

# A Secret Proposal to the Royal Society

Did the Crown Obscure a Continent Under the Guise of Progress?



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I did not intend on writing twice today, dear reader; but what I have found within the *Royal Society Archives* this afternoon is worthy of a double post.

My spare time is now dictated by these archives, by the contents of old documents and books.

It's a **deliberate** pivot.

I spent enough time watching my life leak away into the void of *TikTok* and *Facebook*, realising that the more I scrolled, the less I knew.

It was a trade-off that left me with nothing but wasted hours and a shallow understanding of the world.

Searching these records and writing about what I find gives me a grounded purpose.

There is a brutal honesty in these papers that you can't find in a digital feed; it is learning in its most raw, unvarnished form.

I digress.

Let us look upon this document and the silence that holds it in place.

For in this instance, dear reader, *the institutional silence*, the deliberate decision to strike the pages from the record, is every bit as revealing as the ink itself.

Proposal to Map Great Tartary 🌍 🇨🇦

THE  
ROYAL  
SOCIETY

SCIENCE  
IN THE  
MAKING



## Paper, 'Proposals for engraving a new and exact map of the Grand Tartary'

- Reference number: CLP/22ii/8
- Date: 1724

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## Description

Read to the Royal Society on 10 December 1724.  
Note reads: 'Not to be enter'd'.

Subject: Cartography, Exploration

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### Reference number

CLP/22ii/8

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### Earliest possible date

1724

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### Physical description

Ink on paper

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### Page extent

3 pages

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### Format

Manuscript

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## Hierarchy

This item is part of:



Classified papers of the Royal Society

1660-1741

Reference number: CLP

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We begin at the gateway to the *Royal Society's Science in the Making* archive, specifically with an entry cataloged under reference number **CLP/22ii/8**.

The title is deceptively plain:

***Proposals for engraving a new and exact map of the Grand Tartary***

On the surface, it appears to be nothing more than a standard clerical record of eighteenth-century cartography; dated 1724.

Yet, tucked within the metadata of this archive is a directive that fundamentally alters how we must view it:

## ***Not to be enter'd***

This wasn't a suggestion; it was an administrative seal of silence issued on December 10, 1724.

To understand the gravity of that phrase, one must understand the role of the Royal Society at the time.

To be ***entered*** was to be woven into the official fabric of scientific consensus.

To be ***not entered*** was to be scrubbed, to be deemed dangerous, irrelevant, or perhaps too disruptive for the public consciousness.

This gatekeeping serves as a sharp reminder that what we call *history* is often just a curated collection of approved narratives.

While the modern world navigates by a map of reality that feels fixed and absolute, these archival anomalies suggest we are living within a fiction, a carefully managed story where inconvenient sovereign powers and geographical truths were simply omitted from the record.

When an institution as powerful as the Royal Society decides that a map of a vast, inhabited empire is *not to be entered*, they aren't just filing a paper; they are editing the world.

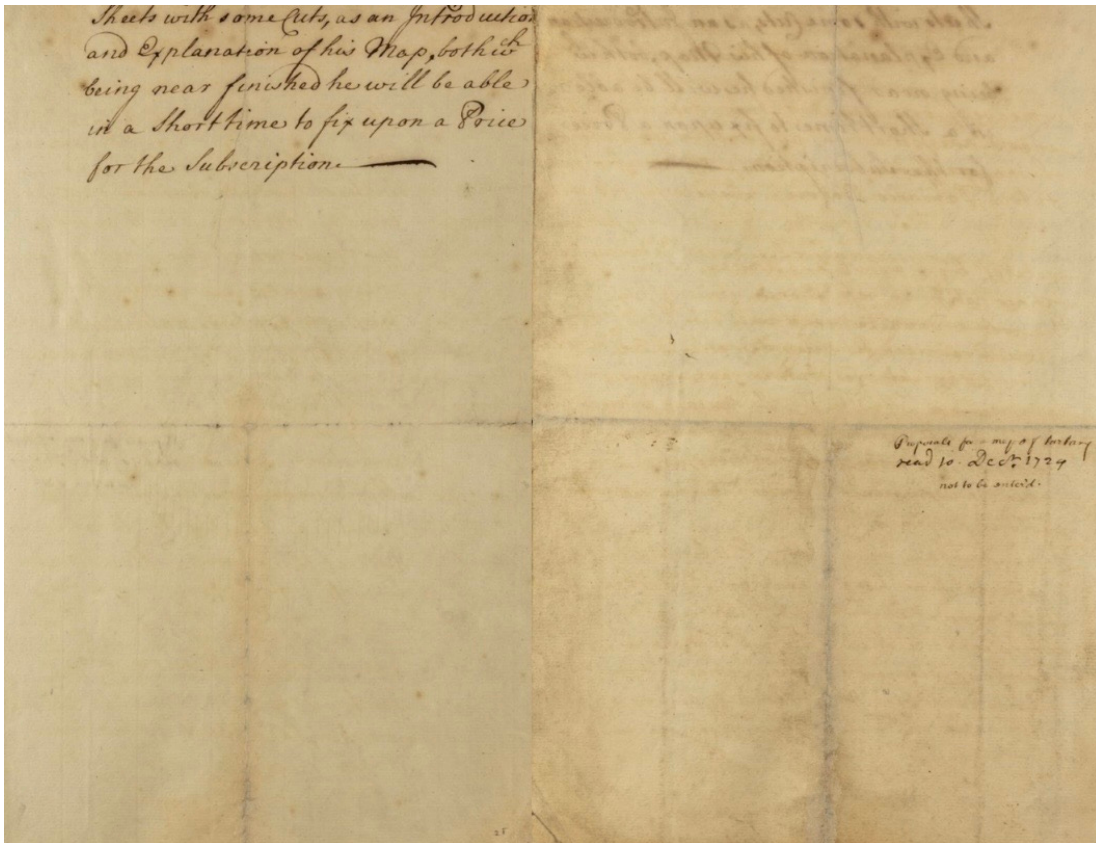
By striking these documents from the register, they didn't just hide a paper; they fractured our inheritance, leaving us with a history defined more by its voids than its truths.

