

# Sites of Encounter in the Medieval World

## Lesson #2: Quanzhou

### Why was Quanzhou Such an Important Site of Encounter?

#### Major Topics:

- Chinese technology & society
- Cultural Interaction
- Reading Travel Narratives
- Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta



*"Hanging Scroll, Flower, Painted in ink and colours on silk," made by Wang Yuan, 1310-1350 (Yuan Dynasty), British Museum no. 913,0501,0.5, [www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/). © The Trustees of the British Museum.*

While Sicily's ports were rather small, Quanzhou was one of the largest and busiest ports in the medieval world. Located on China's southeast coast, Quanzhou was a primary destination for Arab, Persian, Indian, and Southeast Asian ships carrying merchants eager to buy China's famed porcelain and silk. Because of its extensive internal economy and technological advances, China exported more than it imported. Although the land route to China was sometimes difficult to travel, shipping to and from the southeast coast meant that China was never isolated from outside world. China was also the largest and most centralized state in the medieval world, and government regulations of merchants and foreigners were more thorough. As one of the official trade cities of the Chinese empire, Quanzhou had large foreign communities.

In this lesson, students read excerpts about Quanzhou by two famous travel writers, Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. Both sources must be read critically, because Marco Polo is not always reliable and Ibn Battuta may not have actually reached China. Students are introduced to the uses and problems of travel narratives which are an integral part of the rest of the unit.

## Procedures

### Step 1: Introduction to the World Trade Circles Map (Class Time: 40 minutes)

Although products travelled all the way across Afro-Eurasia, merchants rarely travelled beyond an established area around their home bases, their “world trade circle.” This step guides students through the important



concepts of the World Trade Circles map and gives them practice with its features. Following the Teacher’s Instructions on the first four pages of **SoE2.1 World Trade in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century**, teachers can have students answer the questions on the student handout in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class activity. At the end, teachers should debrief the students to make sure that they understand the definition and features of trade circles and the relative importance of particular trade circles. Students should understand that Chinese and Southeast Asian circles were most important because their products were most valued by the rest of the Afro-Eurasian world. India was in the second rank of importance because its products were also very valued. The Islamic world circles were also in the second rank of importance because they were in the center, which meant that Muslim merchants controlled the flow of products from east to west. The European circles were in the third rank of importance, because they were much less developed.

### Step 2: Development of Quanzhou into an important site of encounter (Class Time: 60 minutes)

The term “medieval” does not fit for “Middle Period” China, because between 1000 and 1500 China had advanced technology and its economy was growing rapidly. Either give students **SoE2.2 The Problem with Using the Term “Medieval” for China**, or discuss its ideas with them. Then project **SoE2.3 Timeline of Chinese History**. Ask students to identify some developments in the period that demonstrate why China could not be considered medieval (e.g. booming trade, agriculture, industry, population).

Next students consider the question, “Why did Quanzhou develop into such an important site of encounter during the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties?” Distribute **SoE2.4 Historical Context Matrix**



and the **SoE2.5 Evidence Analysis Chart**, which asks students to select and evaluate evidence to answer the focus question. Then put students into small groups and tell them to find six reasons for the development of Quanzhou and record them on the Evidence Analysis chart. When the groups are finished, debrief as a whole class. Record the student choices on the board or chart paper and guide them to eliminate any choices that are irrelevant. Finally, ask the students to consider what inferences can be made about Quanzhou from the evidence. Be sure that students understand that China was a large exporter in world trade, and China was never isolated from outside trade, even though most Chinese officials had a low opinion of merchants. Emphasize that along the southeast coast, there was lots of support for trade.

## Procedures (Continued)

### Step 3: Chinese Products and Inventions Gallery Walk (Class time: 45 minutes)

Traders were drawn to Quanzhou because they wanted to buy Chinese products, such as porcelain and silk. Chinese inventions and manufacturing processes produced goods that were highly valued across the medieval world. **SoE2.6 Chinese Products and Inventions** contains three groups of images to be hung up around the room for a gallery walk. Divide the class into groups of four and give each group the **SoE2.7 Chinese Products and Technologies Analysis Chart**. Debrief the activity after students complete their charts. Students should understand that the production of these goods required a level of organization and technological sophistication that could not be found elsewhere in the medieval world.

