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Bhaskar Ankush, T. (Orcid ID: 0000-0003-4281-1744)

Hayakawa Hisashi (Orcid ID: 0000-0001-5370-3365)

Oliveira Denny, M. (Orcid ID: 0000-0003-2078-7229)

Blake Sean, Patrick (Orcid ID: 0000-0001-9042-3557)

Ebihara Yusuke (Orcid ID: 0000-0002-2293-1557)

An analysis of the Trouvelot's Auroral Drawing on 1/2 March 1872: Plausible Evidence for Recurrent Geomagnetic Storms

Ankush Bhaskar* (1-2), Hisashi Hayakawa** (3-6), Denny M. Oliveira (1, 7), Sean Blake (1-2), Sam M. Silverman (8), and Yusuke Ebihara (9-10).

(1) NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, MD, United States

(2) Catholic University of America, Washington DC, United States

(3) UK Solar System Data Centre, Space Physics and Operations Division, RAL Space, Science and Technology Facilities Council, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Harwell Oxford, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0QX, UK

(4) Institute for Space-Earth Environmental Research, Nagoya University, Nagoya, 4648601, Japan

(5) Institute for Advanced Researches, Nagoya University, Nagoya, 4648601, Japan

(6) Nishina Centre, Riken, Wako, 3510198, Japan.

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(7) Goddard Planetary Heliophysics Institute, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD, United States

(8) 18 Ingleside Road, Lexington, MA 02420, USA

(9) Research Institute for Sustainable Humanosphere, Kyoto University, Uji, 6110011, Japan

(10) Unit of Synergetic Studies for Space, Kyoto University, Kyoto, 6068306, Japan

* a.bhaskar@nasa.gov; ankushbhaskar@gmail.com

** hisashi@nagoya-u.jp; hisashi.hayakawa@stfc.ac.uk

Abstract

This work examines Trouvelot's observations and drawing of an auroral display during the night of 1 March 1872. It is known that the auroral oval moves equatorward to mid- and even low-latitudes during large geomagnetic storms. Trouvelot's graphical record of the great aurora on 1 March 1872 has been often cited as a remarkable example of a mid-latitude aurora, although it is puzzling that this occurred on a geomagnetically quiet day. Kataoka *et al.* (2019, *JSWSC*, **9**, A16) even regarded this as a dating error. Here, we investigate Trouvelot's descriptions and available geomagnetic measurements in detail. Our analysis shows that the original date of Trouvelot's auroral drawing is most probably accurate. Moreover, Trouvelot's descriptions and the observational site show that the auroral visibility fell at the beginning of 2 March 1872 in Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Consulting simultaneous variations of magnetograms at Helsinki and Greenwich, we found that the nightside aurora specifically coincides with the initial phase of the storm (substorm) and suggests a close association with a substorm triggered by sudden magnetospheric compression. This case study shows that even short geomagnetic storms can be overlooked in

a daily Aa index and they can also cause mid-latitude aurorae. Moreover, we found ≈ 27 -day intervals between this storm, the extreme storms on 4-6 February 1872, and another “bright aurora” that was reported on 6 January 1872. Based on their interval, these mid-latitude aurorae have probably resulted from recurrent solar activity.

1. Introduction

It is generally understood that mid-latitude aurorae appear with great magnetic storms (*e.g.*, Vallance Jones, 1992; Daglis *et al.*, 1999; Schlegel and Schlegel, 2011; Cid *et al.*, 2014, 2015; Saiz *et al.*, 2016), resulted from interplanetary coronal mass ejections (ICMEs) or shock with corotating interaction region, with the southward interplanetary magnetic field (Gonzalez *et al.*, 1994; Borovsky & Denton, 2006; Richardson *et al.*, 2006). This was especially the case with the extreme storms such as the Hydro-Québec storm in March 1989, where significant ICMEs cause one of the most extreme geomagnetic storms in the space age and significant extension of the auroral oval (Allen *et al.*, 1989; Yokoyama *et al.*, 1998; Cid *et al.*, 2014; Boteler, 2019). As such, mid-latitude auroral reports have formed one of the important clues to understanding the space weather and space climate in the past (*e.g.*, Silverman, 1992; Vaquero *et al.*, 2010; Lockwood & Barnard, 2015; Lockwood *et al.*, 2016; Vázquez *et al.*, 2016; Domínguez-Castro *et al.*, 2016; Riley *et al.*, 2018; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2019c).

