hanging in the “outer hall” of the Jesuit’s residence in the city of Fuzhou—the space where visitors would have been received.¹⁷ The first person in this excerpt, Li Jiubiao, reflects on different types of world maps, such as planar and hemispherical projections, which ideally appear together in order to show the sphericity of the earth. Such a combination of map projections is precisely what the Kobe sheet and its later Qing renditions display.

After describing Earth’s sphericity, the introductory text on the Kobe sheet continues by describing its division into five continents:

The myriad places under heaven can generally be divided into five large continents: Asia, Europe, Libya, America, and Magellanica. In turn, within these continents, one can differentiate innumerable small and large countries. It is because they cannot all be drawn on a small map, that below they are only roughly covered.

The Renaissance division of the world into five continents is further emphasised by the use of colours on the Kobe sheet, which were manually applied to both the world map and the maps of the two hemispheres. Pigments, which have faded to various shades of orange, highlight the contours of the Americas, Europe, and Magellanica, and fill the entire landmass of Asia. Only Africa appears to have been left uncoloured. In addition,

¹⁵ The textual history of the book is explained in E. Zürcher (trans.), *Kouduo richao: Li Jiubiao’s “Diary of Oral Admonitions”: A Late Ming Christian Journal* (Sankt Augustin and Brescia, 2007), pp. 11–12, 14–20.

¹⁶ The original text reads: 十五日，盧先生徐步外堂，熟視地圖。余問先生曰：夫地圖諸體不一，意必有平面者、有半球者、有半面者，而圓球之象始備。先生曰：是未若製就員形者，更為易觀耳。于時出木地球一枚。大僅盈握。其所畫與圖無異，但其員形，則所云四面皆人所居，足底相向者，一視而瞭然矣。 Original text and translation based on Zürcher, *Kouduo richao*, pp. 211, 633. A world map also features in other conversations early on in the book; see Zürcher, *Kouduo richao*, pp. 207, 204, 213.

¹⁷ The outer hall (facing the gate building) was likely used as a church and the inner hall as a private residence; Zürcher, *Kouduo richao*, p. 35. A map of Rome appears to have hung in the courtyard that separates the inner and outer halls. It features in another conversation on the earth’s sphericity in relation to time differences; Zürcher, *Kouduo richao*, p. 199.

the characters for Japan are redrawn in a bright red, most likely after the sheet had reached Japan (Figure 5). Comparison with the Braidense and the two-part Vatican sheets discussed above reveals what the colours of the Kobe sheet must have originally looked like (compare Figures 2 and 4).¹⁸ The Qing-era sheets, as well as other world maps that were co-produced by Jesuits, consistently mark Asia in yellow, Europe in red, the Americas in a purplish red, and Africa in blue. This colour scheme is consistent with the use of colours on the Kobe sheet if we consider that the blue pigment faded completely. Tracing the outlines of each continent by using a different colour is a practice that can also be directly linked to Giulio Aleni, the author of the introduction. The *Xifang dawen* 西方答問 (*Questions and Answers from the West*, 1637) is a book that he wrote in collaboration with Jiang Dejing 蔣德璟 (d. 1646) and records the following question: “On the map there are five colours, does this mean that the land of each region is of a different color?” Aleni then explains that colours are used merely to distinguish different continents on the map in order to “make it easier for the eye”.¹⁹ This statement indicates that colour was applied to the Kobe sheet to visually highlight the five continents that structured the Renaissance worldview.

Having introduced these basic concepts that underlie Renaissance geography, namely the sphericity of the earth and its division into five continents, the stage is set for the text to take a sudden turn, inviting the reader to engage even more directly with the maps that are positioned immediately below the text box:

Ah! How large the five continents, how many the myriad countries. Comparing them to heaven above, they are not more than one dot on a circle. The country I am located in, is in turn not more than a dot on the five continents; and the earth I tread on, is in turn not more than a dot in that large country. Now, comparing myself to heaven, what is that like? Comparing myself with the Great Lord of heaven and earth, what is that like? Well, since I am just like a dot within a dot, I am nowhere to be found. However, my body is in heaven-and-earth.

Aleni here deploys a technique that was laid out in *Exercitia spiritualia* (*The Spiritual Exercises*, composed in 1522–1524)—a guide for prayer and meditation that was written by the founder of the Jesuit order, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). Ignatius draws attention to the *compositio loci*, or “composition of place”, whereby the person who meditates a biblical story composes, through imagination, the “place” of the event that is meditated upon. The visual composition of the different “places” facilitates a personal encounter with Jesus in the story.²⁰ The same technique of the visual composition of places is directly employed in the excerpt above, in four steps. First, Aleni asks the reader to look at the world map and to consider the magnitude of the entire world, made up of states and

¹⁸ For example, coloured copies of Francesco Sambiasi’s (1582–1649) *Kunyu quantu* 坤輿全圖 use the same colour scheme, such as the prints held by Ghent University (<https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:001391064>) and the National Museum of Kyushu (<https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/140664>). The 1602 *Kunyu wanguo quantu* includes instructions on the use of colour that differ significantly from those described by Aleni: a brief note in the upper right corner of the second sheet states that red characters should be used for the names of the continents, as well as the name for the tropics, the polar circles, and the equator. The print held by Miyagi Prefectural Library indeed has most of these names coloured in red: https://eichi.library.pref.miyagi.jp/detail?data_id=041-70138-1.

