

THE SELDEN MAP: PROVENANCE AND PRESCIENCE

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Discovery

In early 2008, an American historian visiting Oxford University's Bodleian Library made a startling discovery. Professor Robert Batchelor chanced upon a large, beautifully ornate 17th-century map of East Asia. The map showed Ming dynasty China, the entire East and South China Sea region from Japan to Timor, and trade routes from Indonesia to the western coast of India. Batchelor thought that the map was highly unusual because it was unlike any imperial Chinese or European map drawn at the time. In particular, he noticed faint compass bearings on the map that set out sailing directions and nautical distances to trading destinations in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and the Arabian Gulf. These routes all emanated from one location on the southeastern coast of China: the port city of Quanzhou, in modern day Fujian Province.

The map was known as "The Selden Map," and it bore the name of Sir John Selden (1584–1654), a remarkably erudite English constitutional lawyer, historian, Oriental and Judaic scholar, and parliamentarian. Selden purchased the map in 1626, and his estate bequeathed it to the Bodleian Library in 1659, along with

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more than 8,000 essays and manuscripts.¹ In the past four centuries, neither the map's origin nor its creator has been determined. The provenance of the Selden Map is therefore one of the great mysteries of Asian cartography.

Dr. Timothy Brook, Professor of Chinese history at the University of British Columbia, declared the Selden Map to be the most important Chinese historical document he had ever seen, and made it the focus of his inaugural lecture as Professor of Chinese at Oxford in 2008. Professor Zhang Zhiqing, head of special collections at the National Library of China, said that the Selden Map was more important than any of the pre-modern maps in his collection.

This essay will examine the main theories behind the provenance of the Selden Map. It will touch on the life and work of its benefactor, describe the unique features of the map, compare early 17th century cartographic methods in Ming China and Europe, and assess the historical context in which the map emerged. It will conclude by discussing the Selden Map's remarkable prescience in relation to current political tensions between China and its Asian neighbors over sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas.

Sir John Selden

A king is a thing men have made for their own sakes, for quietness' sake. Just as in a family one man is appointed to buy the meat.²

Born in 1584, John Selden was a liberal political iconoclast and polymath who counted Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas Hobbes, Ben Jonson and John Milton as close friends. Milton hailed Selden as "the chief of learned men reputed in this Land," with "a mind so pure it flows like a bright effluence of bright essence increate."³ The Welsh writer James Howell remarked: *Quod Seldenus nescit nemo scit* ("What Selden knoweth not, no one knows").⁴ He was an enlightened and courageous champion of civil and religious freedoms, and had the distinction of being imprisoned for his outspoken beliefs by two Kings, James I and Charles I. His prolific

writings were informed by extensive study of Hebrew, Greek, Roman and Oriental laws, scriptures and philosophy.

In 1618, Selden published a controversial treatise, *The Historie of Tithes*, in which he argued that the Church had a legal but not a divine right to tithes, or 10 percent of an individual's income. Selden's argument was a thinly veiled and audacious challenge to the notion of the divine right of Kings. He reasoned that tithing was founded on civil law, rather than canon law. To support his premise, he drew on complex ancient Jewish customs on tithing. *The Historie of Tithes* provoked an angry response from the church and monarchy alike, and Selden was forced to retract his book.

Selden also argued that Parliament did not owe its powers to the King, and that the independence of Parliament was rooted in "natural laws" and the traditional customs of the English people.⁵ He buttressed his position with records that showed that parliamentary government was an ancient Anglo-Saxon custom. King James I imprisoned Selden in the Tower of London for five weeks in 1621 under charges of treason.

In 1640, Selden published *De jure naturali et gentium juxta disciplinam Ebraeorum*, a treatise on natural law. Praising the work, Milton wrote:

This volume of natural & national laws proves, not only by great authorities brought together, but by exquisite reasons and theorems almost mathematically demonstrative, that all opinions, yea errors, known, read, and collated, are of main service and assistance toward the speedy attainment of what is truest.⁶

Based on the *Seven Laws of Noah*, Selden's treatise forms much of the foundation of his thinking on maritime law and the dominion of the seas.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Dutch and English began to vie with the Portuguese and Spanish empires for mercantile dominance in the Indian Ocean and China Seas. The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494 and blessed by Pope Alexander VI, had resolved the rivalry between Portugal and Spain over dominion in the New World by splitting their spheres of influence on a line drawn longitudinally at the Cape Verde Islands. All ter-

ritories west of this line, including the seas, would be controlled by Spain. Domains to the east would fall under Portuguese control, excluding the Philippines, which would come under Spanish rule. An unspoken purpose of the treaty was to block intrusion by potential competing powers.

In 1609, the Dutch legal scholar Hugo Grotius propagated a new theory that the oceans were international territory, and all nations were at liberty to use them for maritime trade. His work *Mare Liberum*, or “Freedom of the Seas,” provided ideological justification for the Dutch to use force to dislodge incumbent Spanish and Portuguese interests from their dominions in the Far East, particularly in the Indonesian archipelago where the Dutch sought control over the lucrative trade in cloves and nutmeg.⁷ In response, Selden authored *Mare Clausum*, or “The Closed Seas,” completed in 1618, but not published until 1635, in which he refuted Grotius’s principle of free seas. Drawing on Roman laws, Selden argued that nations could claim sovereignty over certain bodies of water far away from their shores.⁸

Dutch and English traders ignored the Treaty of Tordesillas, and their vessels aggressively challenged Iberian interests in South and East Asia. Grotius and Selden provided a convenient intellectual and legal framework to justify this open land and sea grab. Interestingly, Selden and Grotius developed a mutually respectful correspondence, and their views were eventually harmonized by the Dutch jurist Cornelius Bynkershoek, who published a seminal essay *De dominio maris* (“Dominion of the Sea”) in 1702.⁹ Bynkershoek argued that a nation could claim dominion over so much of the sea adjacent to its coastline as it could effectively control and protect. His views developed into the “cannon shot” or “three mile rule,” which largely prevailed until the promulgation in 1982 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which limited the principle of dominion—the territorial sea—to a distance of 12 nautical miles from shoreline.¹⁰

