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Map shows Chinese discovered America

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17 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Map shows Chinese discovered America

Historians and mapmakers are currently in deep debate over the authenticity of a map that might prove a Chinese admiral was the first person to discover America. This controversial notion, posited by British amateur historian Gavin Menzies, has gained credible validation after the discovery of an ancient map in Shanghai. The map dates back to 1418, seventy years before Columbus stepped foot on American shores. Mr. Menzies has written a best selling book - *1421 – The Year China Discovered the World* – in which he claims that Admiral Zhu Di, a Ming Dynasty seafarer, sailed the seven seas and charted new lands in a massive fleet of 300 vessels. Researchers in New Zealand are conducting tests on the map to authenticate its age.

Mr. Menzies makes further claims about Zhu Di that turn current interpretations of history upside down. He maintains that the Chinese sailor circumnavigated the globe a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and reached Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies states the admiral's discoveries were, until now, to little avail, as China underwent centuries of self-imposed isolation. Chinese cartographers and scholars have rubbished Mr. Menzies' book and cast skepticism on a claim that Zhu Di went any farther than South East Asia and India. However, the new map clearly shows America, Africa and Europe, albeit with the UK missing. It was snapped up for \$500 in an antiques shop by a prominent Chinese lawyer.

WARM-UPS

1. HISTORY: In pairs / groups, tell each other about the early history of your country. Did someone discover it? Did another country invade and conquer it? How did it get its name? Change partners and share your findings.

2. WHAT DO YOU KNOW? With paper and pen, walk around the class ask other students, "What do you know about the discovery of America and Christopher Columbus?" Return to your partner / group and share your findings. Walk around the class again, this time telling classmates about the discovery of America and Christopher Columbus: "Did you know (that)...?" (Alternatively, do this for your own country).

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Historians / mapmakers / debates / maps / Shanghai / the Ming Dynasty / best selling books / the globe / discoveries / rubbish / antiques shops / lawyers

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. DISCOVERY OPINIONS: Talk about these opinions with your partner(s).

- a. If the map is authentic, all school history books will need to change.
- b. The next Space Shuttle should be called the Zhu Di.
- c. The city of Columbus, Ohio should be renamed Zhu Di, Ohio.
- d. America should be renamed the United States of Zhu.
- e. Americans will be very reluctant to change names to reflect the new discovery.
- f. The map must be a fake.
- g. The map will help America and China come closer together.
- h. It's too much of a coincidence that the book and map suddenly appeared.

5. MAP: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "map". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

6. MAPMAKER: You are a mapmaker. With your mapmaking partners, discuss the changes you would like to see made to the map of the world. Which borders would you like to create or erase? Which new countries would you like to create? Which countries would you make smaller or larger? Would you rename any countries? Change partners and share your ideas.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Historians and mapmakers are in deep water over a map. | T / F |
| b. A professional historian claimed a Chinese sailor discovered America. | T / F |
| c. A Chinese map showing America is said to date back to 70 AD. | T / F |
| d. Researchers in New Zealand are authenticating the age of the map. | T / F |
| e. The historian's book turns our knowledge of history upside down. | T / F |
| f. China underwent centuries of self-imposed isolation. | T / F |
| g. Chinese scholars have always said a Chinese sailor found America. | T / F |
| h. The map was bought in an antiques shop for \$500. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| a. mapmakers | understanding |
| b. posited | doubt |
| c. credible | confirm |
| d. seafarer | proposed |
| e. authenticate | trashed |
| f. interpretations | mariner |
| g. avail | purchased |
| h. rubbished | cartographers |
| i. skepticism | use |
| j. snapped up | authentic |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. in deep debate | and charted new lands |
| b. This controversial notion, | to authenticate its age |
| c. gained credible validation after | circumnavigated the globe |
| d. sailed the seven seas | of self-imposed isolation |
| e. conducting tests on the map | over the authenticity of a map |
| f. turn current interpretations | Mr. Menzies' book |
| g. the Chinese sailor | of history upside down |
| h. as China underwent centuries | the discovery of an ancient map |
| i. scholars have rubbished | up for \$500 |
| j. It was snapped | posited by... |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Map shows Chinese discovered America

Historians and mapmakers are currently in _____ debate over the authenticity of a map that might prove a Chinese admiral was the first person to discover America. This controversial _____, _____ by British amateur historian Gavin Menzies, has gained _____ validation after the discovery of an ancient map in Shanghai. The map dates back to 1418, seventy years before Columbus stepped _____ on American shores. Mr. Menzies has written a best selling book - *1421 – The Year China Discovered the World* – in which he claims that Admiral Zhu Di, a Ming Dynasty _____, sailed the _____ seas and charted new lands in a massive fleet of 300 vessels. Researchers in New Zealand are conducting tests on the map to _____ its age.