¹⁹ G. Aleni, *Xifang dawen*, Ming print held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9006349f>, *juan xia*, 4b. For a translation of the whole text, see Mish, “Creating an image of Europe for China”.

²⁰ N. Standaert, “The composition of place: creating space for an encounter”, *The Way: A Review of Christian Spirituality* 47.1 (2007), pp. 7–20. For more on the religious meaning of Jesuit world maps in China, see Chen Hui-Heng, “The human body as a universe: understanding heaven by visualization and sensibility in Jesuit cartography in China”, *The Catholic Historical Review* 93.3 (2007), pp. 517–552.

continents, the latter of which are readily recognisable because of the use of colour. Second, he asks the reader to zoom out and to consider, in contrast, how infinitely small this world is compared with heaven: “not more than a dot on a circle.” Third, the reader is asked to zoom in and consider how their country is only a dot among the continents and, zooming in even further, how the piece of land that the body occupies is only a small dot in that country. In a fourth and last step, the smallest and largest scales in this mental exercise are brought together by noting that the reader, as a human being, is infinitely small yet part of an infinitely large whole.

This exercise maximises the reader’s engagement with the map image immediately below the text and guides a specific cognitive operation that encourages mental displacement. Aleni appears to have been particularly fond of such visually oriented techniques for their mnemonic effect: in the late 1630s, he produced the *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* 天主降生出像經解 (*Explanations on the Incarnation of the Heavenly Lord*, 1637), with selected images that were taken from the *Evangelicae historiae imagines* (Antwerp, 1593) by Jerónimo Nadal (1507–1580).²¹ Nadal’s images that illustrate the life of Jesus were commonly deployed by the Jesuits, applying the *compositio loci* technique in order to facilitate a first-hand immersive experience of a religious story. The inclusion of a fold-out map of Jerusalem in some surviving copies of Aleni’s *Tianzhu jiangsheng chuxiang jingjie* suggests that it could be applied just as successfully to the reading of maps.

In the final part of the text, Aleni builds on the reader’s immersive experience of reading the map images, repositioning the link between the physical body and the universe within a broader framework:

Although it is only a very small dot, a soul²² was bestowed onto it by The Creator, which itself is able to grasp heaven and earth and to understand the True Lord of heaven and earth, and of the myriad things. This is what is meant when one says “the human body is a small heaven-and-earth.” If you believe [this], given the extreme smallness of this bodily form, how then could you develop an arrogant outlook? And given the extreme greatness of this mindful soul, there cannot be a reason for putting oneself down and for thinking lowly of oneself. If, whenever we unfold a map, we try to appreciate human life between heaven and earth, how could [we think] it is all coincidence?

The expression “the human body is a small heaven-and-earth” also appears in another of Aleni’s works—the *Xingxue cushu* 性學彙述 (*A Brief Introduction to the Study of Human Nature*, 1624): “[The human] is called the wisest of the myriad of things, and it can be said that *the human body is a small universe*, and that all the myriad things are complete in me.”²³ Here, Aleni adopts an expression that was also used by other authors, such as Lang Ying 郎瑛 (1487–1566). In his *Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿 (*Draft on the Seven Areas of Study*),²⁴ it is even the title of a short subsection that begins as follows:

²¹ M. Shin Junhyoung, “Jesuit mnemonics and topographic narrative: *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* in late Ming China (Fuzhou, 1637)”, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 103 (2012), pp. 237–271.

²² According to the Aristotelian philosophy that the Jesuits propounded, it was *anima*, the immortal rational soul, that distinguished man from animals.

²³ Emphasis added. For a full translation of the passage, see T. Meynard and Dawei Pan (trans.), *A Brief Introduction to the Study of Human Nature* (Leiden, 2020), p. 91. The original text reads: 人為萬物之靈，謂人身即一小天地，而萬物咸備於我也；see N. Standaert and A. Dudink (eds.), *Yesuhui Luoma dang’anguan MingQing tianzhujiao wenxian* 耶穌會羅馬檔案館明清天主教文獻 [*Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus*] (Taipei, 2002), vol. 6.

²⁴ Other texts that contain the expression are commentaries on ancient Chinese texts and Taoist classics, such as Chen Zhixu’s 陳致虛 (b. 1290) *Taishang tongxuan lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing zhu* 太上洞玄靈寶無量度人上品妙經注, *juan xia*, in *Chongkan Daozang jiyao* 重刊道藏輯要, 1906, kangji 6, 71a.

It is said that the human body is a small heaven-and-earth. Heaven is above and its shape is round, while the human head is [also] round like that; the earth is below and its shape is square, while the human foot is [also] square like that. The four seasons are in flux on the surface, like the four limbs are on the outside (of the body); the five elements are located within, like the five organs on the inside (of the body).²⁵

Aleni thus provided readers with a new meaning to an existing phrase expression. The expression therefore not only links the introductory text to yet another printed work by Aleni, but also brings it into conversation with a wider corpus of Ming texts.

