'A Place full of Trade':
Placing an early modern Chinese town in global cultural history*

Anne Gerritsen
University of Warwick

Abstract: This article focuses on the history of Wuchengzhen 吳城鎮, a small town in the inland province of Jiangxi. It explores the history of the town between 1500 and 1850 in terms of both its local significance as an entrepot for trade in grain and tea and its global connections to early modern Europe, by way of the trade in porcelain. The question this paper explores concerns the juxtaposition between, on the one hand, the idea gained from global historians, that during the early modern period, globally traded commodities like tea and porcelain situate a small town like this in a globalized, perhaps even unified or homogenous, world, and on the other hand, the insight gained from cultural historians, that no two people would ever see, or assign meaning to, this small town in the same way. Drawing on this insight, the history of Wuchengzhen is explored on the basis of different textual (administrative records, local gazetteers, merchant manuals) and visual sources (maps and visual depictions of the town), exploring the ways in which the different meanings of the town are constructed in each. The combination of global and cultural history places Wuchengzhen on our map of the early modern world.

Keywords: Early modern China, global cultural history, porcelain, tea, merchants, Jiangxi

Introduction

The Dutchman who observes the riverside towns glide past from the boat he sails on; the scholar-official who takes account of the towns under his control from the administrative seat in which he holds his office; the route-book publisher who represents towns as the connecting nodes that form a route; the map-maker who draws small triangles to indicate market towns; all of these see something different when they look at a Chinese town. All of them choose their own words, images and symbols to represent what they see. In this paper, I discuss the multiple ways in which a single, small, riverside town, Wuchengzhen 吳城鎮, was seen and represented during the period 1500 to 1850. To call this period 'early modern' is problematic, because it suggests far more equivalency with the European early modernity that it borrows the term from than it probably ever had. And yet, for our purposes, it will have to do, because we are connecting this small town in the inland province of Jiangxi to early modern Europe, by way of the global commodities, such as porcelain and tea, that were traded there. The question this paper explores, as will be discussed in more detail below, concerns the juxtaposition between, on the one hand, the idea gained from global historians, that during the early modern period, globally traded commodities, in this case tea and porcelain, might connect a small town like this to a globalizing world, and on the other hand, the insight gained from cultural historians, that no two people would ever see, or assign meaning to, a town, in this case Wuchengzhen, in the same way.[1]

By all accounts, Wuchengzhen was (and is) an unimportant town. It is located inland, to the south of the Yangzi, on the edge of Lake Poyang, just at the point where the Gan flows into the lake (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Outline map of southern China.

By piecing together the various representations of Wuchengzhen's history, we can see the town in various perspectives, ranging from the local to the global, via the (trans)regional and the (trans)national. More importantly, I intend to use the discussion of this single town to demonstrate the importance of the tools of cultural history for challenging the ways in which such terms are often deployed. Far too often, the scales of analysis – local, regional, global, etc. – are applied by historians with hindsight and from the outside; the terms are assumed to have an a priori significance, as if 'the local' or 'the global' always refer to the same units of analysis.[2] Instead, I seek to identify the ways in which spatial frameworks are generated within the specific sources that feature this town, to see what the place meant to those who created those sources. In this way, I hope this discussion of an early modern Chinese town can help not only to make cultural history more global but also to show the importance of cultural history for the study of global connections.

Nieuhof and the global history of Wuchengzhen

To begin, we view this small town through the eyes of a foreign visitor. In June 1655, a Dutch delegation of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) left Batavia for the imperial court in Beijing. The group consisted of fourteen men, and was led by Jacob de Keizer and Pieter de Goyer, chief buyer ('opperkoopman') of the VOC.[3] They carried substantial gifts, mostly manufactured goods sourced in Europe, in the hope of persuading the newly established Manchu rulers to afford them an advantageous trade deal. They had to wait for several months in the southern port city of Canton, where they were hosted by the local provincial governor. When they were finally given permission to set off on their journey of over 2,000 km, it was already March 1656. They sailed inland towards the capital in the north, via the many rivers and canals that provided the most convenient transport for such a group carrying goods.[4] Among the delegation was a man called Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672), who served as its first steward ('eerste hofmeester').

Nieuhof had started off as merchant in the Westindische Maatschappij, travelling to Brazil in 1640, where he stayed until 1649. After a three-year sojourn back in his native Bentheim in Germany, not far from the Dutch border, he set out for the east, arriving in Batavia in 1654. His appointment as steward on the delegation to China only a year after his arrival suggests he made a strong impression on the governor-general of the Dutch East Indies, a man named Joan Maetsuycker (1606–1678), who had only been appointed to that illustrious post a year earlier in 1653. But it was the Amsterdam burgomaster Cornelis Witsen (1605–1669), who had recommended Nieuhof, apparently for his drawing skills.[5]

Nieuhof's report of the Dutch embassy to China, which lasted from 1655 to 1657, has become one of the most widely read seventeenth-century European descriptions of

China, not least because Nieuhof's brother Hendrik, based in Amsterdam, arranged for 150 detailed engravings to be added to Johan's account when he had the text published in 1665.[6] These engravings were loosely based on the sketches that accompanied Johan's text, but Hendrik had never been outside of the Netherlands, so inevitably, the illustrations were an elaboration, to say the least.[7] Below, we will return to these illustrations, but first it is worth getting a flavour of the descriptions of China that Nieuhof provided. See, for example, the description of a town he called Ucienjen, where they arrived in April 1656.

