

Taiwan and Ryukyu in Selden Map: A Cartographic and Toponymic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Thanks to its atypical qualities and the mystery behind its creation, the so-called ‘Selden Map’ has received plenty of academic attention following its rediscovery in 2008. This early seventeenth-century map uses seemingly traditional Chinese map-making techniques to depict Ming China, Joseon Korea, Japan, as well as maritime Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the coast lines of Southeast Asia exhibit great similarity with modern maps, unlike any other contemporary works.

Taking the analysis of Ryukyu and Taiwan in this map as a case study, this article argues that Selden Map is a combined work and represents a hybrid of contemporary Overseas Chinese and European sources. Analysis on the depictions of Ryukyu and Taiwan revealed that the painter did not pay attention to these two areas, and used them only as navigation indicators for Japan. In addition, Taiwan’s waters are marked with two place names “Beigang (北港)” and “Jialilin (加里林)” which, as discussed in this article, were important ports of western Taiwan in the early seventeenth century.

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