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Proposals for engraving a new & exact Map of the Grand Tartary.

Lieut. Colonel Philip John Zabel von Stralitenberg being lately returned from his long Captivity in Siberia, intends to publish a Map of the Country commonly called the Grand Tartary, which he has been preparing for several Years past. Besides his own experience, which he acquired by travelling among and conversing with the Inhabitants of that Country, he has had all necessary Information by frequent correspondence with others who lived in the most remote parts of it. This Map contains all the North & North East part of Asia, and on the East those Countries which border upon China and extend to the Japonozee Sea, viz. the Country Jedso or Kamtschatti with all the Islands about Japan, the Countries Mungalia, Kalmakia & Tangus, the latter belongs to the great Dalai Lama vulgarly called Prester John, On the South the Kingdoms bordering upon the Indies,

as for instance Bucharica & Turchestan &c. and lastly on the West, part of Crim or the Lesser Tartary, the River Wolga & Russia. He has compared and collated it with what the Arabian Turkish & other Authors mention of those Countries, and in it are marked the Places which the Chams or Sovereigns thereof rendered remarkable by their Nativity, exploits & other circumstances. All that occurs of Animals & Vegetables peculiar to those Countries is likewise marked, the variation of the Load Stone, of which there is in some places none at all, the needle pointing directly North & South and lastly the Elevation of the Pole of the several Places partly taken from the Author's own observations, partly observed by others. He had Burgomaster's Werner's Map of Great Tartary by him when he was in that Country, to consult it & to correct it where it was necessary. He intends to publish at the same time a few



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**Translation:**

***"Proposals for engraving a new & exact Map of the Grand Tartary.***

*Lieut. Colonel Philip John Tabert von Strahlenberg being lately returned from his long Captivity in Siberia, intends to publish a Map of the country commonly called the Grand Tartary, where has been preparing for severall Years past Besides his own experience where acquired by travelling among and conversing with the Inhabitants of that Country, he has had all necessary Information by frequent correspondence with others who lived in the most remote parts of it:*

*This Map contains all the North & North East part of Asia, and on the East those Countries who border upon China and extend to the Japoneze Sea viz:*

*the Country Jedso or Kamtschathi with all the Islands about Japan, the Countries Mungalia, Kalmakia & Tangut who latter belongs to the Great Dalai Lama vulgarly called Prester John, On the South the Kingdoms bordering upon the Indies, as for instance Bucharia & Furchestan etc: and lastly on the West, part of Crim or the lesser Tartary, the River Wolga & Russia.*

*He has compared and collated it with what the Arabian Turkish & other Authors mention of those Countries, and in it are marked the Places which the Chams or Sovereigns thereof rendered remarkable by their Nativity, exploits & other circumstances.*

*All that occurs of Animals & vegetables peculiar to those Countries is likewise marked, as also the variation of the LodeStone of where there is in some places none at all, the needle pointing directly North & South and lastly the Elevation of the Pole of the Several Places partly taken from the Authors own observations, partly observed by others.*

*He had Burgomaster Witsen's Map of Grand Tartary by him when he was in that Country, to consult it & to correct it where it was Necessary.*

*He intends to publish at the Same time a few Sheets with some Cuts, as an Introduction and Explanation of his Map, both when being near finished he will be able in a Short time to fix upon a Price for the Subscription.*

*Proposals for a map of Tartary*

*read 10. Decr 1724*

***not to be enter'd"***

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The text we are examining is explicitly titled:

***Proposals for engraving a new & exact Map of the Grand Tartary***

This was not a sketch of a wilderness or a speculative drawing of a *region*, but a formal proposal to engrave an exact map of a sovereign reality.