Details of the Map

The Selden Map is a striking aesthetic piece, measuring five feet high and three feet wide, and painted in six colors. Mountains, trees, flowers and rivers are rendered in exquisite detail. Key landmarks include the Great Wall, the Yellow River, the Silk Road, and the 15 provinces of the Ming Empire. Its upper section portrays Siberia, the whole of China, Korea, Tokugawa Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. The lower half contains Burma, Siam, Vietnam, Cambodia, the Malay Peninsula, Borneo, and the Indonesian archipelago from Java to Timor. The westernmost location marked is Calicut, a major trading port in Kerala on the west coast of India. There is a cartouche on the side of the map that contains distances and sailing directions from Calicut to Aden, Zufar, and Hormuz on the Arabian coast. Professor Mei-Ling Hsu, the late historian of Chinese cartography, believed that the map's creator may have been influenced by the voyages of Zheng He, the pioneering Ming admiral who reached as far west as Aden, Oman, and Kenya during three of his expeditions between 1405 and 1433.¹¹

While the Selden Map is written in Chinese, it is unlike any map made in China during its time. Imperial Ming maps invariably placed China at their center; the Middle Kingdom was always depicted much larger than other countries, with little attention paid to foreign lands. What lies at the center of the Selden Map, however, is not China, but the South China Sea or *Dong Hai*. Moreover, most Chinese maps at the time showed Southeast Asian territories in round annotated "coins."¹² They were generally not drawn to scale or topographically accurate.¹³ The Selden Map is unusual because it accurately delineates the boundaries, contours and land masses of Korea, southern Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indochina, Borneo, Indonesia, and the Malay Peninsula.

The map is also unusual in that it displays a compass rose legend and a measuring scale. Chinese maps did not include compass roses; these were European navigational icons that first appeared in 14th century Portuguese portolan charts.¹⁴ Neither did Chinese maps include rulers or scales. In fact, pre-18th cen-

ture Chinese maps were not drawn to scale and therefore did not include legends.¹⁵ According to Batchelor, the compass rose on the Selden Map is intriguing because of its Chinese adaptations. On the outer circle, there are eight standard compass directions. On the inner circle, there are 24 sun rays, each labeled with cardinal directions for charting the sun's position during various hours of the day. These conform to the *ru xiu du* system, the Chinese method of dividing the day into 12 two-hour blocks, each one corresponding to the lunar months of the year.¹⁶ The rays are also marked with one of 12 zodiacal elements. The *ru xiu du* system was a means of charting the movement of the sun through the cosmological constellation of 28 "lunar mansions."¹⁷ These mansions were heavenly bodies that mapmakers linked to important landmarks within China.

The scale bar is divided into 10 primary divisions, each composed of ten subdivisions. The units are *geng*, a Chinese measurement of the distance at sea approximately equal to 18 nautical miles. Each course on the Selden Map is labeled with a compass direction and distance measured in *geng*. One example of the sophistication of the map is that speeds and distances take into account seasonal winds and currents along particular routes. The compass rose and ruler, along with the elaborate trade routes depicted, indicate that the Selden Map was drawn using charts, magnetic compasses, measuring instruments and directional bearings, and relied less on traditional Chinese cosmology, which was the primary influence on imperial Chinese cartography at the time.¹⁸

The map shows three major trading destinations emanating from Quanzhou: a northeastern route towards the Nagasaki peninsula, a southeastern route towards Manila, and a southwestern route to the Da Nang and Hoi An region of Vietnam. The Nagasaki route passes through the Ryuku islands arc, then north past the Goto islands, branching off to Nagasaki and ending at Hirado. The first island group on this pathway are the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands. They lie at the southwestern tip of the Ryukus just north of Taiwan, and are the focus of current tensions between China and Japan over sovereignty. Marked in red is the port of Naha,

which during the 16th and 17th centuries was the capital of the Ryuku kingdom, China's most loyal tributary state. At the time, Nagasaki was a thriving commercial hub, as it was the only port allowed to be open by the Tokugawa Shogunate between 1600 and 1859.¹⁹ Dutch and Portuguese traders brought deer pelts, shark skins, buffalo horns, and technological and scientific rarities to Nagasaki from Europe.²⁰ In return, they purchased silver, copper and camphor from Japan; porcelain, silk, tea, and ginger from China; and rice, timber and spices from Vietnam and Indonesia.²¹

The second route veers towards Luzon and Manila. Japanese warriors and Chinese traders sailed periodically to the Philippines during the 15th and 16th centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese and Spanish. The first recorded Chinese reference to the islands is from an Arab ship at Canton that was carrying cargo from Mindoro in 982.²² Chinese interest increased after Song dynasty (960–1279) rulers were forced to move south of the Yangtze River in 1127.²³ Chinese ceramics, silk and tea flowed into the Philippines after the Song established their southern capital in Hangchow. In 1372, the first embassy of the Philippines was established in China four years after the Ming dynasty ascended.²⁴ For six decades, the Chinese effectively governed Luzon, but they relinquished power after Admiral Zheng He died in 1435 and the Yongle Emperor's power diminished.

The third route heads southwest towards the Da Nang peninsula and Hoi An on the central coast of Vietnam, and ends between Thi Nai and Quang Nam. Vietnam became a tributary state of China in 938, sending lacquerware, animal skins, ivory, and tropical fruit to the Chinese Emperor.²⁵

The Selden Map is unique amongst contemporaneous maps in being both beautifully painted and navigationally functional. Unlike most ornate maps of the Ming period, such as the *Qian kun hai fang yi tong quan tu* that were oriented from east to west and drawn from a land inhabitant's perspective, the Selden Map is oriented north to south, suggesting its functionality and purpose as a maritime map.²⁶ Because of its large size, however, it is doubtful that the Selden Map was intended for use on the

high seas. It was very different from the portolan charts and rutters used at the time by seafaring captains. These factors lead experts to surmise that the map may have been commissioned by a wealthy Fujianese merchant as a work of art to showcase his vast trading empire.

