



## Changes of Geopolitical Landscape of Fujian Coastal Cities in Ming and Qing Dynasties under the Comparison between Chouhaitubian and Fujianhaianquantu

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The change of geopolitical landscape in Fujian is a vital topic for understanding the ideas of coastal urban planning in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The study compares two ancient maps, *Chouhaitubian* (an illustrated book on coastal defence) in the late Ming Dynasty and *Fujianhaianquantu* (a coastal map of Fujian) in the early Qing Dynasty. It combines them with ArcGIS software for visual analysis to obtain the status of geopolitical landscape changes in the coastal cities of Fujian during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The comparison of the two maps reveals that: Finding 1. The Wei-Suo system of the Qing Dynasty tended to be demilitarised and gradually disintegrated, and a new defence system based on the Folk Fortress was formed. Finding 2. Under the influence of the Seafaring Prohibition Policy, the coastal defence system was moved inward along the ancient postal route. Finding 3. Due to Zheng's rule of Xiamen and Jinmen, new port clusters were formed in the coastal areas of southern Fujian. Changes in the geopolitical landscape of the Ming and Qing Dynasties were closely related to the above events and policy changes, resulting in changes in the economic and trade patterns of Fujian.

**Keywords:** Ming and Qing Dynasties, Geopolitical Landscape, Coastal Cities in Fujian, Chouhaitubian, Fujianhaianquantu

### Introduction

In addition to textual records, maps serve as crucial illustrations of ancient geographical environments. Their cartographic logic and modes of expression reflect the socio-economic development of their time. "Chouhaitubian" (CHTB) is a monograph on Ming Dynasty maritime defence, geography, and history, containing extensive geopolitical information about coastal cities in Fujian. Joseph Needham, a British expert on the history of Chinese science and technology, regards it as an authoritative work on coastal geography in China.<sup>1</sup> "Fujianhaianquantu" (FHQT), created in the early Qing Dynasty and currently held in the National Diet Library of Japan, is the first long scroll map discovered in Fujian from the early Qing period,<sup>2</sup> providing valuable historical materials for studying coastal defence deployment and military institutions in late Ming and early Qing Fujian. Researchers like Gongzhong Li, have explored the coastal defence ideology reflected in "Chouhaitubian,"<sup>3</sup> while Jie Tong has delved into the historical value of "Chouhaitubian" based on its cartography and historical records.<sup>4</sup> Shoujia Wang has investigated Ming Dynasty relations with Japan based on historical materials from "Chouhaitubian,"<sup>5</sup>. Scholars like Zhizhong Li researched the versions and authors of "Chouhaitubian," determining details about its various editions and authors.<sup>6</sup> There has been relatively limited research on "Fujianhaianquantu," with Han Xue's work, "A Study on the Compilation Time of the *Fujianhaianquantu* Held in the National Diet Library of Japan,"<sup>7</sup> providing insights into the creation time of the map. Although these studies encompass military science, geography, and history, research comparing the geopolitical landscape changes in Fujian coastal cities during the Ming and Qing Dynasties using CHTB and FHQT remains scarce. Therefore, this article employs geographic and historical methods such as visualisation analysis and historical place name comparison to delve into the societal, political, and economic changes in Fujian's coastal cities during the Ming and Qing Dynasties.

<sup>1</sup> Shan Liao, "A Preliminary Exploration of Maritime Defense Intelligence in Chaitubian," *Southern Journal*, no. 10 (2020): 36.

<sup>2</sup> Han Xue, "A Study on the Compilation Time of the *Fujianhaianquantu* Held in the National Diet Library of Japan," *Pearl River Shipping*, no. 14(2022): 87.

<sup>3</sup> Gongzhong Li and Xia Li, "Memory of Japanese Pirate and the Evolution of China's Maritime Sovereignty Concept: An Examination from *Chouhaitubian* to *Yangfangjiyao*," *Jianghai Journal*, no. 3(2007): 152.

<sup>4</sup> Jie Tong, "The Historiographical Value of Ruozeng Zheng's *Chouhaitubian*," *Journal of Historiography Studies*, no. 2(2012): 25.

<sup>5</sup> Shoujia Wang, and Chengfu Gu, "A Valuable Document for Studying the History of Sino-Japanese Relations in the Ming Dynasty—A Review of Fudan University's Collection of the Jiajing Edition of *Chouhaitubian*," *Historical Review*, no. 1 (1986): 35.

<sup>6</sup> Zhizhong Li, "On the Author and Editions of *Chouhaitubian*," *Cultural Relics*, no. 7(1983): 70.