> Upon the 25. of *April* we came to a Village famous for Shipping, call'd *Ucienjen*, where lay great store of Vessels of several sorts and sizes, which were come thither from all Parts of *China*, to lade with *China* Earthen Ware, great quantities whereof are sold in this Village, which lies near to the Pool call'd Poyang, upon the side of the River *Can*, and is about a Mile long: It is a Place full of Trade, and very handsomely built. […] Quite through the middle of this rich Village runs a broad Street, full of Shops on both sides, where all manner of Commodities are sold, but the chiefest Trade is in *Porcelane* or *China* Ware, which is to be had there in great abundance.[8]

Various aspects caught Nieuhof's attention: the range of ships in this little waterside town, and the many parts of China they had come from; the 'China ware' that was loaded onto these ships; the location near a lake (Poyang) and a river (the Gan), and the ubiquity of commodities for trade, especially porcelain. Seen through Nieuhof's eyes, Ucienjen, or Wuchengzhen as it is known today, must have appeared the perfect place to visit: full of shops that sold in abundant quantities precisely what the Dutch wanted from China, and easily accessible by boat, with transport routes in all directions. Unfortunately, the ships

that had brought Nieuhof and his delegation to Wuchengzhen soon sailed onwards, towards the emperor, who would not grant them any kind of regular access to any of the numerous market towns they had sailed past on their journey from Canton to Beijing.

Wuchengzhen could be seen as a 'global' town through its trade in porcelain. By the middle of the seventeenth century, blue-and-white porcelain, mass-produced in the ceramics production site of Jingdezhen 景德鎮, a short distance from Wuchengzhen (112 km or 79 miles as the crow flies), and traded and transported through the town by way of Lake Poyang 鄱陽湖 and the Gan 贛江, was desired all over the globe. The VOC ships brought millions of pieces to the Netherlands, from where they were transhipped throughout Europe.[9] The Japanese, the Javanese, the Persians and the Mughals, to name just a random group of others, too consumed Jingdezhen's blue-and-white Chinaware.[10] The trade in porcelain, paid for by silver that the servants of the Spanish empire had extracted from mines in Potosí, connected Jingdezhen, but also trade depots like Wuchengzhen, transportation routes like the Gan, and connecting nodes like Lake Poyang, to the global economy of the seventeenth century, even if that did not guarantee the kind of political connections that globally-minded men like Johan Nieuhof had hoped for.

Global history and cultural history
The work of social and economic historians has long been part of the move towards the global: economic histories of the eighteenth century, for example, could focus on demonstrating how a single, silver-based economy connected people and their goods in China, India, Europe and the Americas.[11] Economically speaking, there was a clear connection between the pieces of porcelain manufactured in Jingdezhen and the consumers of porcelain in the Netherlands. The porcelain shops in Wuchengzhen are drawn into that

global network by forming one of the nodes that connected producers and consumers. The legacy of these global connections is material: the Chinese porcelain that filled the seventeenth-century homes of Dutch merchants still features in private homes and in the displays and storerooms of Dutch museum collections.[12] Of course, the trade in Chinese porcelain reached far beyond Dutch merchants alone. Swedish or Scottish country homes, dining tables in the United States, markets in colonial Mexico, to name but a few examples, all featured porcelains that were made in Jingdezhen and had passed through Wuchengzhen.[13] Global histories of the early modern world frequently invoke the image of porcelain as the perfect example of an early modern world that was connected through globally traded commodities.

As cultural historians, however, we are perhaps less interested in finding empirical evidence for the socio-economic ties that existed in the past and more in identifying the views and perspectives of those that created and shaped the textual traces and material legacies that remain today. To understand the past, a cultural historian might argue, we have to challenge the idea of a single historical truth, and instead recognise the multiple perspectives that co-existed in the past, the many competing truth claims, and the power dynamics that bring to the fore one perspective at the cost of another.[14] In other words, it may well be true that porcelain connected disparate parts of the seventeenth-century world, and we may wish to draw on material objects and textual documents to prove the existence of those global economic connections, but we cannot not really understand that past unless we unpack the multiple perspectives and views that are embedded within that material and textual legacy.

What I propose to do below is to look very closely at the sources that remain for the tiny node in the global network formed by the market town of Wuchengzhen, the nearby

lake of Poyang, and the marshes and rivers that surrounded Wuchengzhen and Lake Poyang. The historical sources for the Poyang region in the early modern period, which I consider, broadly speaking, to refer to the period between 1500 and 1850, are limited: they include administrative records for the region, created by those in charge of governing this area; maps, created for administrative purposes; route books, produced by those in charge of maintaining official pathways of communication in late imperial China; mercantile handbooks, left behind by the merchants whose livelihood depended on making profit out of regional trade; and travel accounts by foreign visitors like Johan Nieuhof. All these sources are inevitably shaped by the perspectives and circumstances from which they emerged. They all reveal certain visions of this area and they all reflect, in different ways, a desire to assert some measure of control over the region. The question we should ask is if (and if so, how) any of these sources, and the perspectives on this little town that they contain, reveal what we might call a global vision of this region. Before we proceed, however, it may be helpful to place Lake Poyang, the Gan and Wuchengzhen on a map and set out the geographical and chronological parameters within which this discussion is situated.

The Lake Poyang region

Wuchengzhen is a small town on a spit in Lake Poyang.[15] The town is not well known; it does not appear in many history books, nor does it feature on most maps of Jiangxi, the province in the southeast of China where this town is located. Lake Poyang, the lake that surrounds Wuchengzhen, is fed by the Yangzi, the longest river of China, and as a consequence, it changes in size over the course of the year. In spring, when the melting waters in the mountainous western provinces of the Chinese empire increase the water levels of the

Yangzi, the lake serves as an overflow for the river, inundating the floodplain that surrounds it. After the summer, the water level in the river decline, and the lake becomes smaller in surface. The size of the lake has also fluctuated throughout history. At one stage, the lake covered 6,000 square kilometres, although it has averaged around 3,500 square kilometres more recently.[16] Due to various factors, including consecutive droughts, the water storage created by the Three Gorges Dam, and the setting of water traps for fish-farming, recently the surface area of the lake has even been as low as 200 square kilometres.[17] Lake Poyang is also fed by the Gan, the river that flows northwards from Ganzhou, the southernmost county of Jiangxi province. The Gan flows past Jiangxi's provincial capital, Nanchang, into Lake Poyang and from there provides access to the Yangzi via a connecting channel. The Gan is one of the key north-south transportation routes in the southern Chinese empire, and Lake Poyang formed a key node in the late-imperial trade and communication systems for the entire part of the Chinese empire that lay south of the Yangzi.

Figure 2. Map of Jiangxi province.