According to Timothy Brook, the most interesting feature of the map is its astonishing sophistication and accuracy.²⁷ Distances, ratios, shorelines, harbor contours, reefs, shoals, currents, winds, and even seasonal climate shifts are noted with remarkable precision. This implies that the author had accumulated data from the rutters of highly experienced captains navigating these waters. It appears that one of these sources is the 1595 *Reysgheschrift* rutter by Dutch sailor Jan Huygen van Linschoten. Linschoten published sailing directions to the East Indies that had been a carefully guarded secret by the Portuguese for nearly a century. The publication of Linschoten's rutter was a sensation, and launched the race by the Dutch and English for control of trade in the East Indies.²⁸

In 1567, the Ming court removed a longstanding ban on maritime trade with foreign countries.²⁹ Overseas trade resumed with vigor during the Wanli period (1573–1620). The Selden Map indicates that a Chinese entrepreneurial diaspora was thriving during this time; there are over two dozen trading routes depicted on the map. The late 16th and early 17th centuries may represent the high water mark of globalization by the *huaqiao*, or overseas Chinese, foreshadowing the ambitious commercial forays that 21st century China is now embarking upon internationally.

Chinese and European Cartography c.1600

There are several striking differences between cartographical methods used in the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and in Europe at the time. Imperial Chinese maps were usually printed in black carbon ink and were rarely colored.³⁰ They placed China at their center, with foreign lands rendered insignificant in comparison. They demonstrated little interest in or knowledge of the outside world. Chinese maps lacked perspective and did not use consistent scale. Instead, locations were set on a simple grid system that dated back to the third century AD.³¹ More importantly, the

Chinese viewed the world as flat, and maps were drawn to reflect cosmological connections between heavenly bodies and important locations on earth. Maps were designed to show the cosmological power of the empire according to a system known as *ershiba xiu fenye*, or “the twenty-eight lunar mansions field allocation.”³² This system linked each province, city, major river, mountain and landmark with one of 28 cosmological ‘mansions’ in the heavens that were defined by celestial constellations through which the moon passed.³³ On the Selden Map, the names of heavenly bodies can be found in red-bordered “coins.” They correspond with landmarks within China, but do not appear on territories beyond its borders.

The ancient Chinese refused to believe that the world was round. Historian Kiyoshi Yabuuchi notes that Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) astronomers were introduced to a terrestrial globe in 1267 by a Persian astronomer who later served as director of the Islamic observatory in Dadu, or modern day Beijing.³⁴ He writes, “The terrestrial globe did not interest the Chinese astronomers, who had other ideas about the form of the earth.”³⁵ Professor Christopher Cullen, emeritus director of the Needham Research Institute at Cambridge University, adds:

For the Chinese, the earth was at all times flat, although perhaps bulging up slightly, and Chinese ideas on the shape of the earth remained unchanged from early times until the first contacts with modern science through the medium of the Jesuit missionaries in the seventeenth century.³⁶

Joseph Needham also notes that cartographers in pre-Qing China were adamant that the world was flat, and that exposure to Western and Arabic cartography had little impact on their methods.³⁷

Zhang Huang (1527–1608) was perhaps the most eminent Ming cartographer at the end of the 16th century. His seminal work, *Tushu bian*, or “Compendium of Illustrations and Writings,” was published in 1613 and contains several maps that clearly demonstrate the Chinese view that the earth was flat—and that the heavens were round.³⁸ In Zhang’s words, “roundness refers to the motion of the heavens, and squareness to the stillness of the earth.”³⁹ Interestingly, Zhang included in *Tushu bian* copies of a

number of the maps of China and the world that were drawn by the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610). These present a stark contrast to Ming maps: they portray the earth as curved; China is depicted as one of a number of major nations (although strategically placed in the center of each map, no doubt to please Ricci’s Chinese hosts); and they demonstrate the advanced cartographic techniques and geographic knowledge of Mercator and Ortelius.⁴⁰ Although Zhang met and interacted with Ricci, it is not known how much influence the Italian priest had on his views. However, the title of Zhang’s definitive 1590 map of the world is telling: *Si hai huayi zong tu* or “General Map of Chinese and Barbarians within the Four Seas.”⁴¹

Ricci worked tirelessly in China from 1595 to 1610 to produce elaborate Chinese annotated maps that incorporated the most advanced European cartographic knowledge and techniques. However, his maps do not appear to have had a discernible impact on Chinese cartography in the late Ming or early Qing periods. Neither his coordinate marking system nor his accurate placement of territories in Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas seem to have been adopted by Chinese mapmakers.⁴² Historian Kenneth Ch’en offers four reasons for this: Chinese arrogance; suspicion about Ricci’s missionary agenda; the lesser development of Chinese science relative to the West; and careless reproduction by many Chinese printers.⁴³

In addition, Cordell Yee, a historian of Chinese cartography, observes that the Ming court conceived of maps not simply as depictions of physical spaces, but also as objects of beauty. Poetry, calligraphy and the *sanshui* (“mountain and water”) watercolor painting technique were as important elements to a Chinese map as grid fixes on specific places and spaces.⁴⁴ This can explain the immense beauty of the Selden Map’s renderings of mountains, forests and rivers.