Taken together, the introductory text guides the reader to meditate on the idea of a mortal physical body, located on the earth that is represented by the world map and home to an immortal rational soul. Positioned in between heaven and earth, the human soul is able to grasp the workings of heaven and earth as represented by the world map and the “view from above” on the map of the two hemispheres. This ability to comprehend all of Creation in turn connects humans to the Christian god. Aleni proposes that such an understanding of the human condition prevents both haughtiness and despair. The introductory text therefore not only introduces the basics of global geography as an integral part of Christian cosmology to a Chinese readership, but also provides spiritual guidance through visualisation. While these contents illuminate the practical function of the Kobe sheet as a basis for starting conversations in the context of missionary practice, their historical meaning emerges from reconstructing its inter-textual connections. This locates the Kobe sheet firmly within a web of late Ming books, many of which were co-created within an emerging community of Chinese Christians and a handful of European Jesuits—with Aleni prominently among them. A close reading of the introductory text therefore shifts the focus from the European missionary to the social and material contexts in which he operated. These social and material contexts also shaped the two remaining parts of the Kobe sheet that contain the maps, to which we now turn.

Revisiting the origins of the maps proper

Between 1610 and 1612, after the death of Ricci but several decades before the printing of the Kobe sheet, a zealous eunuch tax official in Fujian province obtained two European maps from a ship and forwarded them to the imperial throne.²⁶ Upon receiving the Latin-language maps of Europe and the Americas, the emperor consulted his administration and tasked the Directorate for the Veneration of Heaven (Qintianjian 欽天監) with explaining and annotating the maps. Diego Pantoja (1571–1618) and Sabatino de Ursis (1575–1620)—two Jesuit missionaries who were working for the directorate in their capacity as court astronomers responsible for composing the state calendar—translated and annotated the two maps. The resulting short text eventually circulated in Beijing as a manuscript treatise.²⁷ One copy of this treatise, probably including maps, reached the city of Hangzhou, which is centrally located in the Yangtze River delta. By the late 1610s, the city had become a refuge for European missionaries and their converts during the so-called Nanjing persecution (1616–1617). While some missionaries were expelled to

²⁵ 傳云:人身一小天地。天形圓而在上,人之首圓應之。地形方而在下,人之足方應之。四時運於表,四肢應於外也。五行處於裏,五臟應於內也。Lang Ying 郎瑛, *Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿, Ming print held by the National Library of China, http://read.nlc.cn/allSearch/searchDetail?searchType=10024&showType=1&indexName=data_892&fid=411999023108, Juan 16, 2a–b.

²⁶ Explained in detail in Wang Yongjie, “Explaining European geography: the *Zhifang waiji* and its editions”, in Cams and Papelitzky (eds.), *Remapping the World in East Asia*, pp. 79–102.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Macao, others found protection at their scholarly friends' residences.²⁸ After the persecution had lost its initial momentum, the missionaries' most prominent scholarly friends and hosts in Hangzhou, Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1557–1627) and Li Zhizao 李之藻 (1571–1630), could once again support the printing of treatises that were co-authored by Jesuit missionaries and their Chinese scholarly friends, just as they had done before the persecution.²⁹ It was in this context that the original explanatory treatise that was composed for the emperor was taken up, augmented, and turned into a book.

Yang Tingyun and Giulio Aleni, with the latter staying at the former's residence, collaboratively extended and edited the treatise by Pantoja and de Ursis in the summer of 1623, and the resulting book was printed in the autumn of the same year.³⁰ Prefaces and indications of authorship confirm that this was not a Jesuit enterprise, but a collaborative publication effort that was supported by a strong scholarly network and booming private print market.³¹ The published book, entitled *Zhifang waiji*, is a Chinese-language world geography that shares elements of writing about the world that were popular in late Ming China, but mostly draws on Renaissance sources and concepts. Information grouped per country and categorised by continent is interwoven with elaborations on the Christian faith and Catholic Church, presented in a polished narrative form.³²

In 1625, Aleni moved from Hangzhou to Fuzhou after having met Ye Xianggao 葉向高 (1559–1627)—a retired Grand Secretary who was a native of Fujian province and who introduced Aleni to his local intellectual network at Fuzhou.³³ As the first Jesuit missionary in Fujian, Aleni had to establish his reputation immediately after his arrival there, particularly as Franciscan and Dominican missionaries, who did not approve of the methods of the Jesuits, were also gaining foothold in the province. The *Zhifang waiji* most likely helped him a great deal, as a second edition of the work was printed in Fuzhou, for which Ye Xianggao wrote a preface before his death in 1627.³⁴ The *Zhifang waiji* is therefore extant in two editions: the first was produced in Hangzhou in 1623 and the other in Fuzhou after 1625. Although the two editions of the *Zhifang waiji* can easily be distinguished by paratextual information, they cover the same contents verbatim.³⁵

²⁸ Dai Lianbin, "Household publications in the society of Ming Hangzhou", in *Imprimer sans profit? Le livre non commercial dans la Chine impériale*, (eds.) M. Bussotti and J.-P. Drège (Genève, 2015), pp. 339–414.

²⁹ Hangzhou was a centre of literati culture and thus also of household publications in late Ming China, and these collaborators were continuing an earlier push in producing printed matter to help the Jesuit mission; see N. Standaert, "Mapping the printing of Sino-European intercultural books in China (1582–c.1823)", *East Asian Publishing and Society* 12 (2022), pp. 130–191, especially pp. 140–141.