Statistical studies show a fairly good empirical correlation between the storm intensity (minimum Dst index) and the equatorward boundary of the auroral oval (Schulz, 1997; Yokoyama *et al.*, 1998; Silverman, 2006). Indeed all four outstanding aurorae reviewed by Chapman (1957) – namely those in September 1859 (Tsurutani *et al.*, 2003; Siscoe *et al.*, 2006; Silverman, 2006; Gonzalez *et al.*, 2011; Cliver & Dietrich, 2013; Hayakawa *et al.*,

2018c; Lakhina & Tsurutani, 2018; Blake *et al.*, 2020), February 1872 (Tsurutani *et al.*, 2005; Silverman, 2008; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018a), September 1909 (Silverman, 1995; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2019a; Love *et al.*, 2019a), and May 1921 (Silverman & Cliver, 2001; Hapgood, 2019) – have been confirmed as geomagnetic superstorms of $Dst/Dst^* \leq -500$ nT (Cliver & Dietrich, 2013; Riley *et al.*, 2018; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018a, 2019b; Love *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b) and compared with two more superstorms with mid-latitude aurorae in October/November 1903 and March 1946 (Hayakawa *et al.*, 2020a, 2020b).

Nevertheless, there seems to be some reported mid- to low-latitude aurorae during periods of quiet to moderate geomagnetic activity. Silverman (2003) reviewed these aurorae and named them “sporadic aurorae” (Silverman, 2003), setting its threshold in daily *aa* index as ≤ 55 (Silverman, 2003). They are generally faint aurorae, while their physical properties such as duration and relationship with substorms are currently under further investigations (Silverman, 2003; *c.f.*, *e.g.*, Akasofu, 1964; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018b). Although their physical mechanism has not been fully understood, follow-up works have recovered such sporadic aurorae in other mid- to low-latitude regions (Willis *et al.*, 2007; Vaquero *et al.*, 2007, 2013; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018b; Oliveira *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it would be intriguing to collect more parallel data, critically reconsider auroral reports during quiet to moderate geomagnetic activity, and consider their reliability and background physics in comparison with geomagnetic measurements at that time.

Étienne L. Trouvelot’s famous auroral drawing on 1 March 1872 (Figure 1; Trouvelot, 1882; see also Odenwald, 2015) is one such puzzling case (see *e.g.*, Kataoka *et al.*, 2019), given that the aurora was reported in mid-latitudes despite quiet to moderate geomagnetic activity (daily *aa* = 13). Indeed, Kataoka *et al.* (2019) have recently revisited this auroral drawing and

criticized Trouvelot's original dating on 1 March 1872, "as no magnetic storm was recorded at that time". Kataoka *et al.* (2019) instead claimed that Trouvelot's drawing was misdated and associated it with the great magnetic storms on 1872 February 4 – 6 when aurorae were seen in the low-latitude area (*c.f.*, Willis *et al.*, 2007; Silverman, 2008; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018a), based on their criticism. Therefore, it would be of significant interest to consider if Trouvelot's drawing was correctly dated (Trouvelot, 1882; Odenwald, 2015) or misdated from the February storms (Kataoka *et al.*, 2019). If the dating is correct, this auroral drawing belongs to a sporadic aurora (*e.g.*, Silverman, 2003) and questions us its cause. In order to address this scientific question, we examine geomagnetic activities and the possible solar wind drivers based on contemporary observations.

In this study, we, therefore examine Trouvelot's original drawing and description to evaluate the reliability of Trouvelot's own dating for this auroral drawing, compare them with contemporary auroral records, contextualize the temporal and spatial evolution of this aurora with available magnetic measurements, and consider the case and cause of sporadic aurorae.



Figure 1: Trouvelot's auroral drawing at 21:25 LT on 1872 March 1 (Trouvelot, 1882), with courtesy of the Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library, The New York Public Library Digital Collections. (<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-e6cd-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

2. Trouvelot's Auroral Observations

Étienne Léopold Trouvelot (1827 – 1895) was a French artist and astronomer, who emigrated from France to the United States in 1852 and worked in New England afterward. He started working on astronomy after a series of auroral spectacles in 1870 (*e.g.*, Hale, 1895). He is well known for his astronomical drawings (Trouvelot, 1882), which are currently preserved in the New York Public Library. Among them, Trouvelot published an auroral drawing dated

on 1 March 1872 (Figure 1) as “Plate IV” in his monograph with his own description in his appendix (Trouvelot, 1882, p. 161):

