



## **The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered North America**

*Paul Chiasson*

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**The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered North America** Paul Chiasson

The gripping, marvel-filled account of how a native son took a casual walk up a mountain on Cape Breton Island and made an archeological discovery of world-shaking proportions.

In the summer of 2003, at home for his parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary, Paul Chiasson decided to climb a mountain he had never explored on the island where eight generations of his Acadian family had lived. Cape Breton is one of the oldest points of exploration and settlement in the Americas, with a history dating back to the first days of European discovery, and it is littered with the remnants of old settlements. But the road that Chiasson found that day was unique. Well-made and consistently wide, and at one time clearly bordered with stone walls, the road had been a major undertaking. In the two years of detective work that followed, Chiasson systematically surveyed the history of Europeans in North America, and came to a stunning conclusion: the ruins he stumbled upon did not belong to the Portuguese, the French or the English – in fact, they pre-dated John Cabot's "discovery" of the island in 1497.

Using aerial and site photographs, maps and drawings, and his own expertise as an architect, Chiasson carries the reader along as he pieces together the clues to one of the world's great mysteries. While tantalizing mentions can be found in early navigators' journals and maps, **The Island of Seven Cities** reveals for the first time the existence of a large Chinese colony that thrived on Canadian shores well before the European Age of Discovery.

Chiasson addresses how the colony was abandoned and forgotten, in the New World and in China, except in the storytelling and culture of the Mi'kmaq, whose written language, clothing, technical knowledge, religious beliefs and legends, he argues, expose deep cultural roots in China. **The Island of Seven Cities** unveils the first tangible proof that the Chinese were in the New World before Columbus.

## The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered North America Details

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# **From Reader Review The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered North America for online ebook**

## **Eric says**

What an excellent book, especially for a history buff! Well researched, well thought out, and it reads like a fast paced adventure who-done-it. The history of a Chinese presence in pre-Columbian New World, is only very recently being speculated on, and this authors own efforts to make sense of some local ruins from where he grew up on Cape Breton Island might very well be proof of that conjecture. He's living a history buffs dream. Even if it doesn't pan out fully (he bluntly says this is only the end of the beginning) awaiting the results of the archeological digs will be eagerly watched for.

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## **Caroline says**

Pretty good. It's the author's personal story about how he came to believe an area near his hometown is the ruins from an ancient chinese society. It takes half the book before he even starts talking about the chinese though, which was a little weird to me, but since he didn't think they were involved until that point in the book, I guess it makes sense. But for as much as I liked the book, it put me to sleep almost everytime that I tried to read it. Guess I'm not used to reading non-fiction...

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## **Leah says**

I saw this book on a sale table during a local bookstore's last days. It seemed the perfect book for my father, assuming the author wasn't a crackpot. I took the chance and it turned out well. Paul Chiasson tells the very personal story of his search to discover the origins of ruins he found near his parents' house in Cape Breton. After exhausting the early European records, he comes to the conclusion that the Chinese must have settled the island in the early 1400's. Extremely carefully researched, this book is laid out clearly to eliminate other possibilities and build evidence before drawing its conclusion. I felt it ended a bit abruptly and would like to find out if any follow-up research has been conducted in the area.

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## **Derek Davis says**

This one is a doozy. I read the first half, partly bored silly, partly put off by what seems the author's credulity, then decided to check some things out online. What I turned up made it obvious there was no point in carrying on.

First of all, the premise, that the Chinese settled on an isolated crag on the tip of Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia, seemed outlandish but worth investigation (it was a sale book, so not much to lose). Second, the author claims that, while dying of AIDS, he amassed huge quantities of historical information on Cape Breton (the home to generations of his family), virtually every expedition taken to the coast of North America over several hundred years, every map of note made of these travels, much of the history of China, and been accepted to speak before a symposium on Chinese exploration. All within two years, while also

teaching and practicing architecture.

His tracing of Cape Breton's history might make an interesting monograph in its own right, but as a prolonged (with the emphasis on "long") introduction to his supposed thesis it is sleep-enducing. More telling, it turns out that local forest managers, among others, have shown that the photos he uses are mis-identified by as much as 30 years, that they bear no relation to any supposed ruins, Chinese or otherwise, and actually picture firebreaks constructed as recently as 1989.

But even that's just a teaser. The book flap bio states that "Paul Chiasson is a Yale-educated architect ... [who] has taught at Yale, at the Catholic University of America ... and at the University of Toronto." I didn't check the Catholic U., but no such person turns up in searches of either Yale or Toronto, except an adjunct in surgery at the latter. I can't find any online reference to the "author" except in connection with this particular book. And the book's copyright is not to Mr. Chiasson, but to "Island of Seven Cities, Inc." I say, does anyone smell something odd?

It would appear that there is no such "Paul Chiasson," although others with that name have lived on Cape Breton, including a local teacher who died in 2012 – and who spent eight years after retirement in China.

What was the point of all this? To put out a history of the island that would not otherwise have reached print? And was St. Martin's Press aware of whatever was going on? If so, why would they be part of it?