European mapmakers in the late 16th and early 17th centuries also valued aesthetics, particularly after the invention of copper gravure plate color printing. Some of the most beautiful Dutch and English maps ever made come from this period, replete

with aesthetic features such as cartouches, portraits, allegories and heraldry. In contrast with their Chinese counterparts, however, European mapmakers were informed by mathematics and science rather than mythological, astrological, and cosmological beliefs. By 1600, the curvature of the earth had long been accepted wisdom in the West, and map making reflected this. The great cartographers Ortelius and Hondius had already produced masterpieces, and John Speed was producing hundreds of navigational maps based on the detailed rutters of experienced captains in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indian Oceans.⁴⁵ In 1569, the Flemish cartographer Gerard Mercator published *Nova et Aucta Orbis Terrae Descriptio ad Usus Navigantium Emendata*, a revolutionary atlas in which he demonstrated how the earth's curvature could be projected onto a flat surface so as to enable accurate straight line navigation.⁴⁶ The Mercator projection allowed for latitudinal parallels and longitudinal meridians to appear perpendicular to one another, with a constant scale applicable within an individual grid. Mercator's maps made extensive use of "rhumb lines," or straight lines of constant bearing that ship captains could use to simplify navigation. The Selden Map incorporates these techniques, evidence that the author had been influenced by the Europeans.

The Great Game in East Asia

The first Europeans to venture into Southeast Asian waters were the Portuguese and the Spanish. The Portuguese discovered the Moluccas islands in 1511; these are the fabled Spice Islands of Indonesia and can be seen in the southeast corner of the Selden Map. At the time, they were the world's only known source of nutmeg and cloves, which were prized in the Middle East and Europe. By 1512, the Portuguese had established fortifications in Malacca and Ternate, gateway trading ports into the region. When Ferdinand Magellan learned of this, he led a Spanish expedition that reached the Moluccas in 1521. Magellan, however, was killed in the Philippines that year. Coveting the economic potential of the Moluccas, Charles V of Spain dispatched a fleet to the islands, but it was crushed by the Portuguese at Ternate in 1523.

The warring powers declared a ceasefire and agreed to negotiate an eastern “antimeridian” to the Tordesillas treaty, which had earlier fixed the dividing line between Portuguese and Spanish sovereignty in the Atlantic. Each side appointed a legion of astronomers, cartographers, cosmographers, mathematicians and ship pilots to arrive at a boundary line for one half of the known world. However, due to insufficient knowledge of longitude, the experts could not arrive at a scientific solution.⁴⁷

The impasse was broken when John III of Portugal and Charles V conveniently married each other’s sisters. The Treaty of Zaragoza was signed on April 5, 1529. It specified that Portuguese influence would extend to a meridian 297.5 leagues, or 892 miles, east of the Moluccas.⁴⁸ This territory included the Philippines, which had been ceded to Spain under the Treaty of Tordesillas. Portugal agreed to pay 350,000 ducats to Spain in consideration for these rights.⁴⁹ Charles V was in no position to contest the Philippines, as he desperately needed Portuguese funds to finance the War of the League of Cognac, his war against his arch-rival Francis I of France. He also had to forestall a looming threat in Vienna and Hungary posed by the encroaching Ottoman armies of Suleiman the Magnificent.⁵⁰ Interestingly, the eastern boundary of the Selden Map lies very close to the meridian defined by the Treaty of Zaragoza.

The treaty, however, did not end the rivalry between the Iberian monarchies. Charles’s successor, Philip II, decided to colonize the Philippines in 1565, judging correctly that Portugal would not intervene. In 1571, the Spanish took control of Luzon, executed its ruling family and made Manila the capital of the Spanish Indies.⁵¹ The Selden Map identifies Manila by its then Chinese name, *lusong wang cheng*, or “Royal City of Luzon.” This reflects its Chinese author’s recognition of Spanish domain over the Philippines. Spanish aggression set a precedent, however, for other nations to ignore the Treaty of Zaragoza. It is no surprise that Dutch, English, and Japanese maps drawn at the time rejected Iberian sovereignty claims to the region.⁵²

By the end of the 16th century, when the Selden Map was likely drawn, a perfect storm was brewing between European powers vying for trade and maritime supremacy in the East and South China Seas, bringing new forces into play. The English East India Company (EIC) was established in London in 1600; two years later, the Dutch East India Company, or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), was founded in Amsterdam. In the prior two decades, English and Dutch ships had reached the Philippines and Indonesia, discovering a bounty of cloves, spices, teas, timber, silver, and copper.⁵³ The Dutch and English were set on challenging Iberian dominance in the region, in clear disregard of the Treaties of Tordesillas and Zaragoza.

In 1602, the Dutch-Portuguese War started, coinciding with the establishment of the VOC. Dutch forces attacked Portuguese settlements in Ceylon, Formosa, and the southern Philippines. Assisted by EIC vessels, the Dutch removed the Portuguese from Ambon in 1605, blockaded the Moluccas the next year, established a fortress in northern Ternate and wrestled control of half the clove trade in the Moluccas.⁵⁴ They willfully seized Portuguese ships and booty, a brazen application of Grotius's theory of "freedom of the seas." In 1609, the VOC set up a trading base in Hirado, near Nagasaki. The English followed in 1613, appointing as their comprador a shrewd entrepreneur named Li Dan.⁵⁵ Li was a native of Quanzhou, the Fujianese port that is the nexus of Chinese trading routes on the Selden Map.