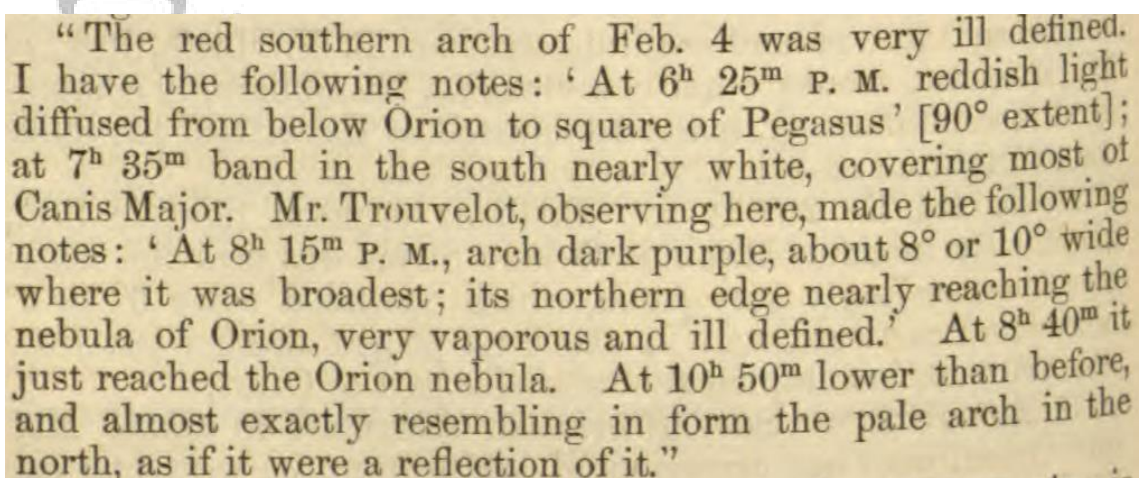
PLATE IV. AURORA BOREALIS.

As observed March 1, 1872, at 9h. 25m. P. M. The view presents the rare spectacle of an aurora spanning the sky from east to west in concentric arches [28c]. The Polar Star is nearly central in the back-ground, the constellation of the Great Bear on the right and Cassiopeia's chair on the left. The large star at some distance above the horizon on the right is Arcturus. The almost black inner segment [28b] of the aurora resting upon the horizon, has its summit in the magnetic meridian [32a], which was in this case a little west of north, its arc being indented by the bases of the ascending streamers [28c]. Both streamers and arches were, when observed, tremulous with upward pulsations [29b] and there was also a wave-like movement of the streamers from west to east [29a]. The prevailing color of this aurora is a pale whitish green [28c] and the complementary red appears especially at the west end of the auroral arch. The summits of the streamers are from four hundred to five hundred miles above the earth [31a] and the aurora is therefore a phenomenon of the terrestrial atmosphere [32b] rather than of astronomical observation proper.

According to Trouvelot's description, the aurora arch extended along the dark segment having its center at the magnetic meridian, the aurorae moved upward and eastward, the aurora was mostly pale whitish-green, whereas the west end of the auroral arch had a reddish color. This means the aurora was bright enough for its rays and pulsations to be detected with the unaided eye, and both its greenish emission (wavelength (WL) = 555.7 nm) and reddish emission (WL = 630.0 nm) coexisted in it as a background. Interestingly, Trouvelot (1882, p.

28) himself reported the auroral color in general as: “For the most part the auroral light is either whitish or of a pale, greenish tint; but in some cases, it exhibits the most beautiful colors, among which the red and green predominate”. Therefore, it is expected that faint greenish emissions (WL = 557.7 nm) were detected as whitish in color (see *e.g.*, Hayakawa *et al.*, 2017; Carrasco *et al.*, 2017; Ebihara *et al.*, 2017; Stephenson *et al.*, 2019). The whitish rays in the drawing (Figure 1) may indicate that its mixture with reddish emissions (WL = 630.0 nm) with weak brightness may have been detected as whitish in color as well, potentially with some contributions from bluish emissions (WL = 427.8 nm, N₂⁺).

As auroral phenomena were the origin of his astronomical interests, Trouvelot had watched aurorae and had spared an independent section for the auroral borealis in his monograph. In 1872, he observed “a brilliant aurora for over one hour” on January 6 and “an aurora which apparently continued for two or three consecutive days and nights” (Trouvelot, 1882, p. 30 and p. 36) as well. Trouvelot’s auroral reports have been occasionally cited in scientific journals as well. One of the good examples is his auroral report on 4 February 1872 (Figure 2), cited in Twining (1872, p. 276).



