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Georgia Southern University Professor Uncovers Trade Route Secrets Hidden for Centuries

SEPTEMBER 19, 2011



A Georgia Southern University history professor has uncovered centuries-old Chinese trade routes that have been hidden for nearly 400 years. The discovery was made by Robert Batchelor, Ph.D., while researching maps in Oxford University's Bodleian Library. Batchelor is discussing his discovery at a meeting of researchers being held today at Oxford.

"Like many researchers, I approached China in this period from the perspective of the Ming Empire, which because of The Forbidden City and The Great Wall is usually remembered for closure rather than openness," explained Batchelor. "But when I moved to Georgia and began learning about the Savannah Port, it piqued my interest in the Chinese shipping trade of that era. I was studying a nearly 400-year-old map in the Bodleian Library when I discovered it was actually a map of Chinese trade routes. The Bodleian Library knew they had the map, but no modern scholars ever made the connection that the map actually documented Chinese trade routes."

While studying the long neglected early 17th-century Chinese manuscript map, Batchelor discovered a finely drawn network of shipping routes. Unlike many Chinese maps that show only the empire itself, this map depicts the whole of East Asia and most importantly the trading routes used to reach Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Southeast Asia. It also shows how such navigation worked, and restoration has revealed that the routes on the map were drawn before the coasts. Batchelor believes the map was most likely commissioned by a Chinese or perhaps Moslem merchant family-lineage group from Quanzhou, Fujian, who had strong connections in Southeast Asia.

"The map is a unique artifact that tells the story of East Asian commerce as open, dynamic

and driven by coastal merchant networks with aspirations to trade as far away as the Persian Gulf," said Batchelor. The map, known as the Selden Map of China, was donated to the Bodleian in 1659 by English legal philosopher John Selden.

"Professor Batchelor's discovery is another example of Georgia Southern University's research reaching far beyond our borders and impacting people around the world," said College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Dean Mike Smith. "There is no question that international scholars and researchers will study this map to unlock secrets lost to time and to better understand the impact and implications of international trade centuries ago."

While the map will prove invaluable to researchers who want to study Chinese shipping and trade history, Batchelor thinks the discovery also paves the way for a modern dialogue about China's relationship with the U.S. and other countries.

"Many people don't realize that South Georgia's relationship with China goes back to at least the 1760s when Henry Yonge planted the first soybean crop in North America in Savannah with seeds brought from China. It's important to think like early Americans and merchant Chinese –reaching out to build relationships rather than walls," said Batchelor.

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"O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree..." 🎄🎵#TBT to circa 1964, when a tree in front of the Williams Center was decorated for the holidays.



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Georgia Southern Alumnus Luke Bryan to Return to Area for Farm Tour Concert

SEPTEMBER 19, 2011

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Georgia Southern University alumnus and Capitol Records Nashville recording artist Luke Bryan will return to the area as part of his *Farm Tour* concert series. A portion of the proceeds from the concert will benefit Georgia Southern scholarships.

The concert will be held Wednesday, Oct. 5 at Longneedle Farm on LJ Road in Claxton. Tickets may be purchased at the University Store on the Georgia Southern campus (www.qsustore.com) or online at www.lukebryan.com/farmtour. This marks the third year that Bryan has played a concert to benefit scholarships for Georgia Southern students.

"We have such a blast at these shows," says Bryan. "We look forward to bringing music into some of these areas where concert tours can't get to. There's nothing like building a tour set in the middle of a crop field!"

Bryan, who graduated from Georgia Southern in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in business administration, came up with the idea for the *Farm Tour* concerts as a way to give back to local farming communities by celebrating and lifting up the American farmer and offering a fun escape with the outdoor shows. This year's *Farm Tour* presenting sponsor is DEKALB.

Bryan's recently released *tailgates & tanlines* CD is the follow up to his gold-certified album *Doin' My Thing*, which produced three back-to-back number one singles — "Do I," "Rain Is A Good Thing" and "Someone Else Calling You Baby."

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