<sup>7</sup> Han, "A Study," 86.



### Brief description of maps

CHTB compiled during the Jiaping reign of the Ming Dynasty by the Governor of Zhejiang, Zongxian Hu, and authored by the military strategist Ruoze Zheng,<sup>8</sup> is an official work on coastal defence against Japanese pirates. This work covers military, geographical, and historical aspects and has been published in three editions during the Ming Dynasty. It includes 112 maps of coastal terrain and prefectures, fifty-nine illustrations of warships and weaponry, two maps of Japan, and one map of the invasion routes of Japanese pirates. The scope of these maps ranges from Guangdong in the south to the Yalu River in Liaoning in the north, spanning the entire Chinese coastline. In the early Ming period, there were few incidents of Japanese pirate harassment along the southeast coast. However, due to insufficient attention to coastal defence, these incidents escalated into large-scale Japanese piracy during the Jiaping reign (1522-1566), prompting the creation of CHTB.<sup>9</sup> The coastal defence maps of Fujian in this book can be divided into two parts: the first volume focusing on the Fujian region and the fourth volumes covering the entire scope. The first volume emphasises coastal defence elements such as Patrol Division Towns and beacon towers in Fujian coastal areas, while the fourth volumes broadly cover various areas with city information prominently marked.

FHQT, a pictorial map currently housed in the National Diet Library of Japan, has been dated to 1679,<sup>10</sup> during the Kangxi reign (1662-1722) in the Qing Dynasty. This map utilises the unique Chinese technique of landscape painting in scroll format, vividly depicting the river courses and island topography along the Fujian coast. The division between land and sea is represented with the land at the top and the sea at the bottom, offering a perspective from the ocean towards the land, oriented towards the direction of enemy incursions. The map's geographical scope extends from Chaozhou in Guangdong in the south to Pingyang in Zhejiang in the north.

Differences in the depictions of the two maps are illustrated in Figure 1. Both maps are coastal defence maps and include conventional elements such as garrison towns, mountains, and islands. However, their overall cartographic logic diverges significantly due to their different focuses: CHTB emphasises coastal defence information, while FHQT highlights urban and coastal defence information. The differences in drawing logic and toponymic annotations between the two maps reflect multiple geopolitical landscape changes from the Ming to the Qing Dynasties.



Figure 1 - The cartographic differences between *Chouhaitubian*(CHTB) and *Fujianhaianquantu*(FHQT) are significant, particularly in their respective styles of illustration.

<sup>8</sup> Ruoze Zheng, *Chouhaitubian* (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Yixuan Dai, *Japanes Pirates during the Jiaping and Longqing Reigns of the Ming Dynasty and the Emergence of Capitalism in China*. (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1982), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Han, "A Study," 86.



Collation of changes in place names data on two maps

The Wei-Suo Defence System was the overarching maritime defence system during the Ming Dynasty, with each defence area primarily comprising a Water Fortress, Garrison City(Wei), and a variable number of Fortified Towns(Suo) and Patrol Division Towns. A Garrison City was established with 5,600 soldiers, a Thousand-Household Fortified Town(Thousand-Household Suo) with 1,120 soldiers, and a Hundred-Household Fortified Town with 112 soldiers(Hundred-Household Suo),<sup>11</sup> while the number of Patrol Division Towns varied depending on the situation. The transmission of information within the Wei-Suo system was facilitated through beacon towers and postal routes. (Figure 2)