“The red southern arch of Feb. 4 was very ill defined. I have the following notes: ‘At 6^h 25^m P. M. reddish light diffused from below Orion to square of Pegasus’ [90° extent]; at 7^h 35^m band in the south nearly white, covering most of Canis Major. Mr. Trouvelot, observing here, made the following notes: ‘At 8^h 15^m P. M., arch dark purple, about 8° or 10° wide where it was broadest; its northern edge nearly reaching the nebula of Orion, very vaporous and ill defined.’ At 8^h 40^m it just reached the Orion nebula. At 10^h 50^m lower than before, and almost exactly resembling in form the pale arch in the north, as if it were a reflection of it.”

Figure 2: Trouvelot's auroral report on 1872 February 4, reproduced from Twining (1872).

On this basis, we consider Trouvelot had already started his astronomical observations around the Harvard College Observatory (N42°23', W071°08') at latest on 4 February 1872. This assumption is consistent with his documented connection with the Harvard College Observatory in the front cover of Trouvelot (1882) and in Hale's short biography (Hale, 1895). This assumption allows us to estimate the magnetic latitude of Trouvelot's observational site as 53.8° on the basis of the dipole assumption of the GUFM1 model (Jackson *et al.*, 2000).

3. A Dating Error or a Sporadic Aurora?

On the other hand, Trouvelot's auroral drawing has recently had its date criticized and alternatively associated with the extreme storms on 4-6 February, "as no magnetic storms were recorded at that time" (Kataoka *et al.*, 2019). Given its daily *aa* index = 13.2, the geomagnetic activity on 1 March 1872 is certainly considered as quiet to moderate, on the basis of Silverman (2003)'s threshold (daily *aa* ≤ 55) as shown in the top panel of Figure 3.