The holy grail for all parties was the regional trade in silver. Silver was highly prized by the Chinese and Japanese. In late Ming China, it became the main currency for overseas trade, and following the fiscal reforms of 1581, it became the principal form of tax payment within China.⁵⁶ The game began to focus on Manila, given its strategic position as the main transshipment center for Spanish silver mined in Mexico and Peru. Between 1580 and 1590, it is estimated that 3,000 tons of silver was shipped annually from Acapulco to Manila; by 1620, the per annum volume exceeded 20,000 tons.⁵⁷ Factoring in smuggled silver, the actual volume exported may have been double this. Most of the silver was bound

for China. In exchange, the Chinese exported silk, gunpowder, cotton textiles, porcelain, sulphur, iron, copper, flour, and ginger.⁵⁸ In 1614, the VOC received permission from the States General in the Netherlands to challenge the Spanish and Portuguese from Hirado to Ternate. The stakes were enormous. For example, in the spring of 1616, the Dutch captured a fleet of 35 Chinese junks laden with Spanish silver en route from Manila to Hirado. The value of this booty was estimated to be equal to one sixth of the Dutch treasury's silver reserves at the time.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Spanish forces from Manila attacked the Dutch outpost in Ternate in 1606 with 36 vessels and 1,200 soldiers. The result was a stalemate, with each side occupying one half of the island. A 15-year truce ensued, with the Spanish, Dutch and English sharing trade routes in the Sulawesi Sea between the Indonesian archipelago and the southern Philippines. In 1621, the English joined the Dutch in assembling the Anglo-Dutch Joint Fleet of Defence, whose main mission was to blockade Manila and extract trade concessions in silver, copper, timber, and cloves from the Spanish.⁶⁰

While the European colonial powers were fighting one another, the Ming court suddenly reversed itself. At the outset of the 17th century, the Wanli Emperor turned China's gaze inwards, eschewing official contact with the outside world and dismissing Europeans as "red haired barbarians."⁶¹ Imperial China decided that it had little interest in the oceans or control over them. In 1614, the Emperor halted funding for naval vessels patrolling the East China Sea. As Brook notes, "The Ming preferred to see itself as presiding over a world order that consisted solely of obedient petitioners to its court...a hierarchy of regulated positions rather than a negotiation of competing claims."⁶² Until Western powers aggressively encroached on China in the early 19th century, the Ming and Qing Emperors viewed all foreign countries, especially their neighbors, as tributary states of much lower status. Despite an initial curiosity in the dazzling displays of Western science, mathematics, astronomy, cartography, and horology that Matteo Ricci and his Jesuit mission brought to the Ming literati, by the time the Selden Map arrived in London in the 1620, China had all but closed its doors to the outside world. Its primary external connec-

tions were made through the Fujianese traders from Quanzhou and Zhangzhou who continued to ply their transoceanic trade with Asian neighbors and traders from the Arab, Mediterranean and European worlds.

Provenance

The map has no chops, signatures, imprints, annotations or markings on either side to indicate who its authors were or when it was drawn. Neither Selden nor his estate left clues as to the provenance of the map, save that it is recorded that Selden had purchased it in 1626 from Samuel Purchas, a London dealer in Oriental antiquities.⁶³ There is no mention of a map of this kind in the records of either the English or Dutch East India Companies. Selden's only mention of the map is in a codicil to his will dated June 11, 1653, in which he described it as:

A map of China made there fairly, and done in colours, together with a sea compass of their making and divisions, taken both by an English commander, who being pressed exceedingly to restore it at a great ransome, would not part with it.⁶⁴

Richard Ovenden, chief librarian of the Bodleian, notes that many of the annotations on the map were written in southern Fujianese dialect. He surmises that the authors likely came from Quanzhou.⁶⁵ This supports the view that the map was not produced by an imperial cartographer, as such maps would have been written in the official *hanyu* Chinese of the Ming court. However, the exact identity of the map's authors remains unclear.

The dating of the map appears to be a simpler task. As Batchelor notes, the appearance of the name "Batavia" indicates that the earliest the map could have been completed is 1619, when Batavia first appeared as a reference to Dutch Jakarta.⁶⁶ Furthermore, markers showing Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish settlements at Ambon, Bantam and Ternate imply that the map could not have been produced before 1605. According to Batchelor, the map is most likely to have been drawn sometime between 1618 (after the publication of Zhang Xie's treatise on maritime trade) and 1624, when the notorious Fujianese pirate Zheng Zhilong established an illicit trading base in Penghu, currently the

Pescadore Islands.⁶⁷ The Dutch had also set up a base on Penghu in 1622, but the Selden Map labels this simply as “Peng” and shows the Dutch only occupying Ternate. Interestingly, the annotation at Ternate reads *Hongmao zhu* or “Where the Red Hairs Live.”⁶⁸ *Hongmao* was a derisory term the Chinese used for the Dutch.⁶⁹

Given Quanzhou’s strategic position on the map as the hub of three major trunk routes, it is reasonable to surmise that its authors were based there. Professor Li Xiacong of Peking University suggests that the map may have been produced by Chinese-speaking Islamic merchants who lived in Quanzhou during the late Ming period.⁷⁰ The cartouche in the map’s left border containing sailing directions from Calicut to Aden, Zufar in Oman, and the Kingdom of Ormuz in the Arabian Gulf would support the idea that there was some Arab influence on the map’s creation. It also suggests that exchanges between Arabs and Chinese could have been as active as those with Europeans at the time.⁷¹

An equally plausible theory is that the map’s author was an artist commissioned by a wealthy Fujianese trader who wished to document his vast trading empire with a spectacular wall painting. For centuries, the Fujianese dominated inter-Asian trade, and they today constitute the majority population of Taiwan and the bulk of overseas Chinese living in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, and Malaysia. Ming historian Zhang Xie lived in Quanzhou and Zhangzhou between 1610 and 1615, and his *Dongxiyangkao*, or “Study of the East and West Oceans,” published in 1617–1618, contains lively accounts of port life in Vietnam, Manila, Luzon, and the Visayas.⁷² These are all places noted on the Selden Map. Zhang’s works may have informed the authors of the map, who could well have been his neighbors in Quanzhou.