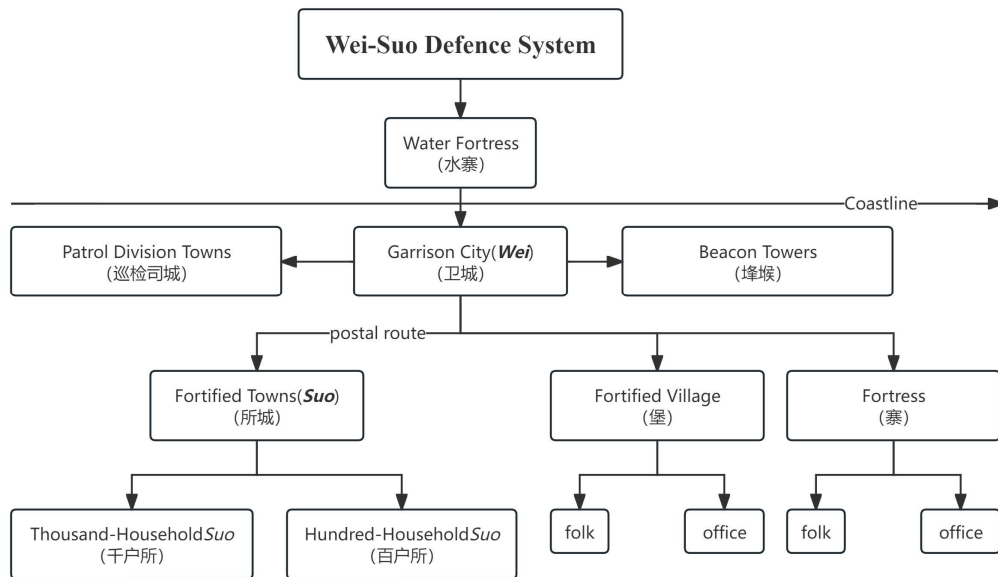


Figure 2 - The positions and hierarchical relationships among the Water Fortress, Garrison City (Wei), Fortified Twon (Suo), Patrol Division Town, and beacon towers, this figure shows that the Water Fortresses are located outside the coastline, while the other defence structures are positioned inland from the coastline.

The Water Fortress was the first line of coastal defence in the Ming Dynasty and was a key fortified site. Only one fortress is marked on the original site of the *Tongshan* Water Fortress in the FHQT, with no supporting defence facilities in the vicinity, not in the form of Water Fortresses in the Ming Dynasty. The remaining four Water Fortresses are not labelled, three of them without identifying the same place name. The Water Fortress in the Qing Dynasty disappeared. During the Ming Dynasty, five Wei were constructed alongside Water Fortresses, and there were fourteen Suo, totalling nineteen Wei-Suo locations. By the Qing Dynasty, the number of Wei-Suo locations had been reduced to eleven, a decrease of nearly half. This reduction in Wei-Suo locations was also reflected in the sharp decline in the number of Patrol Division Towns. In the two volumes of the CHTB, ninety-nine Patrol Division Towns were marked. However, in the FHQT, there was no label of any Patrol Division Towns, but among the twenty-three locations with identical names and positions. As a defensive facility, beacon towers were extensively marked in the CHTB, but no such mark appeared in the FHQT, despite the presence of locations with identical names. The CHTB records over 200 beacon tower sites densely distributed along the Fujian coast. In contrast, the FHQT depicted beacon towers are mainly situated in areas far from the coastline. The FHQT indicates that coastal lookout facilities disappeared in the early Qing period.

The CHTB marks twenty-one Fortresses. In contrast, the FHQT marks 101 Fortresses, with some locations overlapping in name but differing in scale from those in the CHTB. Regarding Fortified Village, the CHTB does not label any related names, whereas the FHQT marks thirty-seven Fortified Village, some of which have the same names and positions as Patrol Division Towns in the CHTB. Compared to Fortresses and Fortified Villages, Wall City represent larger settlements. The CHTB marks only one Wall City, while the FHQT marks seventeen, of which fourteen are located in southern Fujian.

The postal routes of the Qing Dynasty saw little change compared to those of the Ming Dynasty,<sup>12</sup> with the number of post stations remaining unchanged and eight new express post stations added along the route. Maritime traffic, however, underwent significant changes. In the Ming Dynasty, the CHTB shows that all marked ports were

<sup>11</sup> Liyuan Cheng, "Evolution of the Coastal Spatial Pattern of Ancient Quanzhou from the Perspective of Coastal Defence," paper presented at the 2022/2023 China Urban Planning Annual Conference, Wuhan, Hubei, China, (2023).

<sup>12</sup> Yulan Wang. "The Spatio-Temporal Distribution and Changes of Post Stations and Express Courier Stations in Fujian during the Ming and Qing Dynasties." (Master's thesis, Fujian Normal University, 2019),101-102.



concentrated in the northern Fujian areas of Fuzhou Prefecture and its subordinate Funing County, with no ports marked in Xinghua Prefecture in central Fujian, and only one port in Zhangzhou Prefecture in southern Fujian. In contrast, the FHQT shows that in Qing Dynasty, the ports were mainly distributed in the southern Fujian region, with only two in northern Fujian and one official port in Xinghua Prefecture in central Fujian.