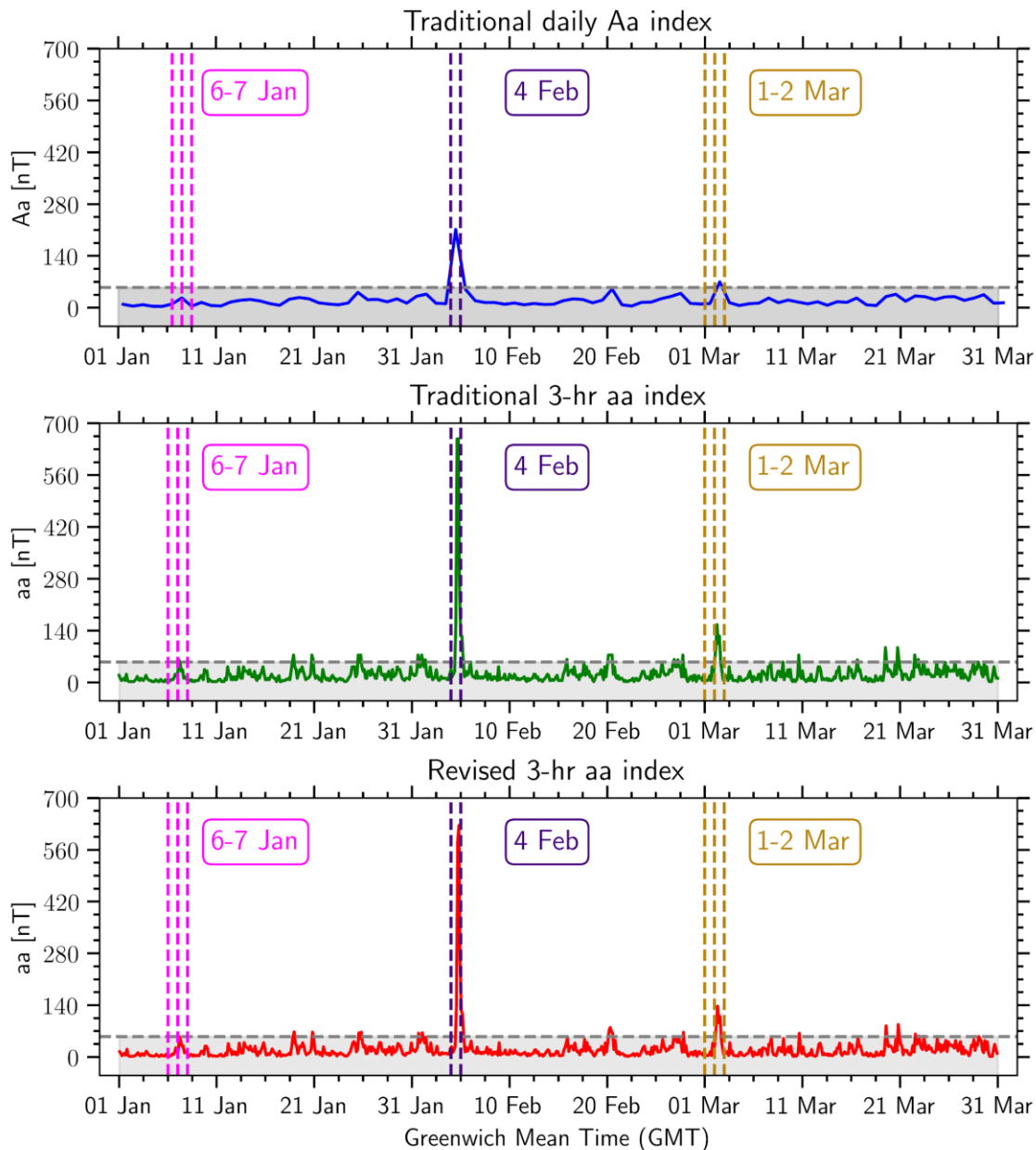


Figure 3: Aa index (Mayaud, 1972) and revised Aa index (Lockwood et al., 2018) from 1872 January to March, with a threshold (highlighted grey areas) of Aa = 55 suggested by Silverman (2003) and dates with candidate aurorae on 6 January, 4-6 February, and 1-2 March 1872.

However, caveats must be noted here, as the *aa* index was not specifically designed for high-latitude ionospheric variations. Nevertheless, Trouvelot's aurora was reported in 1872, far

before the introduction of the AE index or SME index (Davis & Sugiura, 1966; Newell & Gjerloev, 2011). As such, auroral activity in the auroral zone may not be reflected in the *aa* index. Moreover, the *aa* index is with daily to tri-hourly resolution (Mayaud, 1972; Lockwood *et al.*, 2018a, 2018b) and high-resolution magnetic measurements are needed to analyze the details of the geomagnetic activity back in that time, especially to deal with the small geomagnetic disturbances caused by Corotating Interaction Region (CIR) (Smith and Wolfe, 1976).

Moreover, Trouvelot's auroral report on 4 February 1872 (Figure 2) seems significantly different from his drawing dated on 1 March (Figure 1). On 4 February 1872, Trouvelot observed aurora at least from 20:15 LT to 22:50 LT, including 21:25 LT. Unlike Trouvelot's graphical record (Figure 1), this aurora was mainly seen southward with its northern edge reaching Orion, as long as Trouvelot himself emphasized (see Figure 2), whereas Figure 1 shows aurora in the northern sky. Therefore, although Trouvelot had certainly seen the aurora on 4 February 1872, his auroral report at that time is hardly consistent with his drawing (Figure 1) and hence casts serious doubts on Kataoka *et al.*'s re-dating for Trouvelot's drawing.

We have also computed the star positions seen from Harvard College Observatory with Stellarium 0.19.3. The relative positions of the polar star, Ursa Major, and Cassiopeia certainly appear more favorable to 4 February rather than 1 March, if we fix the observational time as 21:25 LT, as suggested in Kataoka *et al.* (2019). However, Trouvelot's mention of Arcturus directly contradicts this conventional dating alteration in Kataoka *et al.* (2019). Trouvelot (1882, p. 161) states in his explanation, "The large star at some distance above the horizon on the right is Arcturus". Simulations with Stellarium show Arcturus at 21:25 is

visible only after 9 February 1872. Therefore, Trouvelot's drawing cannot be dated as of February 4 – 6, but likely depicted as 1 March 1872 after the rise of Arcturus (20:02 on 1 March 1872). We note here that the reported observational time could be slightly different. This is not something extremely surprising as such detailed drawing must have taken substantial time to complete. Therefore, we conclude that Trouvelot's dating should be accepted as face value, rather than altered version as 4 – 6 February presented in Kataoka *et al.* (2019).