To the north of the spit, the lake narrows as it leads towards the Yangzi; to the south of the spit, the lake widens significantly. Because of the fluctuations in the size of the lake, the lake's shores are irregular and the land surrounding the lake marshy. The ecological characteristics of the region have made it a place favoured by migratory birds; 98% of the world's population of Siberian cranes overwinter at Lake Poyang, as do egrets, spoonbills, storks, swans, geese, ducks, and shorebirds. The area has the status of a nature reserve (the Poyang Lake Nature Reserve) and is counted amongst the now 27 Wetlands of International Importance (the so-called 'Ramsar List') in China.[18] The counties immediately surrounding the lake were prone to flooding and the land was not considered to be particularly fertile. The editors of a late seventeenth-century gazetteer for this region described what the region's yielded in terms of natural products as follows: 'The best products everywhere in

this region are mountain products and fish. Among these, there are some very fine ones. But the county as a whole has poor quality land, and people are habitually frugal. Basic foodstuffs, plants, trees, fowl and fish, these are all part of the daily necessities of the hundred surnames; none of them are special'.[19]

As a consequence of this poor agricultural yield, the local population in the lake's surroundings focused on making the most of the transport opportunities on the region's river and lake-based network. Wuchengzhen became 'A Place full of Trade', as Nieuhof described it. The period from *ca*. 1730 to *ca*. 1830 was Wuchengzhen's heyday in economic terms. During this period, the densely populated town, described as having 'six districts, eight quays, nine paths and eighteen alleys' had a population of over 70,000 residents, supplemented by a further 20,000 migrants.[20] By way of comparison, around 1800, the English cities of Liverpool and Birmingham had a similarly sized population, so it is not insubstantial, although the empire's capital, Beijing, had a population of 1 million in 1800. Perhaps we could say that the reason Wuchengzhen is not widely known is not because it is too small to matter, but because the network of places, goods, and their transportation routes that connected Wuchengzhen to the rest of the world is hard to visualise.

The goods that these merchants traded and transported on the lake and the region's river network centred on three commodities: porcelain, grain and tea. Porcelain, as we already saw, was manufactured in the region east of the lake, especially in and around Jingdezhen, and was transported via Lake Poyang, Wuchengzhen, the Yangzi and the Gan. Grain, mostly from the area south of the lake, also passed through Wuchengzhen. The grain-growing region to the south of Nanchang made Jiangxi province an area of grain surplus. All the grain-producing counties had easy access to the river system of the Gan, from where grain was transported downriver on the Gan to Lake Poyang. At Wuchengzhen, where the

Gan flowed into the lake, grain-laden junks sailed northwards to Hukou 湖口, just slightly

downriver from Jiujiang 九江, where they could enter the Yangzi. From there, the junks

laden with grain tribute for the imperial court could sail downriver, towards the entrance of

the Grand Canal. Alternatively, the grain from the region could be shipped upriver towards

Jingdezhen along the Chang, which flowed into the lake near the county town of Poyang. So,

merchants transhipped grains throughout the region and beyond, and merchants from far-

flung locations came to market towns like Wuchengzhen to buy grain.

The third of the commodities that passed by Wuchengzhen was tea. Fuliang county

浮梁縣 in Raozhou prefecture 饒州府, to the northeast of Lake Poyang, and Qimen county

祁門縣 in Huizhou 徽州 (now part of Anhui province), were famous for the tea they

produced. In terms of the contemporary classification of different tea leaves, Fuliang tea

belongs to the same category as Qimen tea, or Qihong 祁紅 (literally 'red' from 'Qi'), which

became known from the nineteenth century onwards in the West as Keemun (being the

transliteration of Qimen). Keemun black tea was one of the named types of tea that was

highly sought after in nineteenth-century Europe and shows up in the records of the inland

Treaty Port of Jiujiang, where junk shipments of tea were recorded and taxed. This little

town in Lake Poyang, Wuchengzhen, served merchants in porcelain, grain and tea from all

over the Chinese empire and beyond. So far, our discussion has placed Wuchengzhen on a

map in geographical and economic terms. In what follows, I would like to shift our attention

to what this place actually meant to those who encountered it.

The administrators' view of Wuchengzhen

Inevitably, a town like Wuchengzhen meant different things to different people, depending

on the nature of their relationship to the town. Those who were in charge of the

administration of the town, for example, saw the place through the eyes of the imperial

administration. The Chinese state administered control over its territory by means of the

imperial bureaucracy, which governed over the empire's eighteen provinces, each divided

into prefectures, which in turn were made up of several counties. At each level, the law

dictated the number, rank and administrative duties of officeholders, who were recruited

through the civil service examination system.[21] Their appointments lasted for no more than

three years, and they were never asked to serve in their home county, so as to minimize the

risk of corruption. The officials in charge, thus, consisted of one provincial governor based in

the provincial capital, Nanchang, fourteen prefects based in the capitals of the prefectures

into which Jiangxi was subdivided for much of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), and *ca.* 80

county magistrates based in each of the county seats into which the prefectures were

subdivided. The responsibilities of these administrators concerned the land and its residents

in the territorial unit under their control. They were responsible for keeping the peace, the

proper execution of the law, and the collection of taxes levied on the households under his

control.

Management over and control of the region's commercial activities did not

immediately form part of the administrators' duties. In fact, the imperial bureaucracy was

not entirely successful in extending its control over commerce. In part, this is because the

county and prefectural officials were responsible for the administrative matters of the

resident population, not its commercial activities. In some ways, the commercial activities of

a region were not visible to the administrators, because the commercial towns, the *zhen* 鎮

(small market towns), were not part of the nested hierarchy of the territorial administration

and were thus not directly connected to the central bureaucracy of the empire.[22]

Technically, all market towns within the boundaries of a specific county fell under the

responsibilities of the county magistrate, but in practice, the absence of imperial

representation in such towns rendered them to some extent invisible to the administrators.