### Changes in Fujian coastal cities

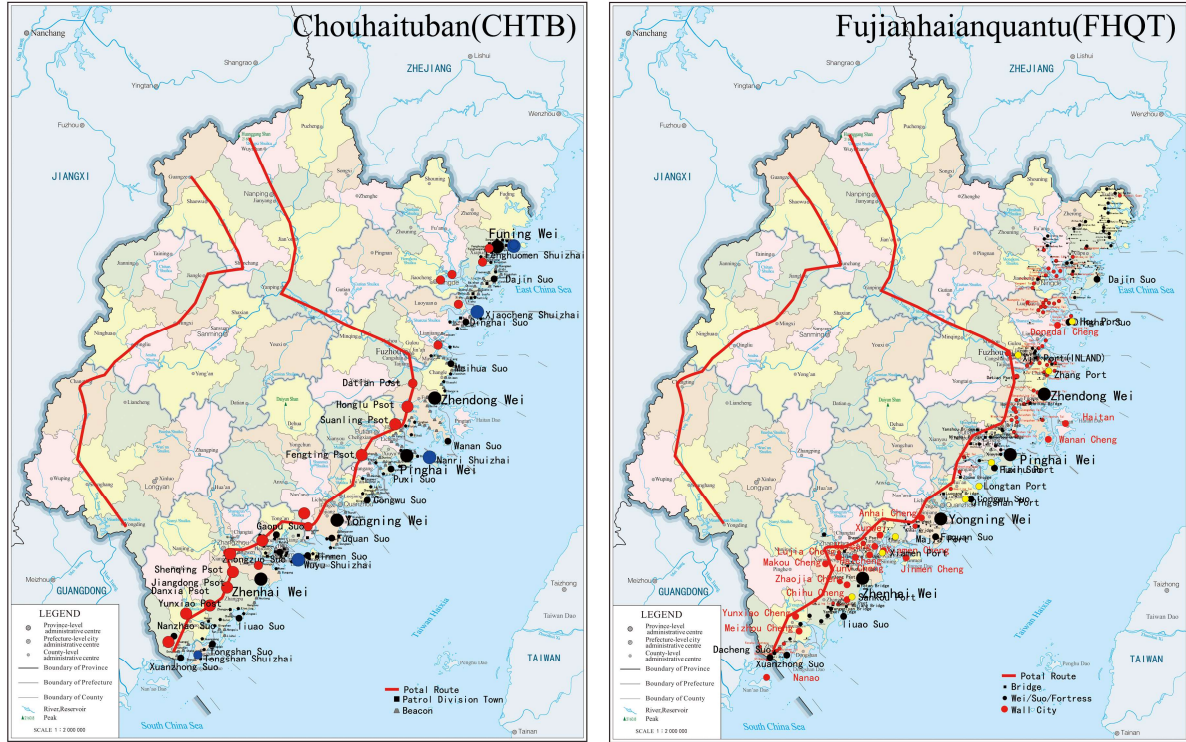


Figure 3 - Overlay map. This map was created by extracting and superimposing the coastal defence elements from the two maps.

The comparison of the two maps reflects the comprehensive abolition of the Wei-Suo Defence System in its early years. All five major Water Fortresses were abandoned at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, and the number of Wei and Suo decreased by 42%. The Wei and Suo that remained in use were no longer garrisoned and incorporated into the administrative system of prefectures and counties. Taking Quanzhou Prefecture as an example, the Fortified Towns of *Fuquan Suo* and *Chongwu Suo* were disbanded and incorporated into the *Yongning Wei*, while Wei and Suo, without military organisation, gradually evolved into towns and villages.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Patrol Divisions under the Wei-Suo Defence System were also completely abolished. The dramatic changes in the coastal defence system revealed by the two maps represent the collapse of the integrated defence system between the sea and the coast at the end of the Ming Dynasty and the initial manifestation of the disappearance of the Wei-Suo defence system in the Qing Dynasty. (Figure 3)

During the late Ming and early Qing periods, there was a significant increase in the number of Folk Fortresses and Wall City along the coastal areas of Fujian, gradually forming a fortress system along the ancient postal routes. FHQT indicates 121 more Fortress and Fortified Towns, as well as 16 additional Wall Cities, compared to the CHTB. Despite the gradual decline in national strength towards the end of the Ming Dynasty, the Seafaring Prohibition Policy persisted. External threats, such as Japanese piracy, and internal disturbances caused by bandits, coupled with economic decline and deteriorating social conditions, led to the resurgence of family-based armed forces. Consequently, a large number of Folk Fortresses and Folk Fortified Villages were constructed, serving as strongholds for these family-based armed forces. During the late Ming and early Qing periods, Pinghe County in Zhangzhou Prefecture had approximately 140 Fortresses, with 108 of them collectively built by families, accounting for 78% of the total.<sup>14</sup> Pinghe County serves as a microcosm of the surge in Folk Fortress construction in Fujian.