I guess you can have fun with the book, and you might well enjoy the history of Cape Breton itself, which somehow sounds to be accurate if you ignore the "Seven Cities" nonsense – which is why I gave it a second star. For the rest, it's a lot of hoey, concocted to god know's what end.

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### **Carrie says**

Entertaining and thought-provoking. Would have liked to know where he went in his research after this - was any of his theory debunked or supported?

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### **Sam Hedrick says**

Chiasson's hypothesis is intriguing, connecting the legend of the seven cities of Cibola with the Chinese fleet. That being said, I grew tired of what appeared to be his continual defense of his research and theories. I kept asking myself, if he found ruins and an obvious site, why didn't he have someone digging for artifacts to link the inhabitants of New Breton with the builders of the site? Hopefully some accredited archeologists will start a dig and make some connections. In the meantime, Chiasson should do a Joe Friday and "stick to the facts" without trying to be so much part of the story.

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## **Lianne Burwell says**

I'm a little surprised that I am giving this book as high a rating as I am. Mainly I'm doing that because the writing is quite good, the details of Cape Breton colonial history is intriguing, and the main thesis was intriguing.

Sadly, the main thesis is also pretty ludicrous. It's based entirely on piles of stones, some of which have straight edges, a handful of Mik'maq characters that look rather like Chinese characters, and Mik'maq clothing that has a resemblance to ethnic minorities in China (although China is not, nor ever was, the type to send minorities out of expeditions)

My biggest problem was the lack of anything even resembling proof. No Chinese documents that would indicate that they had an outpost and gold mine halfway around the world. No artifacts found at the site. Shouldn't there be some sort of trash found? A broken piece of pottery? Carving on a rock used to build with?

It was an interesting read, but I don't buy even the tiniest portion of his thesis.

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## **Jc says**

The Island of Seven Cities: Where the Chinese Settled When They Discovered America by Paul Chiasson

For so many years, North Americans have been taught that Columbus was the discoverer of "The New World" when this could not be furthest from the truth. Vikings of the ninth century were crossing from Europe to Greenland and Iceland fairly regularly. The Vikings, in fact, established a colony on the northern end of Newfoundland. Chiasson presents his information that the Chinese actually settled on the northern end of Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Columbus had known about the Island of Seven Cities twenty years before he "found" the New World" so obviously somebody had been there long before him and his ilk. Chiasson believes that the earliest inhabitants of Cape Breton Island, besides the native Amerindian populations, were Chinese explorers. Gavin Menzies in his book, 1424, comes to the same conclusions about the Chinese; they established colonies in many different parts of the world.

I found this book very exciting and captivating. Chaisson tells this fascinating story with an eye to building suspense and intrigue along the way until he can successfully get the reader to agree that the Chinese could be responsible for settling in Cape Breton Island.

Anybody looking for some historical detective reading along the same lines as Menzies would appreciate this book. I found it captivating.

Happy Reading,

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## **Ireney Berezniak says**

I had purchased this title having spotted it at a local bookstore, intrigued as I was by Gavin Menzies' theory that the Chinese had circumvented and mapped the globe as early as the 1420s ... long before Magellan's documented voyage of 1519-1521. Paul Chiasson, the author of this particular pseudo-scientific title, claimed that he had discovered remnants of ancient Chinese settlements on Cape Breton, the place of his birth.

The book is certainly enthusiastically written, rather entertaining, and, crucially, quite convincing. However, the science and evidence fall flat under scrutiny. The ancient walls, crumpled ruins, and roads "discovered" by Chiasson, were later revealed by archeologists and folks familiar with the area to be an assortment of natural rock formations, and various remnants of human construction dating back to late 1800s, and as early as late 1980s ... a little bit of time with a search engine reveals scores of articles debunking this theory.

Whether Chiasson seriously contemplated this outlandish theory, or fabricated it to garner some attention for whatever reason, I do not know. Perhaps it is a story of fiction, wrapped in the pretense of science for the benefit of publicity generated by controversy. Regardless, this work cheats the reader into believing a lie. As such, I cannot rate it highly ... the 2 stars are both a reward for the entertainment and bits of historical facts, and a penalty for the blatant lie.

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## **John says**

'The Island of Seven Cities' is Cape Breton Island, and I came across this book in a gift shop by the Bras D'Or (guilty from admission-didn't buy it but ordered it from my public library when I got home).

There are two stories which run in parallel: first, Paul Chiasson, the author, is gradually getting sicker and sicker; next, he is gradually getting more and more convinced of a truly wacky idea- that the Chinese visited Cape Breton Island about a hundred years before European settlement began, leaving memories of Christianity, metal smelting and writing which enabled the Micmac of Cape Breton to survive when the Beothuks of Newfoundland could not.

The first story is compelling and easily stands comparison with other personal accounts of confronting and overcoming severe illness. His quest stops the story becoming introspective and (spoiler alert) his family taking him to give a lecture at the Smithsonian Institute deserves to be on screen.