³⁰ Their co-authorship of the book is stated at the beginning of each chapter. Giovanni Magnini's *Geografia cioe descrizione universale* and Jose de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral da las indias* are possible sources used by Aleni and Yang during their extension and editing of the original treatise; P. de Troia, "Zhong Xi dilixue zhishi ji dilixue cihui de jiaoliu: Ai Rulüe 'Zhifang waiji' de xifang yuanben" 中西地理學知識及地理學詞彙的交流：艾儒略《職方外紀》的西方原本, *Wakumon* 或問 67.11 (2006), pp. 67–75.

³¹ For more on the book and print markets of late Ming China, see Chow Kai-wing, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford, 2004).

³² B. Hung-kay Luk, "A study of Giulio Aleni's 'Chih-fang wai chi' 職方外紀", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40.1 (1977), pp. 58–84.

³³ A. Dudink, "Giulio Aleni and Li Jiubiao", in "Scholar from the West: Giulio Aleni S.J. (1582–1649) and the Dialogue between Christianity and China", (eds.) T. Lippiello and R. Malek (Nettetal, 1997), pp. 129–200, here pp. 130–142.

³⁴ Ye Xianggao's preface explicitly states that the book was widely read in Fujian and Aleni therefore had a second edition printed in the province; Ai Rulüe and Yang Tingyun, *Zhifang waiji*, Fujian edition held by the Library of Congress, "Ye Xianggao xu", 4b–5a.

³⁵ The only textual difference between editions concerns the structuring of that text into chapters. The Hangzhou edition features five chapters, covering Asia, Europe, Libya (Africa), the Americas, and the Four Seas, with information on the antipodal continent of Magellanica, appended to the chapter on the Americas. The Fujian edition rearranges contents and moves information on Magellanica into a separate sixth chapter; Wang Yongjie, "Explaining European geography".

Following the personal trajectory of Aleni from Hangzhou to Fuzhou, the *Zhifang waiji* was collaboratively composed, edited, and printed within strong local networks of patronage.

Most prints of both the Hangzhou and Fuzhou editions of the *Zhifang waiji* include five map sheets: one world map, and one map each for the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.³⁶ Whereas most maps have filled black-and-white gradation bars, stripes are employed in the maps of Europe and the Americas (Figure 6). Following this difference, the latter two maps do not include figures (ships and a sea monster), which feature prominently on the maps of Asia and Africa. This stylistic difference between the continental maps originates from the origins of the project, where only the maps of Europe and the Americas were sent to the court between 1610 and 1612, as mentioned above. An additional sheet with two hemispherical maps that also includes two astronomical diagrams appears in most extant Fuzhou prints and has been included in a few Hangzhou prints as well.³⁷ Each of these six map sheets covers four half-pages of the book, rendering their manner of folding and binding relatively uncommon, with readers having to turn the folios or remove one side of the folio from the binding in order to appreciate any given map in its entirety (Figure 7).

The general maps that are included in the *Zhifang waiji* are precisely the maps that feature on the Kobe sheet: the world map, entitled “Wanguo quantu” (“Complete map of all countries”), and the maps that depict the northern and southern hemispheres, entitled “Bei yudi tu” (“Map of northern territories”) and “Nan yudi tu” (“Map of southern territories”), respectively. The general maps, therefore, are extant in two rather distinct formats, either inserted within a book or printed together on a single sheet. Each of these two formats came with its own production context and exists in different editions. This long and complicated textual history of the *Zhifang waiji* brings us to the final issue, namely the precise relationship between the extant prints of these general maps across different formats and editions, including as part of the Kobe sheet.

Comparison of the general maps across formats and editions

In line with the two editions of the *Zhifang waiji*, detailed comparison of its six map sheets confirms that all of them were carved twice—once as part of the Hangzhou edition and a second time as part of the Fuzhou edition. This process introduced minor discrepancies, just as we have seen with the text (Figure 8). The most obvious difference is that the continental maps of Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas in the Fuzhou edition all have

³⁶ The authors personally consulted the following copies: (1) Hangzhou edition: Kyoto University (no maps; F1-77); Tōyō bunko (five maps; the map of the two hemispheres is not included, V-5-A-28); (2) Fuzhou edition: Rome Central Library (six maps; 72-C494); Kyoto University (six maps; 2B-43). The following digitised versions were also consulted: (1) Hangzhou edition: Waseda University (five maps, the map of the two hemispheres is not included, 文庫08 C0488, https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_c0488/index.html); National Library of China (five maps, the map of the two hemispheres is not included; volume 8 in 05200, http://read.nlc.cn/allSearch/searchDetail?searchType=10024&showType=1&indexName=data_892&fid=411999011140); Fu Ssu-nien library of Academia Sinica (five maps; 178668–178670; via the onsite database); (2) Fuzhou edition: Library of Congress (six maps; B686 A25, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2012402472>); National Archives of Japan (six maps; 292–0171, <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/img/3602548>); National Library of China (no maps; 15551; http://read.nlc.cn/allSearch/searchDetail?searchType=10024&showType=1&indexName=data_892&fid=411999026205); Bibliothèque nationale de France (six maps; Chinois 1519–1520; <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b90060999>); Vatican Library (six maps; Borg.cin.512; https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.cin.512); Fu Ssu-nien library of Academia Sinica (six maps; FT027R; via the onsite database). In all cases, the world map and, if included, the map of the two hemispheres are bound at the beginning of the book after the prefaces, while the maps of the continents are included at the beginning of the corresponding chapter.