If this empire was just a collection of disparate tribes or a vast, empty wasteland, one must ask why such a meticulous, multi-year effort was required to document it.

The document notes that this land was ***commonly called the Grand Tartary.***

That word, *commonly*, is a direct indictment of our modern amnesia.

It suggests that in 1724, the existence of this place was not a fringe theory or a geographical myth, but a well-known fact of the global landscape.

Lieutenant Colonel Philip John von Strahlenberg spent *severall Years* preparing this map, acquiring his knowledge through *travelling among and conversing with the Inhabitants.*

You do not spend over a decade of captivity mapping a void, nor do you converse with inhabitants of a place that doesn't exist in a meaningful, organised way.

One of the most striking contradictions to the modern narrative is the mention of the ***Great Dalai Lama***, whom the document notes is ***vulgarly called Prester John.***

By linking the Dalai Lama to the legendary figure of Prester John, a king-priest long associated with a powerful, lost Christian empire in the East, the document suggests a political and spiritual weight to Tartary that has been completely scrubbed from contemporary textbooks.

Furthermore, the document states that Strahlenberg *compared and collated* his findings with what *Arabian, Turkish & other Authors mention of*

*those countries.*

This is a crucial distinction.

If the Tartars were simply *Turks*, as many modern official histories claim, he would not be comparing their accounts against one another; you do not compare a people against themselves.

This implies that the Tartars were a distinct entity, holding their own sovereign space alongside the Turks and Arabians.

The map also intended to mark the places where the *Chams or Sovereigns* of these lands were *rendered remarkable by their Nativity, exploits & other circumstances.*

This language points to a lineage of rulers; a history of births, great deeds, and political power that implies a sophisticated state structure rather than nomadic chaos.

Most intriguing is the scientific observation regarding the *variation of the LodeStone.*

Strahlenberg recorded that in some parts of this empire, there was no magnetic variation at all, with *the needle pointing directly North & South.*

He was documenting the magnetic pulse of the region, treating it with the same empirical rigour one would apply to a known, physical world.

Yet, despite this wealth of firsthand, scientific, and political detail, the paper carries that final, damning administrative note:

***not to be enter'd***

On December 10, 1724, the *Royal Society* read these proposals and decided they were to be kept off the official record.

This was the intentional creation of a void.

They had the evidence of a sovereign, inhabited, and mapped *Grand Tartary* in their hands, and they chose to treat it as if it never happened.

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And so, dear reader, we shall reflect upon this small document, and what it means for the modern narrative; it is a cold receipt for a theft we weren't supposed to notice.

We are looking at a meticulous description of a map that has been scrubbed from existence, leaving us with a text that describes a ghost.

It is a calculated piece of **administrative surgery**.

By preserving the description while disposing of the map itself, the record-keepers ensured that Tartary would remain a rumour, a set of coordinates with no destination.

This isn't a mystery to be solved with a sense of wonder; it is a demonstration of how easily a physical reality can be reduced to a few lines of ignored ink.

The absence of the map is the most honest part of the entire archive.

It exposes the fact that history isn't a natural accumulation of time, but a curated collection of survivors.

Someone sat at a desk and decided that the visual evidence of this sprawling geography was an unnecessary complication for the future.

They left us the words as a hollow formality, knowing that without the map, the narrative they wanted to build would face no visual challenge.

We are navigating a world defined by these intentional voids, staring at screens that can show us anything except the one thing that was specifically taken away.

This missing document reveals the arrogance of the institutional pen.

It assumes that if an object is removed, the memory of it will eventually follow.

Reading this description now is like finding a manual for a machine that was scrapped before we were born.

It leaves us in a position of forced ignorance, where we can sense the scale of what was lost but can never truly verify it.

We are the inheritors of a mutilated record, and the only way to take it seriously is to stop looking for the *magic* in the margins and start recognising the blunt, functional power of the people who decided which parts of the world were fit to be seen.

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Donations are entirely unnecessary and are never a requirement for engaging with this work.

In a landscape saturated with noise, your time and focused attention are the truly valuable commodities.

The goal here isn't to build a traditional transactional relationship, but to foster a space where the exchange of ideas remains the primary objective.

If funds are contributed, they serve a singular, functional purpose:

**the acquisition of further literature and the costs associated with  
accessing private archives**

But just note, dear reader, it is your presence that I value above all else.

Thank you, *curious mind*.

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