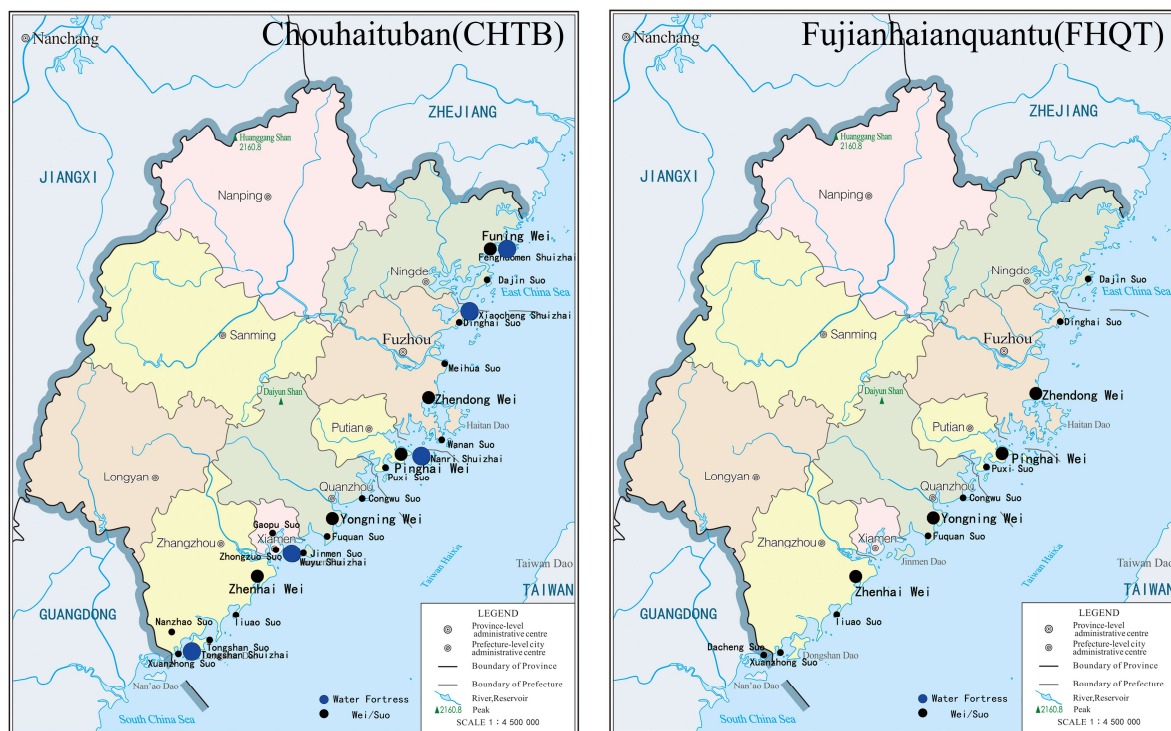
<sup>13</sup> Yike Mao, *Research on the Merger of Guard Stations and Counties in the Qing Dynasty* (Beijing: Social Sciences Literature Press, 2018),5.

<sup>14</sup> Chen, Zhiping, and Qinghua Zhao. "Initiatives of Min-Yue Literati in Fortress Defense against Japanese Pirates and Thieves during the Jiajing and Wanli Reigns of the Ming Dynasty—Taking Huo Tao and Lin Xiechun as Examples." *Historical Research Quarterly*, no.06(2018):7.



At the beginning of the Qing Dynasty, the maritime shipping centres in Fujian shifted from the northern to the southern region. A comparison of port distributions reveals that during the Ming Dynasty, the primary shipping centres were located in the Fuzhou Prefecture in northern Fujian. In contrast, during the Qing Dynasty, the centres shifted to the Zhangzhou and Quanzhou Prefectures in southern Fujian. According to the CHTB, the only officially designated trade port in southern Fujian during the Ming Dynasty was Yuegang in Zhangzhou Prefecture. This limitation was largely due to the prolonged seafaring prohibition, which led to severe economic pressure and rampant smuggling. In the 40th year of the Jiajing reign (1561), the famous "Rebellion of the Twenty-Four Generals"<sup>15</sup> broke out in Yuegang. To quell the rebellion, the Ming government opened Yuegang as the only legal civilian trade port in southern Fujian. Additionally, Anhai and Xiamen ports served as military ports for Chenggong Zheng's forces, laying the groundwork for the revival of foreign trade in southern Fujian ports in later years.