³⁷ The authors know of one extant Hangzhou print that includes the two hemispherical maps, which was on sale at Martayan Lan in around the year 2017 (<https://www.martayanlan.com/>).

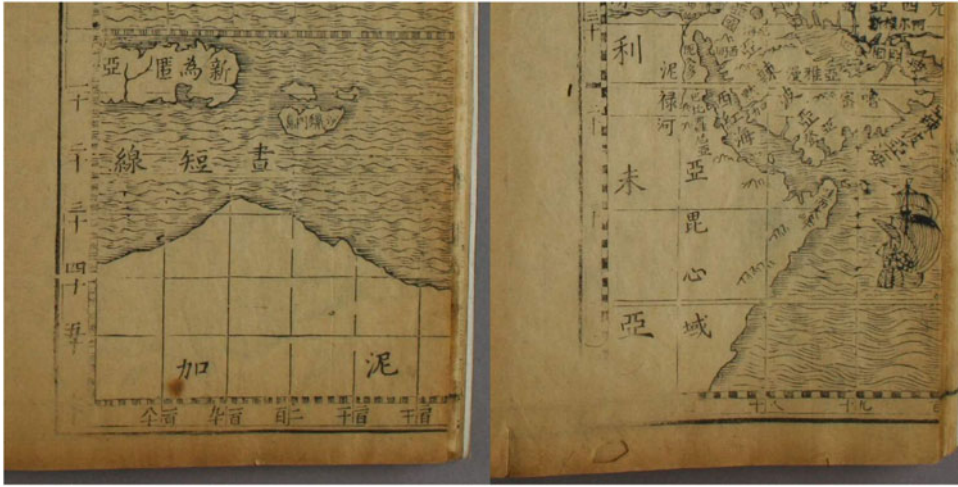


Figure 6. Two maps from the same (Hangzhou-edition) copy of the *Zhifang waiji*. Notice the difference in style that was employed for the gradation bars on the map of the Americas (left) and the map of Asia (right). This difference matches the inclusion of a sea monster and two ships on the maps of Africa and Asia (one ship is in the lower right corner). Source: Waseda University Library.

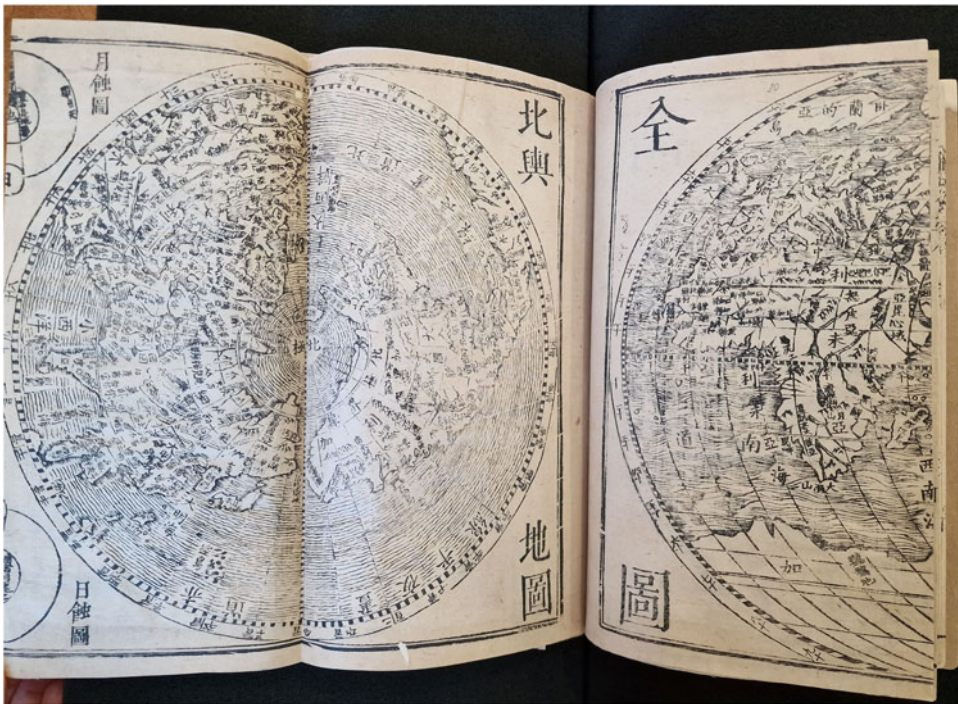


Figure 7. The last page of the world map from a Fuzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji* and the first page of the next map sheet, with only the northern hemisphere visible. Note how the reader needs to fold open a page to see the whole hemisphere, yet still cannot see the entire sheet at once. Source: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma. Photo by Elke Papelitzky.

titles that are added beyond the neatline in the right margin. Such titles are entirely missing in the Hangzhou edition. Besides these added map titles, some place names differ slightly between the editions. For example, the island of Hispaniola is marked as Little Spain Island (Xiao Yixibaniya dao 小以西把尼亞島) on the world map in the Hangzhou edition, but as New Spain Island (Xin Yixibaniya dao 新以西把尼亞島) in the Fuzhou edition.³⁸ Distinguishing between Hangzhou and Fuzhou editions of the maps is thus relatively straightforward and leads to a number of additional insights, the most important of which is their relationship with the Kobe sheet.

