Wei Yuan ( 魏源 , 1794 - 1857) was one of the most progressive Chinese in the first half of the 19th century. He was well versed in both historical and geographical studies. Being a minor civil official at Yangzhou during the Opium War (1840 - 1842), he paid close attention to the West, and published a famous book entitled Haiguo Tuzhi (The Illustrated Gazetteer of the Maritime Countries) in 1842. It was not only a geographical book on the "maritime countries", but also a book containing his ideas of maritime defence.

This academic exercise is a detailed study of Wei Yuan and the changing concept of the world in Modern China. There are seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides the aim and scope of the study. Chapter 2 surveys the life and career of Wei Yuan and examines the time and environment under which he lived. Chapter 3 discusses Wei Yuan's historical thought and his ideas of change. Chapter 4 covers the origin and development of the concept of the world in traditional China. Chapter 5 studies Wei Yuan's Haiguo Tuzhi. Chapter 6 reviews the contributions of Wei Yuan's Haiguo Tuzhi in shaping the Chinese world-view in Modern China. The concluding chapter assesses Wei Yuan's position in Modern Chinese History. This study provides a deeper understanding of Wei Yuan and sheds better light on the study of changing concept of the world in Modern China.