THE "WU PEI CHIH" CHARTS

BY

W. Z. MULDER

In the discussion of Mills' article on "Malaya in the Wu Pei Chih Charts" in T'oung Pao, Vol. XXXIV (1937, p. 233 ff.), Duyvendak expresses the hope that others will continue the work that is left undone and will apply the same excellent method to other sections of the Charts. In all modesty trying to meet these expectations, we endeavour to give in the present paper a mariner's opinion on some of the nautical subjects hitherto treated by others and offer a solution to the place-names on that part of the Charts which others have left alone, viz.: the part of the South China Sea where Phillips left off to the home-port of Nanking, a stretch of sea which I have sailed up and down for more than ten years as a navigating-officer.

The Charts are undoubtedly navigators' charts, they give a crude picture of the coast as it appears to the navigators' eye and the added sailing-directions must have been an enormous help to the


T'oung Pao XXXVII
mariners using them! The style-less, crisp, business-like wordings of the sailing-directions have to our idea been made up by a mariner, maybe the navigating-officer of the expeditions; we may safely assume that on expeditions of that scale and scope there must have been several nautical as well as other experts on board.

The sailing-directions are sometimes given one way, but sometimes for both out- and homeward voyages; they are more extensive in the home-waters and always omit the navigation in and out of harbours, so that it looks as if already in those days it was usual to pick up a pilot for that purpose.

In one case they give an inside as well as an outside passage; the courses indicated are amazingly accurate; the whole reminds one of a yearly publication called "The China Coasters' Year and Tide Book" which was until recently a much used directory for coasting vessels. The text of one of the many sailing-directions taken from the charts which we have chosen for our purpose, reads as follows: it was taken from the right-hand side of page 12 of the charts and runs down pages 11, 10, etc.:

1) From somewhere near Montague island down to the river Min both an inward as well as an outward passage are given, complete with soundings (on the Chinese Chart, page 7-8).

2) Published by the "North China Daily Herald", Shanghai.