foot
deep
seven
credible
authenticate
notion
seafarer
posited

Mr. Menzies makes further claims about Zhu Di that turn current interpretations of history _____ down. He maintains that the Chinese sailor circumnavigated the _____ a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and _____ Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies states the admiral's discoveries were, until now, to little _____, as China underwent centuries of self-imposed _____. Chinese cartographers and scholars have rubbished Mr. Menzies' book and _____ skepticism on a claim that Zhu Di went any farther than South East Asia and India. However, the new map clearly shows America, Africa and Europe, _____ with the UK missing. It was _____ up for \$500 in an antiques shop by a prominent Chinese lawyer.

albeit
globe
cast
avail
snapped
upside
reached
isolation

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Map shows Chinese discovered America

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'ancient' and 'map'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "DISCOVERY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the notion of a Chinese sailor discovering America.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| • deep | • turn |
| • notion | • globe |
| • credible | • avail |
| • foot | • cast |
| • massive | • albeit |
| • New Zealand | • snapped |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What adjectives describe your feelings about the article?
- c. What do you know about Christopher Columbus?
- d. What do you know about Chinese mariners?
- e. What do you think will change if the map is authenticated as being real?
- f. How do you think Americans would feel at having to greatly revise their history?
- g. How do you think Chinese people would feel knowing a Chinese sailor discovered America?
- h. Do you think there might be a Space Shuttle Zhu Di?
- i. Do you think it is too much of a coincidence that both the book and map surfaced within three years of one another?
- j. What have you been in deep debate over recently?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you hope the map is real or a fake?
- d. Do you think it'd possible that a huge fleet of ships sailed around the world 600 years ago?
- e. How do you think the map survived for so long?
- f. Do you think Chinese scholars would know more about Zhu Di than an amateur British historian?
- g. Why is the notion that a Chinese sailor may have beaten Christopher Columbus a controversial one?
- h. Would you like to read the book?
- i. When was the last time you snapped up a bargain?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

MAPMAKERS: You are a mapmaker. It is your job to remap the world - you may need an atlas or globe to help you. In pairs / groups, agree on the most important changes that need to be made in the areas below. Write down the potential problems of your remapping. Who will be happy? Who will be angry? How will it change the region or the world?

AREA	HAPPY / ANGRY	CHANGED REGION / WORLD
South America		
Europe		
Middle East		
Africa		
Asia		

Change partners and talk about your remapping. Advise each other on the wisdom of your changes.

Return to your original partners and discuss what you found out from the other "remappers".

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on this story. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. PRIORITY REMAP: Write an essay describing the most important change you think needs to be made to the map of the world and why. Read your essay to your partner(s) in your next class. Did you all write about similar things?

4. A DAY IN THE LIFE: You are an admiral sailing the seven seas looking for new continents. Write an account of one day in your life. Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone have similar days?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. F c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| a. mapmakers | cartographers |
| b. posited | proposed |
| c. credible | authentic |
| d. seafarer | mariner |
| e. authenticate | confirm |
| f. interpretations | understanding |
| g. avail | use |
| h. rubbished | trashed |
| i. skepticism | doubt |
| j. snapped up | purchased |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. in deep debate | over the authenticity of a map |
| b. This controversial notion, | posited by... |
| c. gained credible validation after | the discovery of an ancient map |
| d. sailed the seven seas | and charted new lands |
| e. conducting tests on the map | to authenticate its age |
| f. turn current interpretations | of history upside down |
| g. the Chinese sailor | circumnavigated the globe |
| h. as China underwent centuries | of self-imposed isolation |
| i. scholars have rubbished | Mr. Menzies' book |
| j. It was snapped | up for \$500 |

GAP FILL:

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Mr. Menzies makes further claims about Zhu Di that turn current interpretations of history **upside** down. He maintains that the Chinese sailor circumnavigated the **globe** a century before Magellan, discovered Antarctica and **reached** Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook. Menzies states the admiral's discoveries were, until now, to little **avail**, as China underwent centuries of self-imposed **isolation**. Chinese cartographers and scholars have rubbished Mr. Menzies' book and **cast** skepticism on a claim that Zhu Di went any farther than South East Asia and India. However, the new map clearly shows America, Africa and Europe, **albeit** with the UK missing. It was **snapped** up for \$500 in an antiques shop by a prominent Chinese lawyer.