**The shift from Wei-Suo coastal defence to policies of Taiwan recovery and seafaring prohibition**



**Figure 4 - Distribution map of Water Fortresses, Wei and Suo in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. All Water Fortresses were abandoned in the Qing Dynasty, and the number of Wei-Suo was halved.**

In the Qing Dynasty, the defence focus of coastal areas in Fujian shifted from the sea to the land, transitioning from the Ming Dynasty's policy of the Wei-Suo Defence System for coastal defence to the Qing Dynasty's more stringent policies of Taiwan recovery and seafaring prohibition. Figure 4 shows a comparative diagram of coastal defence between the Ming and Qing dynasties in Fujian. As the first line of defence at sea, Water Fortresses served as stationed and supply points for maritime infantry forces, greatly thwarting the incursions of Japanese pirates. However, following the corruption of the Ming government after the Zhengtong reign(1436-1449), Wei, Suo and other military units faced difficulties in provisions. The five major Water Fortresses in Fujian had to reduce their forces. In 1442, Hong Jiao, a deputy envoy, led the relocation of Xiaocheng Water Fortress inland due to rough sea conditions. After the relocation of the last water fortress, Nanri Water Fortress, to Jiliao County in Xinghua Prefecture in the fourth year of the Chenghua reign (1468),<sup>16</sup> this action signalled the disappearance of the maritime defence line established by the five Water Fortresses without encountering any battles. The second line of defence consisted of Wei and Suo and their affiliated facilities, which became virtually non-existent by the end of the Ming Dynasty and completely disappeared with the abolition of the Wei-Suo Defence System in the Qing Dynasty.

In 1659, the remnants of Chenggong Zheng's forces of the Ming Dynasty attacked Nanjing in an attempt to reclaim the former capital of the Ming Dynasty and overthrow the Qing Dynasty, but they were defeated and retreated to Xiamen in southern Fujian. In 1661, Zheng defeated the Dutch colonists and regained control of

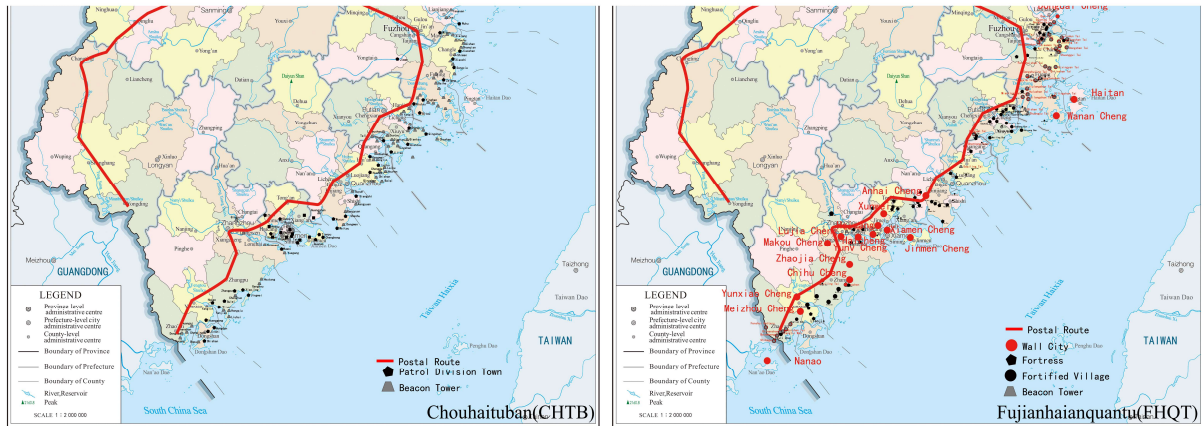
<sup>15</sup> Xianqiang Li, "Revisiting the Rebellion of the 'Twenty-Four Generals' and the Establishment of Counties in Ming Dynasty Yuegang, Fujian," *China's Borderland History and Geography Research* 27, no. 2 (2017): 113.

<sup>16</sup> Rigen Wang, "Changes in the Comparison of Enemy and Allied Forces in Ming Dynasty Southeastern Coastal Defense and Their Impacts," *Research on China's Social and Economic History*, no. 2 (2003): 30.



Taiwan, prompting fear in the Qing government.<sup>17</sup> To sever the connection between the remaining forces of the Zheng family in southern Fujian and Taiwan, the Qing government implemented stricter seafaring prohibition measures in the coastal areas of Fujian and stationed troops to seize the opportunity to recover Taiwan. From the Ming Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the complex geopolitical environment of Fujian prompted the coastal areas to transition from Wei-Suo coastal defence to policies of Taiwan Recovery and Seafaring Prohibition

**The transition from official defence to civilian self-defence**



**Figure 5 - Comparison map of foundational defence facilities between CHTB and FHQT. The new defence facilities added during the Qing Dynasty are located near the postal routes.**

The sharp increase in the number of fortresses during the late Ming and early Qing periods represented a transition from official defence to civilian self-defence. The trend in coastal Fortress construction, as depicted in Figure 5, illustrates that the defensive lines of the Wei-Suo Defence System along the coastal shoreline during the Ming Dynasty shifted towards the ancient postal route. Along this line, numerous Folk Fortresses were constructed, supplemented by beacon towers, forming a system of civilian self-defence during the late Ming and early Qing periods.