### Step 4: Quanzhou as a Trade City Reading (Class time: 45 minutes)

The **SoE2.8 Heading and Highlighting Chart** is a secondary text with background information, along with a close reading literacy activity. Put the students into small groups. Have them read the text, discuss the main idea for each section, and create a heading or title that represents the section well. In whole class discussion, have students share their heading choices, and record the choices on the board. Have the class come to consensus on the "best" choices for headings. Next, students closely read the text again and highlight or underline the key details that support the headings. Finally, the groups discuss the focus questions, "What Chinese products did traders want, and why? Why did traders come to Quanzhou to get these products?" and make notes in the right hand column. Debrief as a whole class, and record and display student responses.



*Blue-and-White Porcelain jug, Tankard with a dragon-shaped handle, from Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, early 15<sup>th</sup> century (Ming Dynasty), British Museum no. Asia OA 1950.4-3.1, [www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online)*  
© The Trustees of the British Museum.

### Step 5: Analyzing Travelers' Accounts (Class time: 90 minutes)

Give students **SoE2.9 Travelers' Accounts Discussion Questions** as homework to prepare them for class discussion. In class, put students into small groups and have them discuss the responses to the homework questions. Then instruct them to create five questions to assess a traveler's account.

## Procedures (Continued)

Remind students that they have to examine primary sources critically for qualities such as relevance, usefulness, bias, and accuracy. Have the groups share their questions with the whole class and explain their reasoning. List the questions on the board, screen, or chart paper. Tell students that they must select five questions by consensus. Invite them to advocate for individual questions. This discussion is key to the lesson. By advocating for particular questions, students must address the issues inherent in using primary sources and the potential value of travelers' accounts in historical inquiry. At the end, the class will have a short list of questions for assessing the travel accounts of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo. Post the questions prominently.

Distribute **SoE2.10 Background Information**. Have students read these secondary biographies of Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta and write down answers to their questions. Discuss the answers to their questions as a whole class, emphasizing the possibility that these travelers didn't actually visit Quanzhou. Give the students **SoE2.11 Marco Polo, "Zayton," [Quanzhou]** and guide them through the close reading activities. Then have students complete the "Marco Polo" section of **SoE2.14 Note Organization Chart**. Distribute **SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun,"** have students do the close reading activities and then have them complete the "Ibn Battuta" section of **SoE2.14 Note Organization Chart**. Discuss with students the question: "Can we reliably use the documents as primary sources?" Ask them what these travelers' accounts tell us about Quanzhou and why it was such an important site of encounter.



## Step 6: Chinese Perspectives on Trade at Quanzhou (Class time: 45 minutes)

Tell students that they will now read Chinese sources to contrast their perspectives with those of Ibn Battuta and Marco Polo. Divide students into groups and give them **SoE2.13 The Chinese Perspective: Hong Mai, Zhao Rugua and Inscriptions**. Have them read the texts and answer the questions, and complete the "Hong Mai, Zhao Rugua and Inscriptions" section of **SoE2.14 Note Organization Chart**. Then the student groups should discuss the final question. Debrief the activity with the whole class by having them groups share their answers to the final question.

## Step 7: Assessment Writing: Why was Quanzhou such an important site of encounter? (Class time: 60 minutes)

Discuss the lesson focus question with the students, using **SoE2.15 Why was Quanzhou Such an Important Site of Encounter?** as a guide. The writing assignment has students practice skills for citing evidence. There are scaffolds to help students select, organize and analyze their evidence and write a two-paragraph analysis. The two paragraph frame has sentence starters that model proper citation of sources in the text.

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## Procedures (Continued)

### Step 8: Guided Discussion on Laws, Customs and Multicultural Coexistence

In this step, students will practice Common Core discussion skills based on excerpts from the previous documents to address this question: How did laws and customs help people from different cultures live together in Quanzhou? Put students in groups of three or four, and distribute the student discussion instructions and documents from **SoE2.16 Laws, Customs and Multicultural Coexistence**. Following the Teacher's Instructions for Discussion, assign each group member two documents and go over the instructions on SoE2.16. After the groups discuss, follow up with a whole class discussion, which can be connected to the conclusion of the lesson below.

To conclude the lesson, ask students to summarize why Quanzhou was such an important site of encounter. List their reasons on butcher paper and post them in the classroom. Then ask them to discuss unit question with regard to Quanzhou: How did this site of encounter change the Medieval World? Ask them what products the Chinese made that other people in the world wanted (porcelain, silk). Ask them about Chinese inventions (gunpowder, printing, paper-making, the compass). How did those inventions spread from China to the rest of the world? (through the trade routes) Conclude by telling them that China was a powerful magnet for westerners for a long time (up to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century explorers). Finally, project the Afro-Eurasian Trade Circles map and ask students how China was connected to the rest of the world.

## SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun," from *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Page 1 of 5)

The Chinese clime is extensive and is rich in resources, fruits, cereals, gold and silver; no other clime in the world compares with it in this respect...

Chinese pottery is made only in the city of Zaitun [Quanzhou] and in Šin Kalan [Guangzhou].... It is exported to India and other parts of the world till it reaches our country in the Maghrib. It is the most superb kind of pottery...

In every city of China is a quarter where the Muslims live separately and have mosques for their Friday prayers and other assemblies. They are highly regarded and treated with respect. The Chinese infidels eat the meat of pigs and dogs and sell it in the bazaars. They live comfortably and in affluence but take little care about their food and clothing. You will see an important merchant whose wealth is beyond reckoning wearing a tunic of coarse cotton. All the Chinese pay attention only to gold and silver vessels. Every one of them has a walking stick on which to lean when walking and they call it the third leg.

Silk is extremely plentiful for the worms attach themselves to fruit, eat it and need little care. This is why it is plentiful and the poor and destitute dress in it. If it were not for the merchants [trading in it] it would have no value...



Great Ming Circulating Treasury Note, ca. 1375, British Museum CM 1942-8-5-1, [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org). © The Trustees of the British Museum

### Vocabulary

**Clime:** climate or environment

**The Maghrib:** the region of northwest Africa

**Infidels:** non-believers (in this case non-Muslims)

**Bazaars:** open air markets

**Affluence:** wealth

**Tunic:** a simple shirt-like garment reaching from the shoulders to between the hips and ankles

**Destitute:** lacking money and property

**Dinars and Dirhams:** both types of coins used in the Muslim world at the time

The people of China do not do business for dinars and dirhams.... They buy and sell with pieces of paper the size of the palm of the hand which are stamped with the Sultan's stamp. . . . If these pieces of paper become tattered from handling, they take them to a house which is like our mint and receive new ones instead...

The Chinese are of all peoples the most skilful in crafts and attain the greatest perfection in them....

[When a ship arrives]...they [the Chinese officials] order the ship's master to dictate to them a manifest of all the merchandise in it, whether small or great [in value]. Then everyone disembarks and the customs officials sit to inspect what they have with them. If they come upon any article that has been concealed from them the junk and whatever is in it is forfeit to the treasury. This is a kind of extortion I have seen in no country, whether infidel or Muslim, except China....

## SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun," from *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Page 2 of 5)

**Manifest:** a list of cargo carried by a ship

**Disembark:** get off a ship

**Forfeit to the Treasury:** taken away by the government

**Junk:** a Chinese ship used for trading

**Extortion:** being forced to pay extra money to a government official

**Funduk:** a building that combined a hotel, warehouse and business center for foreign merchants

**Impounded:** the local merchant or master took charge of the traveler's money

**Damask:** an embroidered silk cloth

**Paganism:** a religion other than Islam, Christianity or Judaism

When a Muslim merchant arrives in a Chinese town he chooses whether to stay with one of the Muslim merchants designated among those living there, or in the *funduk*. If he prefers to stay with a merchant, his money is impounded, the merchant with whom he is to reside takes charge of it, and spends it for him [the foreign merchant] honestly. When he wishes to leave his money is examined and if any of it is missing, the merchant with whom he has stayed and to whom it was entrusted makes it good. If he wishes to stay in the *funduk* his money is entrusted to the master of the *funduk* who is put in charge of it; he buys for the merchant what he wants on his account....

When we had crossed the sea the first city to which we came was Zaitun... It is a huge and important city in which are manufactured the fabrics of velvet, damask and satin.... Its harbor is among the biggest in the world, or rather it is the biggest; I have seen about a hundred junks there and innumerable little ones.

China is the safest and

best country for the traveler. You can travel all alone across the land for nine months without fear, even if you are carrying much wealth.

China was beautiful, but it did not please me. On the contrary, I was greatly troubled thinking about the way paganism dominated this country. Whenever I went out of my lodging, I saw many blameworthy things. That disturbed me so much that I stayed indoors most of the time and only went out when necessary. During my stay in China, whenever I saw any Muslims I always felt as though I were meeting my own family and close kinsmen.