Sometimes, the population size of the county capital was in fact smaller than the size of

such market towns, because the market towns attracted not only merchants but also skilled

and unskilled, as well as seasonal and migrant labourers, but in the eyes of the scholar-

bureaucrats serving in the imperial administration, these activities were not considered of

any great relevance. Jiangxi had four sizable market towns, two of which were located in the

Poyang Lake region: Jingdezhen in Fuliang county, and Wuchengzhen in Xinjian county.[23]

The most famous of these was the porcelain manufacturing city of Jingdezhen, which from

the thirteenth century onwards manufactured the vast majority of the porcelains for

domestic use and overseas trade. Wuchengzhen, on the western banks of the lake, served

as the region's depot and distribution centre for ceramics, and as waterside depot for the

collection of grain and tea, produced throughout the region and collected here for

subsequent shipment to markets further afield. The economic significance of the town, in

other words, did not equate to administrative significance. The net of administrative

control, cast over the entire empire by means of the imperially appointed and locally

stationed scholar-officials, may have incorporated the region as a whole into the structure

of the empire, but the threads of that net did not run through market towns like

Wuchengzhen and Jingdezhen.

It was also the local administrator's responsibility to inform the imperial court about

the area under his control: the number of taxable households, updated records of local

production, successful examination candidates from the region, local sites of cultural

significance, as well as local uprisings, dramatic weather events, or outbreaks of disease.

From time to time, local administrators accumulated all this information and published it in

a genre known as the local gazetteer (*difangzhi* 地方志), usually with the help of members

of the locally resident land-owning elites.[24] The gazetteers for the region of Lake Poyang and

the lakeside county in which Wuchengzhen was located, and especially the maps that were

included in such gazetteers, offer a further insight into the meaning of the place.

The spit of land on which Wuchengzhen is located sits precisely at the point where

the Gan flows into Lake Poyang. Figure 3, taken from a nineteenth-century local gazetteer

for the nearby county of Xinjian, shows us one representation of the town.[25]

Figure 3. 'Map of Wuchengzhen', from *Xinjian xian zhi* 同治新建縣志 [Xinjian county gazetteer], 1871.

The mapmaker has sketched out the watery surroundings of the town, located on a narrow

strip of land. Rather than using a schematic representation marking out streets and

residences, he has drawn strings of small, anonymous looking houses to suggest a sequence

of dwellings and left white spaces between them to suggest space for movement. Rather

than conveying precise information about housing (because we know that the town had far more residents than these fewer than one hundred houses suggests), these anonymous houses more likely represent residential streets for the otherwise anonymous population of the town. These dwellings merely fill in the setting for the key architectural features he wishes to highlight: in the middle of the image two-story building with four pillars, with steps leading to that main entrance and two entrance buildings emphasizing the significance of the main building. The three characters written inside the top layer of the building indicate that this a temple (Linggong miao 令公廟), flanked by several other religious shrines: the Hall of the Three Primes (Sanyuan dian 三元殿) on the right, the Fire-god Temple (Huoshen miao 火神廟) and the Shrine of the Two Loyalists (Shuangzhong shrine 雙忠祠) on the left. Further towards the right-hand side of the map, by the water's edge, another large and elaborate building: Lake Pavilion (Huting 湖亭). Discussing the historical significance of each of these buildings would take us too far from the main point I would like to make here: these buildings represent a richly varied local religious landscape. We could use terms like Buddhist temples, Daoist shrines, or Confucian pavilions, which would connect these individual buildings to a wide cultural framework, but their significance in this representation is more local than that. For local residents, these buildings represent sites they could visit to pray, to beg for intervention in their human lives from the invisible world, or to express gratitude for something they asked for before. The buildings would have had locally relevant stories attached to the deities of these shrines, and it was precisely these stories that made these sites meaningful within the immediate community. So, the mapmaker is representing the town in its most local incarnation.

However, at the same time, there is a broader dimension. Many of the gods worshiped with these shrines would have been revered in other places, too. To give two

examples: the map indicates the location of a temple for the Dragon God (Longwang 龍王) and one for the True Lord Xu (Xu Zhenjun 許真君).[26] Both of these are for deities that are worshipped in other counties as well, in fact, throughout the province and beyond. The provincial capital would have a far larger shrine to worship these deities, and there might be a whole network of main temples, branch temples, and smaller shrines. The protective powers of these deities would be supplicated at dangerous junctions in the road or river and invoked at key moments in time. So, such shrines represent key local stories, but at the same time they connect the place to a wider network of connected shrines that lay beyond the local boundaries. Arguably, the local vision of the space as it was included in this source is a vision that stretched across the southern provinces. Administratively speaking, the town of Wuchengzhen might not have mattered much, but within the gazetteer, we can find traces of a vision that connects the very local space of this spit of land to its wider, in this case regional, context.

The map-maker's view of Lake Poyang and Wuchengzhen

The map depicted in Figure 4 is a very different map. It concerns a hand-drawn map, part of an album of provincial maps by an otherwise unknown late-Qing man called Wu Runde 吳潤德, or so the cover leaf of the album tells us. From the same cover, we also learn that the album is entitled 'Geographic maps' (*Dili tu* 地理圖), which is a very generic name that does not specify which region these geographical maps comprise. As it turns out, the album covers the provinces of China. The absence of a spatial specification suggests the vision of the world of this mapmaker, encompassing the realm as it was known to him in the early twentieth century, when the album was made. The selection of maps in the album and the spaces depicted on the maps tell us something about the mapmaker, such as his interest in

religious monuments, but so does his representation of Jiangxi province.[27] The map is simply entitled 'Map of Jiangxi province', with underneath it the dimensions of the province: from north to south, the province is 400 *li* long, and from east to west, the province is 800 *li* wide.[28] Only a handful of maps in the collection have this measurement, and it is somewhat odd; the depiction does not suggest a province that is twice as wide as it is long, but that measurement (400 x 800 = 320,000 *li* or 160,000 km^2) does, broadly speaking, match the conventional figure of Jiangxi's surface area (approximately 167,000 km^2).

The provincial boundary is drawn with a line made up of two dots and an elongated dash, next to a thicker light brown band.

Figure 4. Map of Jiangxi, from Wu Runde 吳潤德, 'Geographical maps' 地理圖, 1907. From 'Chinese cartography' https://chinesehsc.org/chinese_cartography.shtml. The location of the physical map to my knowledge is not known.