Batchelor offers two theories on the provenance of the map. One version holds that the Selden Map was commissioned as a wedding gift by Li Dan, the Quanzhou entrepreneur who became the wealthiest Chinese businessman in Hirado. Li served as comprador to the EIC in their dealings with the Tokugawa nobles in Nagasaki and the merchants of Fujian. Batchelor reasons that the map could have been Li’s gift to his daughter in 1620, when she

married the son of another wealthy Chinese merchant in Hirado. Li's shipping empire extended from Japan to Siam, and covered routes that included Champa, Tonkin, Manila, Taiwan, Guangzhou, and Quanzhou.⁷³ In the summer of 1620, an English vessel named the *Elizabeth* sailed from Hirado to join the Anglo-Dutch Joint Fleet of Defence and engage in the blockade of Manila.⁷⁴ En route, the *Elizabeth* intercepted and seized one of Li Dan's ships off of Taiwan, under the pretense that it was a Portuguese vessel because the ship's pilot was Portuguese and there were two Iberian priests aboard.⁷⁵ EIC records show that the booty included silk, ginger, and cotton from China, and silver and gold from Manila.⁷⁶ While there is no record of a map being confiscated, Batchelor believes it is possible that the *Elizabeth*'s chartmaker, Gabriel Tatton, could have noticed one and surreptitiously taken it. Tatton was a friend of Richard Cocks, an EIC captain who sold the *Codex Mendoza*, the gloriously illustrated history of the Aztecs published in 1540, to Samuel Purchas in 1626.⁷⁷ Batchelor speculates that Tatton could have sold the Selden Map to Cocks, who then sold it to Purchas. It is documented that Selden acquired the map from Purchas's estate in 1626.

Brook contests this theory by arguing that the Selden Map could not have been commissioned or produced by persons with knowledge of Nagasaki or Hirado. This is because the Chinese character names of many places in Japan that are depicted on the map, including Nagasaki, Hirado, Kobe, and Kagoshima, do not conform with their indigenous *kanji* form or with their conventional Chinese spellings. Instead, they are written in Chinese characters that are phonetic renderings of the Portuguese names for these places.⁷⁸ It is therefore unlikely that Li Dan was involved in the map's origins.

Batchelor's second theory is that the map was drawn by a Fujianese trader based in Manila. He offers four reasons to support this hypothesis. Firstly, Manila is shown as prominently on the map as Quanzhou. The Fujianese port occupies the center of the left section of the map, while Manila occupies the center of the right panel. Secondly, Beijing, Quanzhou and Manila are drawn on a prime axis. This is geographically incorrect, which is

odd given the sophistication and accuracy of other locations on the map, including the locations of these three cities relative to nearby places. Batchelor reasons that the author intended to showcase Manila on some level of parity with Beijing. Thirdly, while the scale of the Selden Map varies greatly from area to area, the scale of the Manila-Luzon region is largest, at 1:2,400,000.⁷⁹ In contrast, the scale for China, Borneo, and Sumatra is 1:4,750,000; the scale for Yunnan and Siam is 1:6,000,000; and the smallest scale is applied to Vietnam and Calicut at 1:7,000,000.⁸⁰ The prominence in scale given to Manila relative to China, including Quanzhou, is noteworthy and would support Batchelor's premise. Finally, Batchelor highlights the critical importance of the inter-regional trade in silver during this period. It was one of the key reasons why Spain so forcefully secured dominion over the Philippines and so aggressively protected its interests there. Manila was the focal point of silver trading between Spain and China. Fujianese traders settled in Manila as early as 1573, and by 1620 the city had more than 20,000 Fujianese inhabitants.⁸¹ It would not be surprising if a Manila-based Fujianese had prepared the Selden Map based on intimate navigational knowledge and an awareness of Spanish mapmaking techniques.

Brook contests Batchelor's second theory and argues instead that the map was drawn around 1608 and emanated from Bantam, a major EIC settlement in west Java. He reasons that a wealthy Chinese merchant living there commissioned it as a representation of his own trading empire. Brook postulates that the map found its way into the hands of an EIC captain, who brought it back to London and sold it to a map dealer; eventually, it was resold to Sir John Selden. While Brook concedes that Manila and its environs are conspicuous in scale and detail, and does not contest the strategic importance of the silver trade there, he notes that the map has many inaccuracies in its depiction of the rest of Luzon and the Visayan Islands, leading him to doubt that the authors were Manila-based.

Brook's theory centers on EIC Captain John Saris, who lived in Bantam from 1604 to 1609. In his last two years in Bantam, Saris

was Chief Factor of the EIC. His main responsibility was to collect debts owed to his employer. The Selden Map could have been collateral for one such debt. As Selden wrote in his codicil, the map was “acquired by an englishe commander who being pressed exceedingly to restore it at good ransome would not parte with it.”⁸² It is recorded that upon his return to England in 1613, Saris sold a number of objects to Richard Hakluyt, a travel writer. These included a sheet map by Luo Hongxian entitled *Huangmingyitong fangyu beilan*, which Saris had also acquired in Bantam.⁸³ Hakluyt died in 1616, leaving his estate to a friend, Samuel Purchas, who was a well-known editor and fellow travel writer. When Purchas died, his private library was acquired by Selden, a close friend. This included an original edition of the *Codex Mendoza*. Brook believes that the Selden Map was amongst these chattels.

Brook dates the creation of the Selden Map to 1608, the time in between when the map notes the presence of the Dutch “red hairs” on Ternate (1607) and when Captain Saris departed Bantam for London in 1609. He argues that his theory is supported by the great detail and accuracy of the VOC empire in the map. However, Batchelor’s observation about the appearance of “Batavia” is critical to the map’s provenance. EIC forces took control of Jayakarta, or modern day Jakarta, in 1619, and renamed the city Batavia. So it is impossible that the Selden Map could have been produced before this date.