A detailed comparison of the two general map sheets from both editions of the *Zhifang waiji* to the Kobe sheet reveals that the same blocks were used to print the general maps on the Kobe sheet and in the Fuzhou edition (Figure 9). Although we do not know whether the Kobe sheet was produced before or after the Fuzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji*, the Hangzhou *Zhifang waiji* definitely existed before the printing of the Kobe sheet. This means that Aleni drew directly from the book that he had produced in tandem with Yang Tingyun and that, helped by Ye Xianggao, he oversaw the recarving of the entire *Zhifang waiji*, including all of its maps, in Fuzhou. This further suggests that he probably initiated the production of the Kobe sheet soon afterwards, combining the two Fuzhou printing blocks that feature in the general maps with a newly carved block that featured in his single-authored introductory text.

The original blocks that were used to print the Hangzhou edition indeed remained in Hangzhou with Li Zhizao, who used them to reprint the *Zhifang waiji* for inclusion in his *Tianxue chuhan* 天學初函 (*First Collection on Heavenly Learning*, 1626)—the first collection of “European learning” that was printed in China. This continued use of the original printing blocks in China’s intellectual heartland ensured the wider circulation of the Hangzhou edition within Ming- and Qing-era print culture. Later, during the eighteenth century, it was also this edition that was incorporated, with continental maps, into the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*) imperial library and other collectanea.³⁹ Significantly, maps from the Hangzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji* also made an impact as being divorced from its accompanying text: its world map was one of two direct sources for Cao Junyi’s 曹君義 *Tianxia jiubian fenye renji lucheng quantu* 天下九邊分野人跡路程全圖 (*Complete Map of All under Heaven, the Nine Frontiers, Astral Affiliations, Human Traces, and Route Itineraries*, 1644), which was later reprinted in Qing China and Edo Japan.⁴⁰

The Fuzhou edition, on the other hand, also circulated in Japan. The Fujian coast, where Aleni was active, was a prime zone of contact between the Japanese and Chinese worlds at the time, and many books and maps had already made their way to Nagasaki in Japan shortly after being printed. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that libraries and museums in Japan preserve many Ming-era books, including the *Zhifang waiji*, often in excellent condition, and that the Kobe sheet itself—the only extant Ming-era print that we know of—survives at a Japanese institution. Yet, from 1630 onwards, the *Zhifang*

³⁸ This comparison is based on the Hangzhou edition in Waseda University Library (digitised) and the Fuzhou edition kept in the Library of Congress (digitised).

³⁹ These collectanea are: *Mohai jinhu* 墨海金壺 (early nineteenth century), *Shoushangge congshu* 守山閣叢書 (1844), and *Huangchao fanshu yudi congshu* 皇朝藩屬輿地叢書 (1903). In contrast to the *Siku quanshu*, these three collectanea include the world map in addition to the four continental maps but are also missing the two hemispheres. Ferdinand Verbiest would later recap much of the textual contents of the *Zhifang waiji* in his *Kunyu tushuo* 坤輿圖說 (1672). Judging from the appearance of the section on Magellanica, which does not carry the suffix *zhou* 州 (sic; continent), he likely also consulted the Hangzhou edition. Verbiest’s work was also incorporated into the *Siku quanshu*.

⁴⁰ M. Cams, “Circling the square: encompassing global geography on large commercial maps”, in Cams and Papelitzky (eds.), *Remapping the World in East Asia*, pp. 124–155.

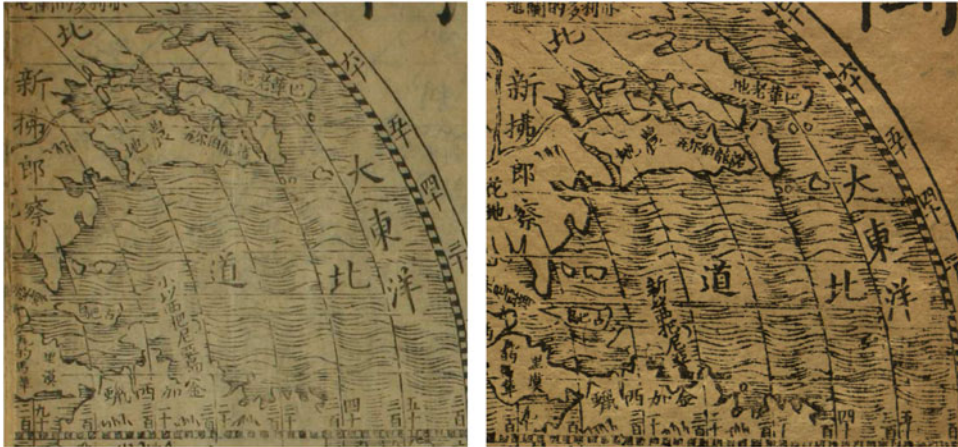


Figure 8. Details of a Hangzhou-edition world map from the *Zhifang waji* (left) and a Fuzhou-edition map (right). Notice the different names for Hispaniola. Sources: Waseda University Library (left) and Library of Congress (right).