The names of the six surrounding provinces are clearly marked. Within the province, the rivers and the lake are drawn with thin lines and lightly coloured in. The only other markings inside the province indicate the locations of six towns, identified by a red symbol. The double red square points to the provincial capital, a symbol used consistently throughout the album's maps. The two double circles indicate other important cities. The only other towns on the map, indicated with red triangles are all to do with the ceramics industry: Jingdezhen, where the porcelains were made, Wuchengzhen, the storehouse of porcelain, and Hukouzhen, the transhipment point located at the key junction where the northern edges of Lake Poyang meet the Yangzi. By highlighting these three towns in conjunction with the other key manufacture, trade and transportation nodes flagged on this map, the mapmaker is telling his own story about Jiangxi. It may be a map that borders its single province with an extra thick line, but all its other indicators point to connections that reach well beyond the province, in fact connect with the wider world. Indirectly, it is a vision of a globally connected province, even if the traded goods and their global connections remain implicit.

Route books

A very different kind of map, again, can be found in merchant route books (*luchengshu* 路程書).[29] Such route books and merchant manuals provided practical information about how to travel from A to B within the empire: the distances between the stopping points, landmarks to watch out for, suitable places to stay, information about market preferences and locally

payable taxes and levies. Some of the printed route books that are extant today were based on information contained in local gazetteers. They follow the imperial administrative structure, mapping out the main stopping points between the imperial capital and the provincial capitals, or between the provincial capital and the prefectural capitals. It seems likely that many such manuals and maps circulated in manuscript form, but the earliest printed versions of route books extant today date to the early sixteenth century, when advances in commercial publishing made such practical, informative guides attractive propositions. Undoubtedly, our understanding of route books will have to be reassessed on the basis of recent research in local archives, which has uncovered rich source materials about merchant travel that historians are only just beginning to explore.[30]

Route books were largely textual rather than visual, identifying the sites a travelling merchant needs to know discursively: points along the route from A to B, inns where one could stay, waterside stations where boats could be hired, fords where rivers could be crossed, distances between them, and so on. They were textual rather than visual, mapping out the space by means of a sequence of place names. To give one example of the official route that connected Jiangxi to Canton on the southcoast, I translate here the description of a section of the route, from Hukou, the entry point to Lake Poyang from the Yangzi river, to the provincial capital Nanchang. It appeared in the 1570 'Comprehensive illustrated route book of the empire' (*Yitong lucheng tuji* 一統路程圖記), in the section on 'Water Routes South of the River'.[31]

Enter Lake Poyang. 'Daughters Harbour'. Great Lonely Mountain. 60 *li*. Green Mountain. Spirit Lake. 60 *li*. Nankang prefecture. 10 *li*: on the left: the seashell. 15 *li*: the islet and a protruding rock. 60 *li*: Wuchengzhen. 60 *li*: the town of Chang.[32]

This bare-bones approach to route planning, featuring nothing more than the names of features in the landscape and key distances between them, seems to reveal little about the meanings of a place like Wuchengzhen, either to its local inhabitants or its passing travellers.

Another route in the Lake Poyang area, included in the same section of *Yitong lucheng tuji*, offers alternatives depending on the water levels in the lake. The description specifies a starting point in the mercantile centre of Qimen in Huizhou prefecture, and leads the traveller via Fuliang county and the porcelain town of Jingdezhen to the prefectural capital of Poyang on the eastern bank of the lake. From there, the route skirts the northeastern banks of the lake, travelling northwards to the Yangzi entrance at Hukou via the prefectural towns of Duchang and Nankang. By staying on the eastern banks of the lake and travelling northwards, the route avoids Wuchengzhen, which was located on the western banks of the lake, but Duchang and Nankang were only about 20 and 40 km away from Wuchengzhen. A comment adds:

Travelling from [the prefectural town of] Raozhou to the provincial [capital], if there is not much water, you can also go [overland] from the mouth of the Rao river for 50 *li* to Kanglang Mountain; if the water levels are high, then you enter the lake's via Bamboo Partridge Forest and Snake's Tail, and you will need to be on guard for high wind and robbers. The Raozhou brokers take paying customers on their basket ships across the lake, but it is difficult to distinguish the good ones from the bad, so absolutely do not go on board of those.[33]

Here we get far more than merely names of places and distances: we get concrete advice that guides travellers through the landscape, with suggestions about where adaptations could be made depending on the actual circumstances and where they should be avoided.

The author of this 1570 route book, Huang Bian, was himself a merchant from Huizhou, the area best known for the density of its merchant population and for the 'translocal practices' of those merchants.[34] Du Yongtao's nuanced discussion of Huang's text and its impact on the development of the genre of route books and merchant manuals is instructive. 'The route books stand for a distinct type of geographical knowledge, one generated in the course of increased mobility spearheaded by the merchants and shaped by their particular concerns. […] it was the merchants who made the genre distinctive.'[35] Commodities like porcelain, made in nearby Jingdezhen, could only be moved across the lake and from there transported northwards or southwards by merchants. Without their increased mobility, these goods would not have reached the emperor in the north or the Portuguese in the south, whose ships had recently started to arrive on the coast (and all of the consumers between them). But the mobility of the merchants depended on the geographical knowledge contained in these books. The town of Wuchengzhen is constituted within this knowledge: a point to pass on the way to the next, a marker in the landscape that facilitates merchant mobility.

The porcelain and tea merchants' handbooks

The printed versions of these route books and merchants' manuals did not only serve the merchants; many of these routes led to the imperial capital and provided the connections between the capital and the centres of administration in the provinces and prefectural capitals of the realm for scholars and officials alike. Small-scale traders, however, also

depended on route books to navigate their way through the region and for this purpose often created their own annotated manuscript versions. Two recently discovered nineteenth-century manuscript versions of such handbooks demonstrate this point.[36] They show traces of intensive use: merchants manually copied the relevant information and added their own comments about where to buy supplies, or about the value of the goods in different regions, or about the exchange rates involved along the journey. The Huizhou merchants responsible for these two manuscript route books traded in tea and porcelain and took their goods all the way to Canton. There, they sold their goods to merchants dealing with foreigners.[37] These manuscript documents were kept within families; they safeguarded this information for members of the family only; they provide knowledge that members of the family would be privy to, but others would be excluded from.