Current Political Tensions in the East and South China Seas

Beginning in 2011, political tensions began to rise in areas at the center of the Selden Map over the sovereignty of five groups of islands: the Dokdos, the Senkakus, the Paracels, the Scarborough Shoal, and the Spratlys. To the east of the Korean peninsula lies a tiny clutch of islands known as the Dokdos to the Koreans and the Takeshimas to the Japanese. Despite having a mere three inhabitants, the Dokdos became the fuse for acrimony between Tokyo and Seoul when then President Lee Myung-Bak made an unprecedented flyover of the islands in 2011. Further south, China and Japan have become locked in sabre rattling over the Senkaku Islands (or in Chinese, the *Diaoyu dao*) a collection

of five rocky, uninhabited islets located northeast of Taiwan. In between China, Vietnam, and Taiwan lie the Paracel Islands, a scattering of reefs now being contested by those three countries. The Scarborough Shoal is a tiny clump of rocks, many submerged, lying some 200 km southwest of Luzon. It is currently the subject of a tense military standoff between China and the Philippines. Finally, in the southern part of the South China Sea lie the Spratlys, a mix of over 100 sparsely inhabited islands, atolls, and reefs that are being disputed by the Philippines, China, Vietnam, Taiwan, and Malaysia.

Experts believe that underneath these remote islands lie enormous reserves of oil and natural gas. The U.S. Energy Administration puts the total reserves of oil in the South China Sea at 213 billion barrels, which would make it the single largest oil reserve outside of Saudi Arabia.⁸⁴ Extractable natural gas under the sea beds is estimated at over 1.6 trillion cubic meters.⁸⁵ Political strategist Robert Kaplan notes that half of the world's merchant tonnage and one third of global oil and gas shipments pass through these waters in more than 80,000 vessels annually.⁸⁶ Lucrative fishing and mineral rights are also at stake. Nationalism, national honor, and the need to settle old scores add to the complexity of the situation.

There is a spiraling arms race in Asia, with the region accounting for more than 25 percent of global arms sales.⁸⁷ China ominously represents 40 percent of this spending.⁸⁸ The conflict between China and Japan presents the most worrisome risk in this high stakes poker game. In November 2013, China unilaterally announced the imposition of an "East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone" covering a trapezoidal area of approximately 600 sq. km over the South China Sea that includes the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands.⁸⁹ Beijing is demanding that all civilian and military air carriers inform the Chinese government in advance if they wish to fly over this space. There is no basis in international law for such an extension of air dominion. For the time being, it appears that cool heads are prevailing—and China's neighbors, along with the United States, are ignoring this promulgation. At

the same time, China is aggressively building up its naval and air might, announcing the launch of a second nuclear powered aircraft carrier battle group and a 12.5 percent increase in defense spending.⁹⁰ From 2000 to 2011, the PRC increased military spending at a compound annual rate of 13.4 percent, and is expected to spend over \$148 billion on defense in 2014.⁹¹ Japan is responding with the fastest military buildup in its post-World War II history. The Center for Strategic and International Studies estimates that Japan increased military spending at a compound annual rate of 2.2 percent from 2000 to 2005, but at a 6.5 percent compound rate from 2006 to 2012. Its defense spending totaled \$58 billion in 2013.⁹² Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is fueling tensions by continuing official visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and sharpening his nationalistic rhetoric. At the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos in January 2014, he likened the current situation between China and Japan to that between Germany and Britain on the eve of World War I. In response, China is demanding that Japan reduce its stockpile of weapons-grade plutonium, which it alleges can produce up to 50 nuclear warheads.⁹³

Drawn four centuries ago, the Selden Map presaged many of the issues that now confront Asian powers, namely dominion of the seas, the rules of free trade, competing claims of sovereignty, and the threat of major armed conflict. In this way, the map can be seen as prescient. But it is much more than a depiction of political boundaries and trading networks. Its contours, landscapes and arcs are not merely those of physical territories. They also reveal a narrative arc of human exploration, entrepreneurship and genius. Despite its relative obscurity, the Selden Map tells a story that includes characters who indelibly shaped maritime and mercantile history, like Grotius, Mercator, Ortelius, Ricci, and the Wanli Emperor. As a work of art, the map brings timeless beauty to what is now the world's most dynamic region. It almost certainly captured the imagination of John Selden and inspired his seminal thinking on maritime law. It is fitting that Selden bequeathed his map to the Bodleian Library, and that a curious historian rediscovered it as one of the world's great treasures.

Notes

- ¹ D.M. Barrett, "The Library of John Selden and its Later History," *Bodleian Library Record* (Oxford: Bodleian Library Record, 1951) pp. 131–132.
- ² G.R. Toomer, *John Selden: A Life in Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 39.
- ³ David Sandler Berkowitz, *John Selden's Formative Years: Politics and Society in Early Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Folger Books, 1988) p. 9.
- ⁴ Timothy Brook, *Mr Selden's Map of China: Decoding the Secrets of a Vanished Cartographer* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013) p. 43.
- ⁵ Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) p. 82.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- ⁷ Brook, *Mr Selden's Map of China*, p. 29.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 37–38.
- ⁹ Dennis Bryant, "Mare Clausum," *Maritime Musings* (2011) p. 11.
- ¹⁰ Brook, *Mr Selden's Map of China*, p. 8.
- ¹¹ Mei-Ling Hsu, "Chinese Marine Cartography: Sea Charts of Pre-modern China," *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* No. 40 (1988) pp. 112–113.
- ¹² Cordell Yee, "Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Geographical Maps," *History of Cartography* eds. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) pp. 58–59.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- ¹⁴ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* Vol. 4, Part I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) p. 286.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 303.
- ¹⁶ Robert Batchelor, "The Selden Map Rediscovered: A Chinese Map of East Asian Shipping Routes, c. 1619," *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* No. 65 (2013) p. 47.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- ¹⁹ Brook, *Mr Selden's Map of China*, pp. 116–117.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ²² John Chafee, "Song China and the Multi-state and Commercial World of East Asia," *Crossroads: Studies on the History*

of *Exchange Relations in the East Asian World* Nos. 1–2 (September 2010) p. 37.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁴ Gungwu Wang, “Early Ming Relations with Southeast Asia,” *The Chinese World Order* John King Fairbank, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968) pp. 77–78.