Moreover, other reports of simultaneous auroral observations seem to robustly advocate Trouvelot's original dating. Greely (1881, p. 74) confirms that aurorae were reported at “Buffalo, Burlington, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Duluth, Escanaba, Grand Haven, Marquette, Oswego, Portland, ME, Toledo, Vicksburgh” on 1 March 1872. This description shows that the aurorae were witnessed throughout the northeastern part of the United States on 1 March 1872 and robustly agrees with the original dating of Trouvelot's auroral drawing. On the other hand, we have only two reports on 5 February and none on February 6 according to Greely (1881, p. 74). In this sense, the conventional date alteration to 5 – 6 February 1872 does not agree with the large auroral extension in Trouvelot's drawing either.

The star positions are very useful to understand the extent of the aurora in the night sky. Additionally, at the time of this observation, the Moon was below the horizon and this condition might have provided better auroral visibility. The pole star is at an elevation of $\sim 42^\circ$ which is equivalent to the geographical latitude of the observation site, Harvard College Observatory (N42°23', W071°08'). The topmost star was seen above the Big dipper in the painting is Muscida, which had an altitude of $\approx 71^\circ$ from the horizon at 21:25 LT on 1 March 1872. This implies the aurora was seen beyond 42° and possibly up to 71° in the elevation

angle. Accordingly, the magnetic footprint of the equatorward boundary of the auroral oval is estimated to be $56.2^{\circ} - 58.5^{\circ}$ magnetic latitude (see O'Brien *et al.*, 1962; Figure 2 of Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018c), assuming the auroral elevation as ~ 400 km and the aurora is along the dipole magnetic field line (Roach *et al.*, 1960; Ebihara *et al.*, 2017).

4. Magnetic Measurements on 1 – 2 March 1872

One puzzling aspect of Trouvelot's auroral drawing (Figure 1) remains, in that “no magnetic storm was recorded” for 1 March 1872 (Kataoka *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, Trouvelot's dating (1 March) shows quiet to moderate geomagnetic activity as indicated by its daily *aa* index = 13.2, (Mayaud, 1972), or its revised daily *aa* index = 11.2 (Lockwood *et al.*, 2018). Applying Silverman (2003)'s threshold ($aa \leq 55$), we can certainly categorize the geomagnetic activity on 1 March as quiet to moderate. Therefore, the aurora in Trouvelot's drawing have apparently occurred without significant magnetic storm and we have no other choice to classify this aurora as a “sporadic aurora”, namely mid- to low-latitude aurorae during periods of quiet to moderate geomagnetic activity, as defined in Silverman (2003).

However, we need to emphasize that Trouvelot's observation was recorded in local time and need to take the offsets with Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) into consideration. Based on his observational site at Harvard College Observatory ($N42^{\circ}23'$, $W071^{\circ}08'$), we need to modify the observational time of 21:25 (with potential variation from 20:02) to GMT, in order to chronologically compare his observation with *aa* indices. As the time zone was introduced only after 1882, the observational time was most likely recorded in the local mean time (see also Silverman, 1998; Boteler, 2006a, 2006b). For Harvard College observatory, this means we apply a time-shift of UT -04:45. Therefore, we estimate the observational time in GMT as $\approx 02:10$ (potentially ranging from 00:47) on 2 March 1872. Consulting traditional and revised

Aa indices on 2 March 1872, we found that the geomagnetic activity was much more enhanced as compared to 1 March 1872 (78.3 and 69.8; see Mayaud, 1972; Lockwood *et al.*, 2018a, 2018b) and this puts Trouvelot's aurora as having occurred on a day beyond the threshold of sporadic aurora ($Aa = 55$) of Silverman (2003).