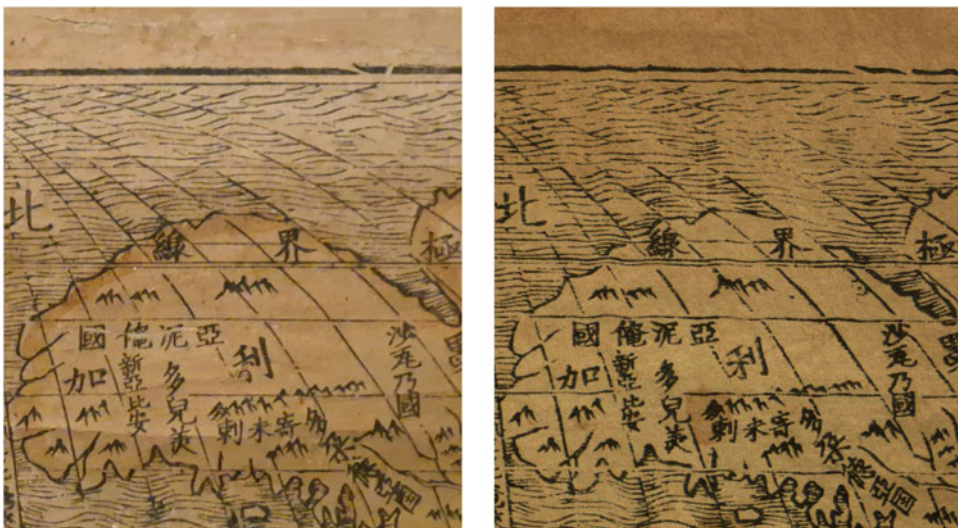


Figure 9. Details of the Kobe sheet (left) and a Fuzhou print of the *Zhifang waji* (right). The paper on the *Zhifang waji* print is slightly wrinkled. Notice the same crack in the neatline at the top and the identical wave pattern. Sources: Kobe City Museum (left) and Library of Congress (right).

waji was banned in Japan due to the censorship of Christianity.⁴¹ The Kobe sheet, with its Jesuit seal, likely would have faced similar censorship if discovered, suggesting that it arrived in Japan either shortly after being printed or else much later. At the same time, and despite the censorship, the *Zhifang waji* became a popular book that circulated

⁴¹ Ō. Ōba, *Books and Boats: Sino-Japanese Relations in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, (trans.) J. A. Fogel (Portland, MN, 2012), pp. 46–47; E. Papelitzky, “World maps from China reimagined in Japan”, in Cams and Papelitzky (eds.), *Remapping the World in East Asia*, p. 161.

widely in manuscript form throughout the Edo period (1603–1868).⁴² As a rule, these manuscripts do not include the maps, although at least one exception contains the continental maps of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.⁴³ It was undoubtedly the rich exchange between Fuzhou and Nagasaki that ensured the wide circulation of the *Zhifang waiji* in Japan, making it likely that the Kobe sheet also reached Japan directly from Fujian.

Another insight that supports the differentiation between the two editions of the general maps of the *Zhifang waiji* concerns the later Qing-era sheets that were discussed above. Comparison with the earlier Ming-era prints confirms that the blocks for the world map had been carved anew, but the use of the term “Little Spain Island” (Xiao Yixibaniya dao) for Hispaniola reveals that they were modelled on the Hangzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji*. In contrast, the two hemispherical maps on the Qing-era sheets were not carved anew during Qing times, but rather printed from Ming-era blocks, as a comparison with one of the few Hangzhou editions that features the two hemispherical maps shows.⁴⁴ This recarving of the world map and reuse of the Hangzhou blocks for the two hemispherical maps meant that the quality of the two maps on the Qing-era sheets differs significantly: printed lines are much finer and more consistent on the hemispherical maps compared with the world map. Thus, the Qing-era sheets are complex artefacts that were printed from woodblocks that were carved at different times.

Finally, the fact that the general maps materialised as part of different formats did not preclude creative adaptation after printing. The Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan holds a single horizontal sheet that contains only the world map, which was clearly printed from the same woodblocks as the Hangzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji* (Figure 10). It features the same colour scheme as the other prints, which suggests early appreciation by its owner as a separate artefact—perhaps even a prototype of sorts, as none of the extant copies of the book includes coloured maps. We might imagine that, during the printing of the *Zhifang waiji*, extra prints were made of its main map and distributed early on by missionaries such as Aleni and their close allies, tracing the continents in colour and deploying them as visual tools in their proselytisation efforts among elites. Perhaps it was the local gentry’s interest in such circulating prints that inspired a new artefact, on the initiative of Aleni, which resulted in the creation of the Kobe sheet. Combining material features of both the book maps and the single sheet, the Ambrosiana print symbolises how late Ming print culture shaped missionary practices as well as the reception of Renaissance geography in seventeenth-century China.

Conclusion

This study reconstructs the intertextuality of the Kobe sheet with due attention paid to its materiality as a printed artefact in three parts. In doing so, it traces intertextual connections to a range of other artefacts—most importantly, a co-created Chinese-language book on world geography. Two general maps from this world geography went on to lead their

⁴² Waseda University alone holds four manuscripts of the *Zhifang waiji*; Wang, “Explaining European geography”, p. 87. Furthermore, the authors have examined two manuscripts at Ryukoku University Library (490.9-36-W-1, 490.9-22-W-3), one at Nichibunken (GA/74/Ga), and one at Tōhoku University (3/8156/1). They are all in six *juan* and thus were copied from the Fuzhou edition.