In the manuscript entitled 'The Ten-Thousand Mile Cloud-Route', we see the same structure that all route books share. First the route its described, with place names and distance markers: 'Purple Sun Bridge, 1 *li*. Peak village, 2 *li*. Bao family village, 1 *li*. Seven Mile Head, 2 *li*', and so on.[38] The text also includes practical guidance in separate sections, offering information such as the tide table of Canton,[39] the important tea trading houses in Canton,[40] the weighing scales in use along the route,[41] the standard for strings of copper coins,[42] which brokers and agents to trust along the way,[43] guidance for the return trip from Canton back to Huizhou,[44] and the levies to be paid on the goods taken back to Huizhou.[45] In the margins, there are further notes that have been added later, such as: 'Make a raft for the tea crates in this place'. Or, in the description of Jingdezhen, it says: 'There are two imperial offices here. This is one of the four [great] market towns of the realm. Rumour has it that there are four hundred kilns here.' In the region of Ji'an, well-known for its heavy representation in the powerholding elite classes, the annotator adds some information

about the many families that boasted examination graduates in this region. A bit later, when navigating a part of the river, the annotator adds: 'At the Great Camphortree Sandbank, for several *li*, the river is very narrow', followed by: 'Pay your respect to the gods as you enjoy the marvellous scenery. You can encounter strong winds. As you exit the gorge, you must be especially careful.' These are just a few remarks, but they are indicative of the various types of information embedded in this document: useful tips that help the merchants take their commercial goods across the mixed terrain, such as the pointer 'make your raft here'; some background information, such as the information about the number of kilns in Jingdezhen, and the number of examination graduates in Ji'an. This was probably somewhat superfluous to the seasoned traveller, but one can imagine a *pater familias* adding these notes, keen to make sure his sons and grandsons also had this kind of knowledge (a bit like a grandfather telling his phone-obsessed grandchild about the fineries of baroque architecture as they travel through European cities). But most important, surely, are the indications of dangers, and how to avoid them.

Trade was risky business, especially in the landscape surrounding Jingdezhen and Wuchengzhen. Crossing the lake from the town of Poyang on the eastern banks of Lake Poyang, to Wucheng on the western bank, for example, was dangerous. Most months, as the logbook at the end of 'The Ten-thousand-mile cloud route' shows, the travellers encountered at least one and often two storms.[46] To mediate such dangers, the merchants prayed at temples. The text points out where there are suitable sites for prayer, as in this annotation, near the lake crossing: 'Pay your respects at the Temple for the Thirty-six Loyalists. The temple was established by the first emperor of the Ming. Outside is a Locust Tree, devoted to the Locust Tree General.'[47] These thirty-six loyalists died in a famous battle won by the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, and sites like that, associated with illustrious

men that died violent deaths and had become martyrs, were powerful sites for popular worship. Guidance on where to pray and background information about the deities worshipped there is seamlessly integrated with practical information about which boat is most suitable for crossing the lake, or which side of the river has better access to shops.[48]

The tea and porcelain merchants who navigated the landscape around Lake Poyang formed their view of the landmarks they passed by means of the handbooks that guided them. Their view of Wuchengzhen was the view that the guidebook suggested to them. As the porcelain merchant's handbook, the 'Safe Journey by River or Land', suggested: 'At times of great drought, you enter the lake at Double Harbour Pagoda [in Poyang county], pass the county capital of Duchang, and travel towards the provincial capital via Wucheng[zhen]'.[49] In other words, the town of Wuchengzhen could be avoided altogether, so long as the water levels were not too low, but provided the necessary access when other routes were not available. The landscape changes due to the environmental fluxes, and the waxing and waning of the water levels. The connecting lines in that landscape that facilitate the movement of the merchants are drawn and redrawn in accordance with the ebb and flow of the water; depending on the environmental circumstances, a town like Wuchengzhen comes into view or is rendered entirely invisible.

The image of Wuchengzhen in Nieuhof's account

The town that Nieuhof visited in the spring 1656, the town he called 'a Place Full of Trade', could be constructed as a 'global' place; after all, it had attracted the attention of a delegation of high Dutch officials, who admired its setting and its commercial appeal as they sailed past the town. But 'Ucienjen' could also be constructed as 'global' on the basis of its representation, and the world-wide circulation of that representation.

Figure 5. 'Ucienjen'. Engraving from Johan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China* (Amsterdam: Van Meurs, 1670), p. 89. Held in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag.

The image in Figure 5 is from the 1670 edition of Nieuhof's travel account, as published by the Amsterdam publisher Van Meurs.[50] To the right of the image, we see a hill, populated with several grand buildings with decorated rooves, described in the text as elegant ('cierlijk'). Closer to the water, the illustration features smaller, anonymous-looking buildings that suggest the humbler dwellings of workers or traders. The foreground is entirely taken up by water and water-based activities. One large ship, seen from its stern, has a cabin with several windows and a banner flying from its single mast, perhaps suggesting the mode of transport the Dutch delegation was using. The other vessels are all smaller, though several seem large enough to transport cargo. Throughout the image, there is evidence of human activity, matching the Dutch description of the town as 'neringrijk', a

word used to indicate the kind of occupations that support people's livelihood, such as fishery and trade.[51]

By 1670, Van Meurs had already published at least three 'global' travel records that all would become an instant hit with the reading public throughout Europe.[52] Nieuhof's description of the Chinese empire and the images added for the Van Meurs edition of Nieuhof's account were seen by readers throughout Europe, as Latin, German, French and English versions appeared throughout the decades that followed its initial publication. The illustration of Wuchengzhen (Ucienjen) was only one of around 150 engravings, but even if none of those readers remembered the town after reading the book, the town was 'seen' by all those whose eyes passed through its pages. Johan Nieuhof's words, combined with the imagination of his brother Hendrik and the hands that made the engraving, situated the town in a global context and created a 'global life' for the town.