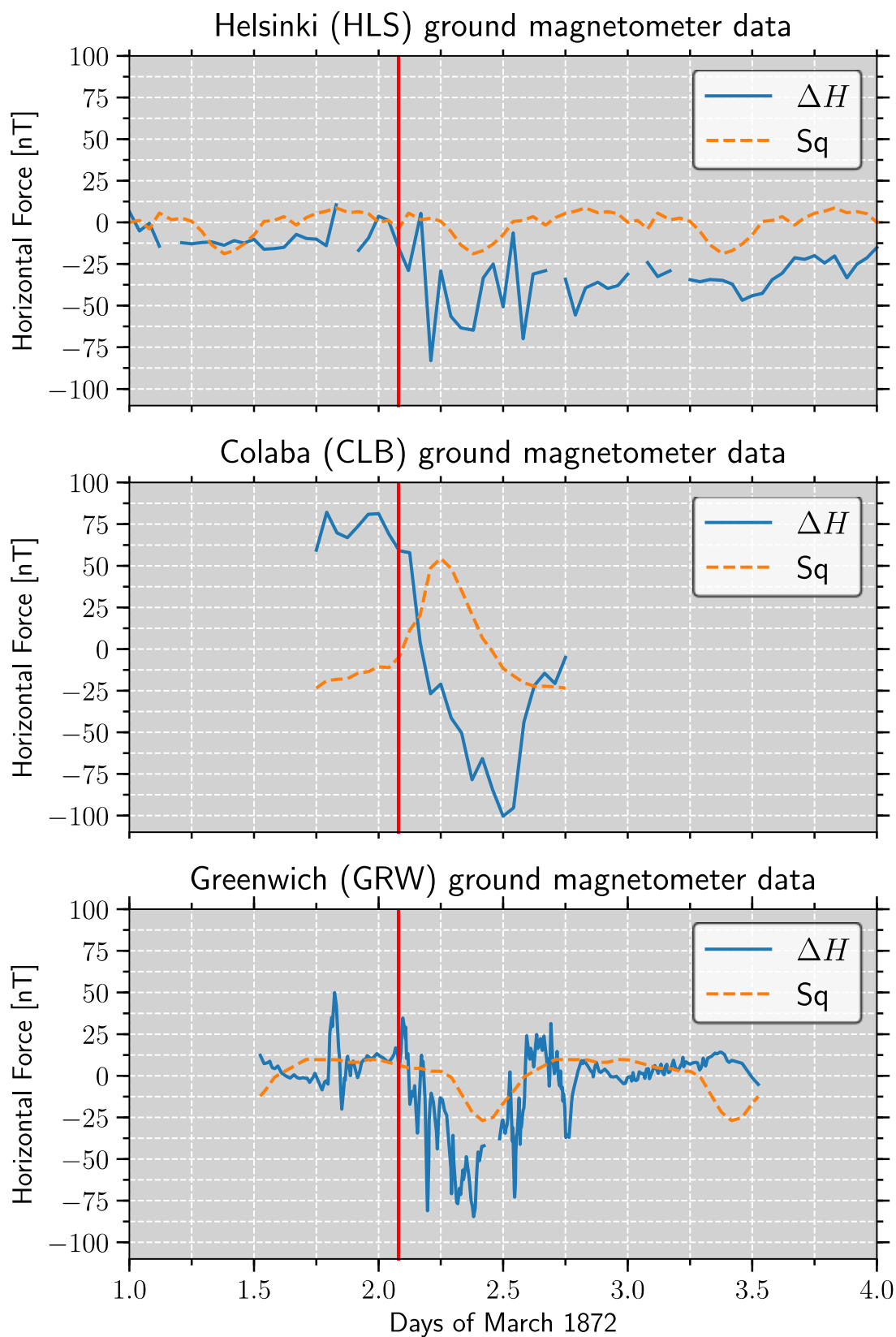


Figure 4: Magnetic field variation observed at Helsinki, Colaba and Greenwich observatories during 1-3 March 1872. The solid blue curve represents quiet time subtracted horizontal (H) magnetic field component during the event. The dashed orange line shows the average diurnal Sq magnetic field variation of H-component during the five quietest days of March 1872, and the vertical red line indicates the time of Trouvelot's auroral drawing (02:10 GMT). A +12 hour time-shift was applied to the Greenwich Sq data, to convert its astronomical time to the civil time.

This interpretation is consistent with the difference of daily Ak index (9 v.s. 45) derived from the Helsinki Observatory (Nevanlinna and Kataja, 1993) and further supported by the hourly measurements at Helsinki on its basis (Nevanlinna *et al.*, 1992; Nevanlinna & Ketola, 1993; Nevanlinna, 2004, 2006). At the time of Trouvelot's auroral observation, Helsinki Observatory (N61°10', E24°59'; 57.8° MLAT) operated a regular magnetic observation. Helsinki Observatory is quite favorably situated for our comparison with the auroral observation at Harvard College Observatory, as both Harvard College Observatory and Helsinki Observatory are geomagnetically located in sub-auroral zones (53.8° v.s. 57.8° MLAT) due to the contemporary position of the north magnetic pole, despite their variation of ~ 20° in geographical latitudes. Helsinki H-values are based on visual spot readings eye-telescope-mirror-scale-method that was in use in many magnetic observatories during the 19th century as in Rome in 1859 (see, Blake *et al.*, 2020). The hourly values of H consisted of three consecutive observations with 30-sec interval centered on the full hour. The final value for each hour was the mean value of these three readings (Nevanlinna *et al.*, 1992; Nevanlinna & Ketola, 1993; Nevanlinna, 2004, 2006), while this procedure often averages out the storm amplitude in comparison with those in spot value (Viljanen *et al.*, 2014).