Citation: Ibn Battuta, C. Defrémery, B.R. Sanguinetti, C.F. Beckingham, and H.A. R. Gibb, trans. and eds. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*. 4 vols. Hakluyt Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, nos. 110, 117, 141, 178. Cambridge: Hakluyt Society at University Press, 1958-2000), Bk.4, chap. 22, pp. 888-894.



Citation: China during the Northern Song Dynasty, created by LiDaobing Yu Ninjie, 1982, GNU license, Wikipedia Commons, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China\\_11a.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:China_11a.jpg).

## SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun," from *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Page 3 of 5)

### Close Reading Activities for Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun"

*Instructions:*

1. Read Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun" to yourself. Be prepared to discuss this question first in groups and then with the class: What interested Ibn Battuta about Quanzhou?
2. Read the text again and mark it using "cognitive markers" to indicate the following:



#### **Make observations:**

- ▶ What strikes you in reading this document? Do certain words leap out at you? What ideas or words grab your attention? *Indicate with an exclamation mark*



#### **Ask questions:**

- ▶ What puzzles you? What do you find out here that you didn't know, or that challenges something you thought you knew? What language confuses you? *Indicate with a question mark*

#### **Identify patterns:**



- ▶ What patterns do you see? What concepts, images or key words repeat? Is this source similar to other sources from this time? *Underline patterns*

#### **Note connections:**



- ▶ What connections do you see? Does this source remind you of a source or issue from another historical era? *Draw arrows → to indicate connections*

**Share your thoughts:** With a partner, compare and discuss annotations, re-reading sections as needed and staying focused on the contents of the document itself. Add notes in the margin to elaborate on the cognitive markers. In preparation for whole class discussion, go back to your initial thinking about the question to confirm or revise it.

3. Parts of the Ibn Battuta text are broken up into smaller pieces in the activities below. The primary source text is in quotation marks with regular type. The instructions and questions are in *Italic* type. Follow the instructions and write your answers in the spaces provided.

"[When a ship arrives]...they [the Chinese officials] order the ship's master to dictate to them (Chinese officials) a manifest of all the merchandise in it, whether small or great [in value]. Then everyone ( ) disembarks and the customs officials sit to inspect what they ( ) have with them ( ). If they ( ) come upon any article that has been concealed from them ( ) the junk and whatever is in it is forfeit to the treasury. This is a kind of extortion I have seen in no country, whether infidel or Muslim, except China. . . .

## SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun," from *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Page 4 of 5)

4. Identifying Reference Devices: In the paragraph on the previous page Ibn Battuta used many referrers. There are two possible "theys": the Chinese officials and the foreign merchants (on the junk). Write whom he meant by each referrer in the space after it. The first one is done for you.
  
5. Marco Polo wrote that the Chinese government charged a ten percent duty on all merchandise. Chinese officials collected that duty when a ship first arrived in Quanzhou. Why did the Chinese officials inspect the goods on the ship?
  
6. If a merchant or ship captain broke the law by not recording his merchandise on the manifest and not paying the duty, what was the punishment?
  
7. Did Ibn Battuta think that this government action was unusual?

"When a Muslim merchant ( the foreign merchant ) arrives in a Chinese town he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) chooses whether to stay with one of the Muslim merchants ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) designated among those living there, or in the *funduq*. If he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) prefers to stay with a merchant ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) his ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) money is impounded, the merchant with whom he is to reside ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) takes charge of it, and spends it for him ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) honestly. When he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) wishes to leave his money is examined and if any of it is missing, the merchant with whom he has stayed ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) and to whom it was entrusted makes it good. If he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) wishes to stay in the *funduq* his money is entrusted to the master of the *funduq* who is put in charge of it; he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) buys for the merchant what he ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) wants on his account...."

8. Identifying Reference Devices: In the paragraph above, Ibn Battuta used many referrers. There are three possible "he"s: the foreign merchant, the resident merchant (who was a Muslim living in Quanzhou) and the *funduq* master. Write whom Ibn Battuta meant by each referrer in the space after it. The first one is done for you.
  
9. If the resident merchant lost or spent the foreign merchant's money without his consent, the resident merchant had to "make it good." What does this expression mean?

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**SoE2.12 Ibn Battuta, "Zaitun," from *The Travels of Ibn Battuta* (Page 5 of 5)**

10. What advantage would the Chinese laws about foreigners and their money have for foreign merchants? What disadvantage would these laws have for foreigners?