The decline of the Wei-Suo Defence System in the late Ming period was directly reflected in the disbandment of military forces in various regions. For instance, in Quanzhou Prefecture, where there were originally 1,650 archers, only 166 remained by the end of the Ming Dynasty, with a reduction and desertion rate of up to 90%. During the Jiajing reign (1522-1566) of the late Ming period, the coastal area of Fujian was ravaged by Japanese pirates, and the inadequate military strength of the Patrol Division Towns led to a decline in their ability to defend against attacks, often resulting in destruction without timely repairs. To cope with this situation, many Patrol Division Towns relocated to Folk Fortresses: for example, the Yanting Patrol Division Town moved to Xiahu Fortress, and the Gaoluo Patrol Division Town moved to Lvxia Fortress. The Ming government initially restricted the construction of Folk Fortress due to fears of local powers forming armed groups around them, but later encouraged the self-construction of Fortresses by civilians. In the early Qing Dynasty, considering the situation in Fujian, the Policy of Seafaring Prohibition was continued. A document titled "Prohibition of Sea Migration" ordered residents within ten kilometres of the coast to relocate inland.<sup>18</sup> At this time, many Wei and Suo in Fujian had already evolved into non-military urban settlements with a large population. Consequently, many coastal residents became displaced, leading them to choose to construct fortresses along the ancient postal route near the sea for the convenience of trade. This further promoted the construction of Folk Fortresses. The tense situation along the Fujian coastal area at the end of the Ming Dynasty and the implementation of policies in the early Qing gradually transformed the defence policy of the coastal areas of Fujian from official defence to civilian self-defence.

**The economic centre shifted from Northern Fujian to Southern Fujian**

The transition depicted in Figure 6, from the Ming Dynasty's concentrated ports in northern Fujian as illustrated in the CHTB, to the densely distributed port clusters in southern Fujian in the FHQT, subtly signifies the rise, fall, and resurgence of ports in southern Fujian. It also serves as a tangible manifestation of the shifting economic centre of Fujian.

Since the Song and Yuan Dynasties, southern Fujian has been one of the centre of maritime trade in the South Sea, with Quanzhou's Citong Port being hailed as the "largest port of the Song and Yuan dynasties." However, with the promulgation of the Ming Dynasty's seafaring prohibition, the Quanzhou Maritime Trade Office was

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Huan Yan. "A Spatial Quantitative Study of the Coastal Defense System in Ming Dynasty Fujian." (Master's thesis, East China University of Science and Technology, 2016),25.



abolished and relocated to Fuzhou to receive tribute from Ryukyu and other countries. Consequently, trade between Fuzhou and Ryukyu flourished, and many ships only docked in Fuzhou, leading to the decline of Quanzhou Port and the rise of Fuzhou Port. The opening of Yuegang in Zhangzhou Prefecture as the only legitimate foreign trade port at the end of the Ming Dynasty was just the beginning of the revival of southern Fujian ports. Zhilong Zheng, the father of Chenggong Zheng, developed maritime private armed forces during the turbulent period at the end of the Ming Dynasty.<sup>19</sup> In the first year of the Chongzhen reign (1628), Zhilong Zheng was recruited by the Ming government, dominating southern Fujian. Using Anhai Port and Xiamen Port in Quanzhou Prefecture as bases, he significantly expanded private trade and collected taxes from ships travelling to and from Taiwan. After Chenggong Zheng assumed office, he established a Fortified city in Anhai. The presence of Anhai City on the FHQU. Although the Ming government only designated Yuegang in Zhangzhou Prefecture as a legal port, the Zheng family opened additional ports, such as Anhai and Xiamen, some of which served as maritime trade ports. They traded not only with the Nanyang Islands, including Luzon, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, but also with Japan and Korea, leading to increasing prosperity throughout southern Fujian due to the opening of these ports. The shift in port clusters between the two maps directly reflects changes in the maritime trade centre. Southern Fujian, stabilised by the Zheng family at the end of the Ming Dynasty, experienced a resurgence in ports that were no longer restricted by the Seafaring Prohibition Policy.