²⁵ Chafee, p. 40.

²⁶ Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” pp. 42–43.

²⁷ Brook, pp. 159–160.

²⁸ Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 153.

²⁹ Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005) p. 128.

³⁰ Cordell Yee, “Traditional Chinese Cartography and the Myth of Westernization,” *History of Cartography* eds. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 170.

³¹ Cordell Yee, “Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Geographical Maps,” p. 47.

³² Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” p. 43.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁴ Cordell Yee, “Taking the World’s Measure: Chinese Maps between Observation and Text,” *History of Cartography* eds. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 119, fn. 77.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

³⁷ Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) pp. 437–438.

³⁸ Yee, p. 120.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁴¹ Brook, p. 140.

⁴² Yee, “Traditional Chinese Cartography and the Myth of Westernization,” pp. 176–177.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.

⁴⁴ Yee, “Reinterpreting Traditional Chinese Geographical Maps,” p. 67.

⁴⁵ Jerry Brotton, *A History of the World in Twelve Maps* (London: Allen Lane, 2012) p. 84.

⁴⁶ Brook, pp. 144–146.

⁴⁷ J.H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement, 1450–1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) pp. 87–88.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵¹ Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” p. 53.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁵⁴ Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006) pp. 23–24.

⁵⁵ Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” p. 56.

⁵⁶ Timothy Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008) pp. 159–160.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁹ Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties*, pp. 215–216.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁶² Brook, *Mr Selden’s Map of China*, pp. 167–168.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁶⁴ Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” p. 42.

⁶⁵ Interview by the author with Richard Ovenden, Hong Kong, March 23, 2014.

⁶⁶ Batchelor, “The Selden Map Rediscovered,” p. 55.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

⁷² Xie Zhang, “Dongxi Yangkao,” in Joseph Needham, ed., *Science and Civilisation in China* Vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) pp. 291–292.

⁷³ Batchelor, p. 57.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷⁸ Brook, pp. 115–116.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 161–162.

⁸¹ Robert Batchelor, *London: The Selden Map and the Making of a Global City 1549–1689* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014) p. 87.

⁸² John Selden, “Codicil dated June 11, 1653,” *Works of John Selden* David Wilkins (London: 1726).

⁸³ Brook, pp. 171–172.

⁸⁴ Jeff Himmelman, “Beijing’s Offshore Shadow,” *International New York Times* (October 25, 2013).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Robert D. Kaplan, *Asia’s Cauldron: The South China Sea and the End to a Stable Pacific* (New York: Random House, 2014) p. 12.

⁸⁷ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, “War and Peace Depend on Choices Made,” *China Daily* (February 27, 2014).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Kevin Rafferty, “Air Defence Zone Row Puts at Risk East Asia’s Peace and Prosperity,” *South China Morning Post* (November 29, 2013).

⁹⁰ Kaplan, p. 28.

⁹¹ Joachim Hofbauer, Priscilla Hermann, Sneha Raghavan, “Asian Defense Spending, 2000–2011,” *Report of the Center for Strategic & International Studies* (October 2012) p. 3, https://csis.org/files/publication/121005_Berteau_AsianDefenseSpending_Web.pdf (accessed April 19, 2014).

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹³ Yunbi Zhang, “Abe’s Reliability in Doubt: Congress Report,” *China Daily* (February 27, 2014).

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Museum, Hong Kong, May 3, 2014. James K. Chin is Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Maritime History Studies*.

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Interviews

I interviewed the following visitors from Oxford University when they lectured on the Selden Map at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum on March 23, 2014:

Professor Rana Mitter, Professor of the History and Politics of Modern China and Director of the Oxford University China Center

Richard Ovenden, Chief Librarian of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

Joshua Seufert, H.D. Chung Chinese Studies Librarian at the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

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Richard Henry Dana, Jr., *Two Years Before the Mast*

New York, Harper & Brothers, 1840—Penguin Classics, 1986, pp. 426-427

Notwithstanding all that has been said about the beauty of a ship under full sail, there are very few who have ever seen a ship, literally, under all her sail. A ship coming in or going out of port, with her ordinary sails, and perhaps two or three studding-sails, is commonly said to be under full sail; but a ship never has all her sail upon her, except when she has a light, steady breeze, very nearly, but not quite, dead aft, and so regular that it can be trusted, and is likely to last for some time. Then, with all her sails, light and heavy, and studding-sails, on each side, aloft and alow, she is the most glorious moving object in the world. Such a sight, very few, even some who have been at sea a good deal, have ever beheld; for from the deck of your own vessel you cannot see her, as you would a separate object.

One night, while we were in these tropics, I went out to the end of the flying jib-boom, upon some duty, and, having finished it, turned round, and lay over the boom for a long time, admiring the beauty of the sight before me. Being so far out from the deck, I could look at the ship, as at a separate vessel;—and, there, rose up from the water, supported only by the small black hull, a pyramid of canvass, spreading out far beyond the hull, and towering up almost, as it seemed in the indistinct night air, to the clouds. The sea was as still as an inland lake; the light trade-wind was gently and steadily breathing from astern; the dark blue sky was studded with the tropical stars; there was no sound but the rippling of the water under the stem; and the sails were spread out—wide and high;—the two lower studding-sails stretching, on each side, far beyond the deck; the top-mast studding-sails spreading fearlessly out above them; still higher, the two royal studding-sails, looking like two kites flying from the same string; and, highest of all, the little sky-sail, the apex of the pyramid, seeming actually to touch the stars, and to be out of reach of human hand. So quiet, too, was the sea, and so steady the breeze, that if these sails had been sculptured marble, they could not have been more motionless. Not a ripple upon the surface of the canvass; not even a quivering of the extreme edges of the sail—so perfectly were they distended by the breeze. I was so lost in the sight, that I forgot the presence of the man who came out with me, until he said, (for he, too, rough old man-of-war's man as he was, had been gazing at the show,) half to himself, still looking at the marble sails—“how quietly they do their work!”