Conclusion: Viewing space through the lens of early modern global cultural history

The insight that a space means different things to different people is, of course, nothing new. But despite the best efforts of geographers to encourage historians to read their sources with an open mind to the idea that space is a construction, much historical writing still assumes a singular geographical framework that provides a static background for whatever historical activity that forms the focus of the work. The risk of assuming more spatial integration than the sources warrant is even greater for historians working on a what they call the 'transnational' or 'global scale': their focus on the connected nature of human and non-human activity across time and space suggests a single spatial framework that encompasses all that activity. It is easy to see how the mobility of a man like Johan Nieuhof or the trade in a commodity like porcelain connects a town like Wuchengzhen beyond its

immediate spatial context to a transnational or perhaps even world-wide frame. But

without paying attention to the different ways in which our sources infuse their

representations of Wuchengzhen with their own perspectives and agendas, we have no idea

what those connections actually mean. By reading our sources as separate entities,

containing evidence of very different perspectives on the town, we see very different

Wuchengzhens. We see a town rendered invisible by the meshes of the administrative net

or by the vicissitude of the water levels, but also a town full of traded goods, streets lined

with porcelain shops and riverbanks crowded with merchants' ships. We see a town

connected with other Jiangxi centres of production and trade; we see a town full of

architectural diversity, with both freestanding buildings with elegant pillars and decorated

rooves as well as small dwellings with unknown occupants; we see the town as a place of

rest in a landscape of constant mobility. It is the diversity of sources that reveals these

multiple meanings, and it is only the combination of global and cultural history that renders

multiple versions of Wuchengzhen visible on our map of the early modern world.

---

[*] I would like to express my gratitude to Marek Tamm and the two anonymous readers, whose very insightful comments helped to make this a better piece.

[1] For an inspiring example of nuanced readings of varied interpretations of maps, see Valerie A Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); The scholarship will be discussed in more detail below, but a few examples of these views might be helpful at this point: Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present*, 3rd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015); Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *A History of Global Consumption: 1500-1800* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2015); Giorgio Riello, 'The Globalization of Cotton Textiles: Indian Cottons, Europe, and the Atlantic World, 1600–1850', in *The Spinning World: A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 261–87; John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1993); Benjamin Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism: Geography, Globalism, and Europe's Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012).

[2] For a broader discussion of this issue, and the importance of applying a 'micro-spatial' approach, see Anne Gerritsen and Christian De Vito, 'Micro-Spatial Histories of Labour: Towards a New Global History', in Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen (eds), *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), pp. 1–28.

[3] A. J. van der Aa, *Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden, bevattende levensbeschrijvingen van zoodanige personen, die zich op eenigerlei wijze in ons vaderland hebben vermaard gemaakt* (Haarlem: Van Brederode, 1878), p. 328.

[4] N. G. van Kampen, *Geschiedenis der Nederlanders buiten Europa, of verhaal van de togten, ontdekkingen, oorlogen, veroveringen en inrigtingen der Nederlanders in Azië, Afrika, Amerika en Australië, van het laatste der zestiende eeuw tot op dezen tijd*, vol. 2 (Haarlem: Erven François Bohn, 1831), pp. 115–21.

[5] Reindert Falkenburg and Leonard Blussé, *Johan Nieuhofs beelden van een Chinareis 1655-1657* (Middelburg: Stichting VOC Publicaties, 1987), p. 63.

[6] Falkenburg and Blussé, *Johan Nieuhofs beelden van een Chinareis 1655-1657*.

[7] Friederike Ulrichs, *Johan Nieuhofs Blick auf China (1655-1657): die Kupferstiche in seinem Chinabuch und ihre Wirkung auf den Verleger Jacob van Meurs* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2003).

[8] The quote is taken from the English translation of the text: Johannes Nieuhof, *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperor of China Deliver'd by Their Excellencies, Peter de Goyer and Jacob de Keyzer, at His Imperial City of Peking: Wherein the Cities, Towns, Villages, Ports, Rivers, &c. in Their Passages from Canton to Peking Are Ingeniously Describ'd* (London: John Ogilby Esq., 1673), pp. 65–6. Nieuhof's text also appeared in other European languages, including French in 1665.

[9] C. J. A. Jörg, *Porcelain and the Dutch China Trade* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983).

[10] John Carswell, *Blue & White: Chinese Porcelain around the World* (London: British Museum Press, 2007).

[11] The classic example is Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric That Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello (eds), *The Global Lives of Things: The Material Culture of Connections in the Early Modern World* (London: Routledge, 2016); Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun Casalilla (eds), *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492-1824: Circulation, Resistance and Diversity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[12] Jan van Campen and Titus M Eliëns (eds), *Chinese and Japanese Porcelain for the Dutch Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers, 2014).

[13] Maxine Berg, ed., *Goods from the East, 1600-1800: Trading Eurasia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Meha Priyadarshini, *Chinese Porcelain in Colonial Mexico: The Material Worlds of an Early Modern Trade* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[14] Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), pp. 194–212; See also the discussion in Alessandro Arcangeli, *Cultural History: A Concise Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

[15] Zhan Yuxin 詹玉新 and Chen Yinchang 陈印昌, *Poyang hu de chuanshuo* 鄱阳湖的传说 *[Legends of Lake Poyang]* (Beijing: Zhongguo minjian wenyi chubanshe, 1987).

[16] Tang Guohua 唐国华, 'Ming Qing Shiqi Poyang Hu de Kuozhan Yu Xingtai Yanbian Yanjiu 明清时期鄱阳湖的扩展与形态演变研究 [The Development and Transformatios of Shape of Lake Poyang during the Ming and Qing]', *Jiangxi Shehui Kexue*, 37:7 (2017), pp. 123–31.

[17] Li L. Q. Zhang, Y.-G. Wang, A. D. Werner, P. Xin, T. Jiang, D. A. Barry, 'Has the Three-Gorges Dam Made the Poyang Lake Wetlands Wetter and Drier?', *Geophysical Research Letters*, 39:20 (2012), pp. 1–7.