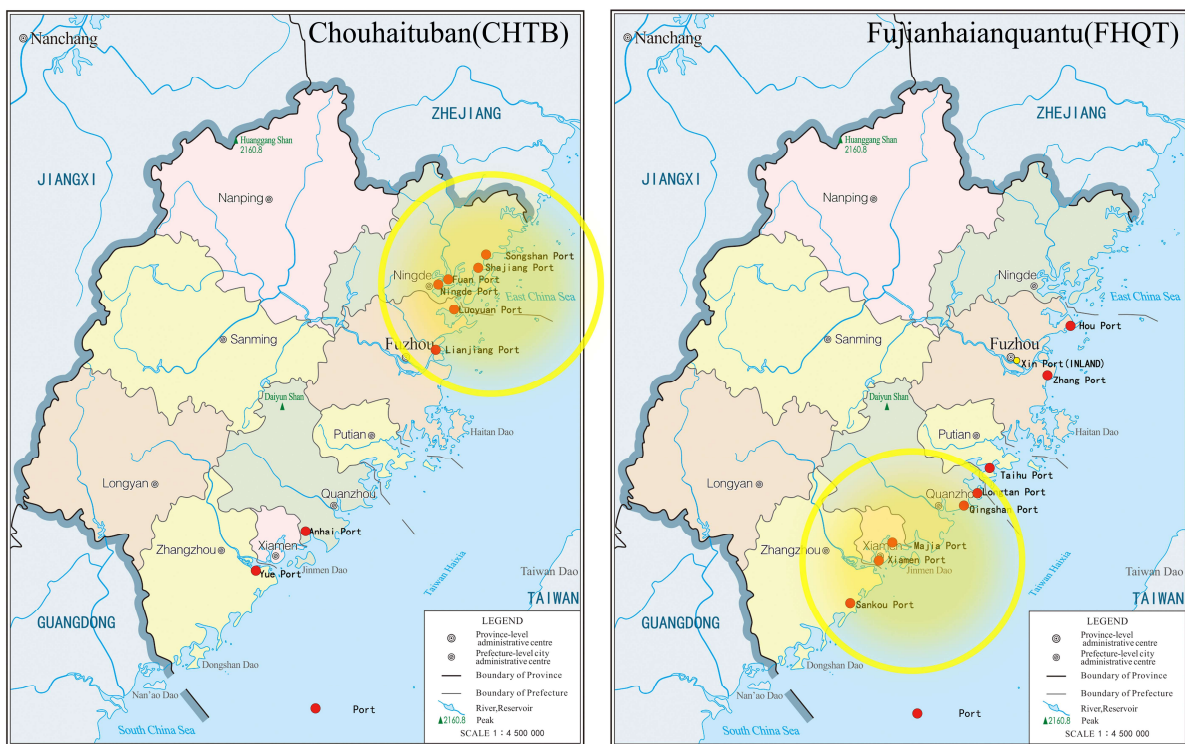


Figure 6 - Comparison map of port centres in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The economic centre shifted from Northern Fujian to Southern Fujian.

### Conclusions

By comparing place names from two maps and analysing existing locations, along with historical records, this article summarised the changes in the geopolitical landscape of coastal cities in Fujian during the Ming and Qing dynasties. The study visualised the changes in coastal cities in Fujian during these periods, revealing the shifting trends of coastal settlements and ports. It interprets these shifts in terms of military, political, and economic factors, revealing that the alterations in the coastal geopolitical landscape of Fujian are a material reflection of policy changes during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Although there are certain micro-level limitations in using maps for research, maps as a medium to interpret history can indirectly and authentically reflect the processes and reasons behind urban changes, providing an irreplaceable tool for studying ancient cities.

<sup>19</sup> Beibei Xia. "Zheng Zhilong: A Great Maritime Merchant of Fujian in the Seventeenth Century." *Academic Monthly*, no. 4 (2002): 59.



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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

### Notes on contributor(s)

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### Image sources

**Figure 1:** CHTB is from Chouhai Tubian, published by Beijing Zhonghua Book Company in 2007. FHQT is from the collection of the National Diet Library, Japan.

**Figure 2:** The analysis chart was completed by the author.

**Figure 3:** The original map was compiled by the Fujian Provincial Institute of Cartography and supervised by the Fujian Provincial Department of Natural Resources. The analysis map was completed by the author.

**Figure 4:** The original map was compiled by the Fujian Provincial Institute of Cartography and supervised by the Fujian Provincial Department of Natural Resources. The analysis map was completed by the author.

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**Figure 6:** The original map was compiled by the Fujian Provincial Institute of Cartography and supervised by the Fujian Provincial Department of Natural Resources. The analysis map was completed by the author.