⁴³ A note is included which claims that the other maps were originally missing. The manuscript is kept at Ryukoku University Library (490.9-22-W-3). A scan is available online at <https://da.library.ryukoku.ac.jp/page/170147>.

⁴⁴ See note 37. We base this comparison on an image provided by Martayan Lan. Significantly, none of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collections that are based on the Hangzhou edition includes the two hemispherical maps. Thus, the blocks for this sheet might have been carved after the Hangzhou edition was first produced, but before the advent of Qing rule in the Yangtze River delta.



Figure 10. *Wanguo quantu*—a single sheet with the world map from the Hangzhou edition of the *Zhifang waiji*. Coloured by hand. Size: 49.4 x 24.3 centimetres. Source: Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, S. P. II.308.

own lives in the sense that one of the co-authors of the book—the Jesuit missionary Giulio Aleni—used them in direct support for his mission in Fujian province. He did so by creating a new artefact that came with new textual instructions on how to meditate on the image of a global world, making full use of the fact that, visually and content-wise, it represented a new experience for Chinese readers. At the same time, more familiar concepts were borrowed in an effort to connect to ongoing intellectual conversations. This balance allowed Aleni to deploy Renaissance geography in the only way that made sense during this early stage of the Jesuit’s presence in the mountainous province of Fujian: to facilitate conversations with the local gentry.⁴⁵ The Kobe sheet, in three parts, is the material testament to these conversations with local contacts. In producing the map sheet and marking it with his personal seal, Aleni played a full part in the local literati and late Ming print culture. At the same time, he drew attention to a strange yet compelling new vision of world geography that raised questions and started conversations, not only about the “Lord of Heaven” and their Creation, but also the place of Ming China in the world.

Looking beyond authorship and messaging, a major change in format and mode of presentation underlay the creation of the Kobe sheet—an entirely novel artefact. By transferring two general maps from the *Zhifang waiji* onto a single sheet of paper and by arranging them vertically together with a newly authored text, new modes of consultation and reception ensued. In the *Zhifang waiji*, the reader had to turn the pages to be able to see the general maps in their entirety. The single-sheet format of the Kobe print, on the other hand, although printed from the same woodblocks, allowed the reader

⁴⁵ Zürcher, *Kouduo richao*, pp. 77–80. At the same time, Aleni corresponded with intellectuals in Europe as soon as he arrived in Asia. In a letter sent from Macao dated 1611, for example, he writes to Antonio Magini at the University of Bologna, informing him of a solar eclipse that he observed on the way to Asia. In the same letter, Aleni mentions that he plans to create an overview map (“*mappa intiero*”), although the context seems to suggest that, at the time of writing, he had a rather different map in mind, tailored to European contacts such as Magini; A. Favaro (ed.), *Carteggio inedito di Ticone Brahe, Giovanni Keplero, e di altri celebri, astronomi e matematici dei secoli XVI. e XVII. con Giovanni Antonio Magini* (Bologna, 1886), pp. 347–349. The authors are indebted to Stefano Piastra for this reference.

to see both maps at once, and even added an introductory text. It also allowed the entire composition to be hung on a wall, displayed, and appreciated in a more permanent manner. On the other hand, the sheets provided much less information than the book did: descriptions of the fauna and flora of places no longer appeared in close proximity to the maps. As a separate artefact that was mounted on a scroll, in the manner of an artwork, colours were applied to visually highlight the division of the world into five continents. But the new format and the added colours also supported a specific function—to guide readers in their consultation of the map sheet and lead them to reflect on the connection between the human world and the Christian god, as laid out in the introductory text. As such, on the Kobe sheet, world geography acquired important new meanings in the hands of its readers.

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Conflicts of interest. None.

Appendix: Chinese text on the map sheet with added punctuation

The edits in the Qing editions are marked in brackets behind the original.

萬國圖小引

造物主化成十二重天而火氣水土四行，從輕至重，漸次相裹。地在天之中，形圓而德方，永不遷移。東西南北之名，上下中外之分，人皆從厥所居以定，實則無往非中也。地與天同一圓體，度數相應。故畫地必取規於天。天有黃赤二道，南北二級，冬夏二至，經緯之度，各三百有六十。地圖亦倣此以成，然地既形圓，則畫之以毬，最能像象。惟是畫之平面，不免展為長形，如剖柑皮而伸之者然。天下萬方總分為五大州，曰亞細亞，曰歐羅巴，曰利未亞，曰亞墨利加，曰墨瓦蠟泥加。又此各州中分大小無算之國。小圖不能畫筆也，茲不過述其大約云耳。噫，五州之大，萬國之眾，其於上天不過圈中之一點也。吾所居之邦又五州之一點也。吾之所駐足又大邦之一點也。今我比天為何如乎？我比天地之

大主又為何如乎？則我正似點中之一點而無處可覓我矣。顧我身之在天地。雖為甚微而一點，靈才為造物主所賦，自能包括天地而明天地萬物之

真主。所謂人身一小天地也。信而以此形軀之至小，則何處可生倨傲之見【情】；以此靈心之至為何如大，則無可自棄自賤之理。試各披畲而玩人生天地間，夫豈偶然者哉！【果知乎此則天地在目豈徒然為何如哉！】

西海艾儒略敬題

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