[18] Wenjuan Wang, James Fraser, and Jiakuan Chen, 'Wintering Waterbirds in the Middle and Lower Yangtze River Floodplain: Changes in Abundance and Distribution', *Bird Conservation International*, 27:2 (2017), pp. 167–86.

[19] Xu Mengshen 徐孟深 and Zeng Wangsun 曾王孫, eds., *(Kangxi) Duchang Xian Zhi* (康熙)都昌縣志) 1694; repr., Beijing: Airusheng, 2013), p. 1.55b.

[20] Liang Hongsheng 梁洪生, 'Wucheng Shangzhen Ji Qi Zaoqi Shanghui 吴城商镇及其早期商会 [The Merchant Town of Wucheng and Its Early Merchant Associations]', *Zhongguo Jingji Shi Yanjiu*, 1 (1995), p. 105.

[21] On this examination system and the possibility of social mobility within that system, see Benjamin A. Elman, *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[22] Richard von Glahn, 'Towns and Temples: Urban Growth and Decline in the Yangzi Delta, 1100-1400', in Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn (eds), *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), pp. 176–211.

[23] Zhang Xiaogu 张小谷 and Gao Ping 高平, *Poyang Hu Diqu Guchengzhen de Lishi Bianqian* 鄱阳湖地区古城镇的历史变迁 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2011).

[24] Joseph Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2015).

[25] Map of Wuchengzhen. From [Tongzhi] Xinjian county gazetteer. Cheng Pei 承霈 and Du Youtang 杜友棠, *[Tongzhi] Xinjian xian zhi* 同治新建縣志 *[County gazetteer of Xinjian county]* (1871; repr., Nanjing: Jiangxi guji chubanshe, 1996).

[26] Cheng Yuchang 程宇昌 and Wen Leping 温乐平, 'Wenhua rentong yu shehui kongzhi: yi Ming Qing Poyanghu qu Xu Zhenjun xinyang wei li 文化认同与社会控制:以明清鄱阳湖区许真君信仰为例 [Cultural Identity and Social Control in the Ming and Qing Poyang Lake District: Xu Zhenjun as Example]', *Nanchang daxue xuebao*, 44:5 (2013), pp. 79–85.

[27] 'Chinese Cartography', accessed 13 February 2020, https://chinesehsc.org/chinese_cartography.shtml.

[28] The Chinese *li* refers to a distance of around one third of an English mile, or half a kilometre.

[29] Timothy Brook, 'Guides for Vexed Travelers: Route Books in the Ming and Qing', *Ch'Ing-Shih Wen-T'I*, 4:5 (1981), pp. 32–76. See also the two supplements to this article, and his *Geographical Sources of Ming-Qing History*, Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies 58 (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988).

[30] See, for example, the collection of materials related to Huizhou merchants. Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, ed., *Huizhou minjian zhenxi wenxian jicheng* 徽州民間珍稀文獻集成, 30 vols (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2018).

[31] Yang Zhengtai 楊正泰, ed., *Mingdai Yizhan Kao* 明代驛站考 *[National Stagepost Network of the Ming Dynasty]*, Revised and enlarged ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), (juan 7), pp. 261–84.

[32] Yang Zhengtai 楊正泰, 270; for a different edition, see Huang Bian 黃汴, *Yitong lucheng tuji* 一統路程圖記 *[Illustrated Route Book of the Realm in Unity]* (1570; repr., Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1997).

[33] Yang Zhengtai 楊正泰, *Mingdai Yizhan Kao*, p. 274.

[34] Du Yongtao, *The Order of Places: Translocal Practices of the Huizhou Merchants in Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[35] Du Yongtao, p. 204.

[36] 'Shuilu Ping'an 水陸平安 [Safe Journey by Water or Land]' (1844); 'Wanli Yuncheng 萬里雲程 [The Ten-Thousand Mile Cloud-Route]' (1848–1854). These manuscripts have been identified by Wang Zhenzhong, Department of History, Fudan University in Shanghai. Wang Zhenzhong's pioneering work has also led to the publication of this collection: *Huizhou minjian zhenxi wenxian jicheng*.

[37] Paul van Dyke is the great specialist on trade and the merchants in Canton. Of his numerous publications, I mention only two: Paul Arthur Van Dyke, *The Canton Trade: Life and Enterprise on the China Coast, 1700-1845* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005); and *Merchants of Canton and Macao: Success and Failure in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Trade* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016).

[38] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 1a.

[39] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 21b.

[40] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 22a.

[41] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 22b.

[42] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 23a.

[43] 'Wanli Yuncheng', pp. 34b–35a.

[44] 'Wanli Yuncheng', pp. 35b-38b.

[45] 'Wanli Yuncheng', pp. 39b-43b.

[46] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 44b.

[47] 'Wanli Yuncheng', p. 6a.

[48] 'Shuilu Ping'an', pp. 6b–7b.

[49] The text reads: 大旱之時進双港塔过都昌县從吳城抵省. 'Shuilu Ping'an', p. 7a.

[50] Much scholarly attention has been paid to the role of Van Meurs in creating a global imaginary; perhaps most noteworthy is Schmidt, *Inventing Exoticism*.

[51] Johan Nieuhof, *Het gezantschap der Neêrlandtsche Oost-Indische Compagnie, aan den grooten Tartarischen Cham, den tegenwoordigen keizer van China ...: Verçiert met over de 150. afbeeltsels, na 't leven in Sina getekent: en beschreven* (t'Amsterdam,: by Jacob van Meurs ..., 1670), p. 89.

[52] These were, apart from Nieuhof's book, Arnoldus Montanus' *Gedenkwaerdige Gesantschappen der Oost-Indische Maetschappij aen de Kaisaren van Japan*, and Dapper's *Gedenkwaerdig bedryf der Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Maetschappye, op de kuste en in het Keizerrijk van Taising of Sina: behelzende het 2e gezandschap aen den Onder-Koning Singlamong*. See Leonard Blussé, 'Peeking into the Empires: Dutch Embassies to the Courts of China and Japan', *Itinerario*, 37:3 (2013), pp. 13–29.