The second idea was truly fresh to me- I hadn't heard of Gavin Menzies, who originated the idea of the medieval Chinese as world explorers, before I read this book. It gives the evidence for it in the order that he found it, rather than as an academic thesis, which means it is helpful to leave bookmarks at the important places. It makes sense, which doesn't mean that it is true, but does mean that it is sufficiently convincing for there to need to be further academic and field research. It was enough to encourage me to read Gavin Menzies books 1421 and 1436 (reviews to come)

I strongly recommend this book: at the very least, it should make Cape Breton as visited by Chinese as

Prince Edward Island is visited by Japanese. Just maybe, it will become an opera which will change the way Canadians think of themselves.

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## **Barry says**

I have read Gavin Menzies book 1421 and was very interested to read this book. I was disappointed. The book spends most of its pages reviewing existing historical information about early European visitors to the Cape Breton area. The conclusion of this more or less comprehensive review is to observe that no reference was made to a set of ruins in Cape Breton.

No evidence of what the ruins were. Therefore, in a giant leap, the author concludes that the ruins are Chinese. He then draws on and involves Menzies to try to support why this leap is reasonable. There are some grainy, blotchy photos that purport to show proof but are hardly easy to interpret or conclusive.

He also tries to make a comparison of the Micmac to the Chinese in terms of dress and writing. The same writing has other theories of origin such as Egyptian or early European runes. The dress comparison it equally flimsy in its connection comparing more recent dress with historic Chinese garb.

In my mind, the jury is still out and these ruins, if they are in fact ruins, need a real analysis. This book is not it.

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## **Ecenhua Maiz says**

### **A must-read for anyone who is interested in pre-columbian expeditions**

This was an excellent further elucidation of the theory of Chinese settlement before the time of Columbus in the Americas. Where Menzies books are somewhat marred by his jumping to conclusions, Chiasson carefully leads the reader through his discovery of a Chinese settlement on the Cape Breton Islands. He shares with the reader his step by step elimination of The Usual European Suspects: Portuguese, French, English, etc. for the remains of a extensive ruins on Cape Dauphin. You share his surprise as he comes to the conclusion driven by the evidence that he gathers that the site could only have been built and maintained for many centuries by the Chinese. I found his pictures of Micmac clothing and designs striking in the extreme. They look identical to ancient Chinese clothing. All in all I highly recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of Menzies but wishes for more evidence and less hyperbole or anyone who is generally interested in evidence of pre-columbian or pre-European expeditions to the Americas.

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## **Lisa Llamrei says**

I saw a documentary about the theory presented in this book, and was intrigued enough to read it.

The author believes that Cape Breton Island was home to a pre-Columbian Chinese colony.

Chiasson presents evidence in the form of maps, legends, aerial photographs, and linguistic/cultural similarities between the local Micmac and the Chinese. He's convinced me that, at the very least, it isn't



impossible.

Much of the book is taken up with stories about his personal struggles and family life. While entertaining, it's not what I expected, or wanted, to be reading. I was left feeling like there wasn't enough about his theory to fill a whole book, so he had to pad it out a bit.

Unfortunately, according to the documentary, Canadian archaeologists believe the ruins identified by Chiasson to be natural formations, and so have declined to investigate. Chinese archaeologists, relying on photographs, believe they could be ruins, but have not (as of the time of the documentary) made the trip to Canada to study them. So, there remains no proof one way or the other. I would be interested to know if/when there is an archaeological dig.

It has inspired me to read "1421: The Year China Discovered the World," by Gavin Menzies, which Chiasson cites often. Review to follow.

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### **Suzan says**

I've tried getting through this book several times over the last 6 years, and I just can't do it. Gavin Menzies sounds like one of the sweetest people you'd ever want to meet, however, he really draws the early part of the book out with irrelevant details that read more like a note to a friend than a serious account of archaeological and historical discovery. Not that I would rather read a stuffy, overly-technical dissertation, but there is a happy medium. It's hard to take him seriously when what you're reading sounds more like a personal blog post than anything else. My copy is headed to 1/2 Price Books.

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### **Louise says**

Paul Chiasson discovers the remnants of a road while hiking in his native Nova Scotia. His curiosity spawns intensive, solitary and self funded research that includes every mapping he can find from a 1424 sketch to current aerial photographs. He reads the accounts of explorers and missionaries.

The author is a passionate amateur with good reason for his passion. He has made an incredible find, even more incredible for its having laid undiscovered in modern times.

Besides his clear and convincing text, he presents aerial photos which demonstrate the dimensions of this forgotten area and photos of the lore of the Mi'kmaq which demonstrate a Chinese influence.

Chiasson has laid out the challenge and the ball is now in the court of the archaeologists. What is this discovery? Did the Chinese build these structures as Chiasson poses? If so, why is it that they were able to build on such a scale in Nova Scotia when so many others perished in the first year? Why has this been so long ignored?

Credit must be given to the book designers. The well selected maps and charts appear exactly where they should. It's rather mundane to comment on the type, but the type and layout, which added printing costs for sure, were easy on the eyes.