11. What advantage would the Chinese laws about foreigners and their money have for the Chinese government?

"China was beautiful, but it did not please me. On the contrary, I was greatly troubled thinking about the way paganism dominated this country. Whenever I went out of my lodging, I saw many blameworthy things. That disturbed me so much that I stayed indoors most of the time and only went out when necessary. During my stay in China, whenever I saw any Muslims I always felt as though I were meeting my own family and close kinsmen."

12. What bothered Ibn Battuta about China?

13. What was his reaction?

14. Do you think Ibn Battuta was being fair to the Chinese?

## SoE2.14 Note Organization Chart (page 2 of 3)

**Question: Why was Quanzhou such an important site of encounter?**

*Instructions: In the first column, write down the reasons that explain why Quanzhou was an important site of encounter. In the second column, write down one piece of evidence that supports each reason. In the third column, analyze the evidence by explaining what it means and how it supports the reason.*

**Ibn Battuta**

| Reason | Evidence | Analysis (what the evidence means & how it supports the reason) |
|--------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|        |          |                                                                 |
|        |          |                                                                 |
|        |          |                                                                 |
|        |          |                                                                 |
|        |          |                                                                 |

## SoE2.15 Why was Quanzhou Such an Important Site of Encounter? (1 of 3)

*Writing Assignment Instructions:* Write two paragraphs answering the lesson focus question: Why was Quanzhou such an important site of encounter?

1. Use this for your opening sentence: Between 1100 and 1400, Quanzhou was a major port for China and the Asian trade circles. It may have been the greatest trade city in the world.
2. Use this for your claim: Quanzhou was an important site of encounter because many foreign ships and merchants came there to buy Chinese products, and because the city was home to many foreign communities.
3. Fill in the Evidence Analysis Chart using your notes on **SoE2.15 Note Organization Charts**. Use the information in your notes to fill in the blanks in the reason #1 and reason #2 statements. Select two pieces of evidence that BEST support reasons 1 and 2. For reason 1, choose one piece of evidence from Ibn Battuta and one from Marco Polo. For reason 2, choose one piece of evidence from Zhao Rugua and one from either Ibn Battuta or Marco Polo. Analyze the evidence (explain what it means and how it supports the reasons) in the last column.
4. After you select and organize your evidence on the Evidence Analysis chart, use the Two Paragraph Frame to write your paragraph. When you finish, proofread it for spelling and grammar. Then copy it over neatly, or type it, and turn it in.

### Evidence Analysis Chart

| Reason                                                                                                              | Evidence                                | Analysis |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------|
| Reason #1: Ships and merchants from _____, _____ and _____ came to Quanzhou to buy and sell _____, _____ and _____. | [from Ibn Battuta]                      |          |
|                                                                                                                     | [from Marco Polo]                       |          |
| Reason #2: Quanzhou had many foreign communities, such as the _____, the _____ and the _____.                       | [from Zhao Rugua or an inscription]     |          |
|                                                                                                                     | [from either Ibn Battuta or Marco Polo] |          |

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## SoE2.15 Why was Quanzhou Such an Important Site of Encounter? (2 of 3)

### Two Paragraph Frame

*(1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph begins with Introduction and Claim)* Between 1100 and 1400, Quanzhou was a major port for China and the Asian trade circles. It may have been the greatest trading city in the world. Quanzhou was an important site of encounter because many foreign ships and merchants came there to buy Chinese products and because the city was home to many foreign communities.

*(Reason 1)* Ships and merchants from \_\_\_\_\_  
came to Quanzhou to buy and sell \_\_\_\_\_

*(1<sup>st</sup> Evidence to support reason 1)* In the fourteenth century, the Magribi traveler Ibn Battuta wrote that  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(Analysis of evidence)* This means that  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(2<sup>nd</sup> Evidence to support reason 1)* In his travel account, Marco Polo, a merchant from Venice, noted that  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*(Analysis of evidence)* Polo's observation shows that  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SoE2.15 Why was Quanzhou Such an Important Site of Encounter? (3 of 3)

*(2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph begins with Transition and reason 2)* In addition to the large number of foreign merchants, Quanzhou had many foreign communities, such as

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*(1<sup>st</sup> Evidence to support reason 2)* As Zhao Rugua, the Chinese trade superintendent at Quanzhou in 1220 recorded, OR As a thirteenth-century Chinese inscription recorded, (choose one)

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*(Analysis of evidence)* This means that

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*(2<sup>nd</sup> Evidence to support reason 2)* Marco Polo (or Ibn Battuta) observed that

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*(Analysis of evidence)* This evidence supports the existence of many foreign communities because

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*(Conclusion)* \_\_\_\_\_

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