The magnetic measurements at Helsinki (see Nevanlinna, 2004, 2006) show that the recorded timing of auroral observation corresponded to a short negative excursion of ≈ 20 nT, followed by two other large negative excursions as depicted in the solid blue line of Figure 4 (upper panel). For comparison, Figure 4 shows the average magnetic field variation of H-component (dashed orange line) during the five quietest days of the month, selected with the revised *aa* index (Lockwood *et al.*, 2018). It clearly shows that there was a geomagnetic disturbance at the time of Trouvelot's auroral drawing (Figure 1). Later that day, the magnetic field shows a sharp decrease (≈ -85 nT) and then a steady and slow recovery over the next few days at Helsinki, which hints at the geomagnetic storm condition.

We also compare this insight with Greenwich magnetograms (N51°29', E000°00'; 54.6° MLAT) at that time (Figure 4, bottom panel). Their chronologies are shown with astronomical time (add 12h to get civil time) and these values were multiplied by -1, to account for the orientation of the magnetogram (see Boteler, 2006a, 2006b; Cliver, 2006; Clarke *et al.*, 2010). As its scale is given “the movement of the spot of light for 0.01 part of the whole horizontal force is 2.361 inches”, we compute $2.361 \text{ inches} = 59.964 \text{ mm} = 0.01 H_{\text{total}}$. The H_{total} corresponds to ≈ 17469 nT, according to the GUFM1 model (Jackson *et al.*, 2000). As this magnetogram has a mm scale, we convert the original magnetogram to the modern unit, based on the scale of $1 \text{ mm} = 2.9 \text{ nT}$. Its daily Sq variation is reconstructed from the RGO yearbook (RGO, 1872, p. xxix), and a comparison with a modern Sq variation from the Hartland INTERMAGNET site indicates that these values were recorded in astronomical time. As such, Greenwich magnetogram shows its ΔH amplitude of ≈ 167 nT.

The Greenwich magnetograms in the H-component display the negative excursion confirming the presence of a geomagnetic storm also noted in the Helsinki magnetogram.

Around 19:30 GMT a sharp increase is seen in the H-component of the geomagnetic field variations (note that variations in magnetogram are inverted). A similar enhancement is observed in Helsinki magnetic field variations (Figure 5). This could be related to the sudden impulse (SI^+), which is generally associated with high solar wind dynamic pressure enhancements (Joselyn & Tsurutani, 1990; Oliveira & Samsonov, 2018; Rudd *et al.*, 2019). The H-component of the magnetic variation started to decrease at ~02:20 GMT. The magnetic variation has two negative peaks at $\approx 04:40$ GMT and $\approx 09:00$ GMT, which probably agrees with the two spikes at Helsinki magnetograms.

Additionally, a geomagnetic disturbance was registered at the Bombay (modern-day Colaba; N18°56', E072°50'; 10.0° MLAT) magnetic observatory for the 1 March (Moos, 1910b, p. 452; pp. 480 – 481; see central panel of Figure 4) as part of a summary table listing notable events. This table registers the SI^+ at Colaba at ~ 0:00 LT on 2 March 1872, that is ~ 19:09 GMT on 1 March 1872 (with the time difference of UT + 04:51), and record amplitude of its horizontal range as ≈ 195 nT with its minimum $\approx 02:17$ LMT ($\approx 07:08$ GMT) on 2 March. After removing their S_q variation (Moos, 1910a, p. 64), we observe the ΔH amplitude as ≈ 185 nT.

According to Oliveira *et al.* (2018), interplanetary shocks can further intensify the low and equatorial magnetic field response if they strike the magnetosphere with small impact angles and high speeds, as shown by simulations and observations (*e.g.*, Oliveira & Samsonov, 2018; Rudd *et al.*, 2019). This scenario is consistent with both possibilities of shock driving by CMEs and CIRs. However, if the large daily magnetic field amplitude at Colaba was followed by a CIR-driven shock, the corresponding CIR was most likely associated with a high-speed and high-density solar wind stream. Additionally, this is supported by the

occurrence of mid-latitude and bright aurorae located around the midnight sector after the onset of CIRs during the declining phase of solar cycle 23 (Luan *et al.*, 2013), which is favored by darkness and winter conditions (Newell *et al.*, 1996; Shue *et al.*, 2002). These CIR-caused aurorae are typically associated with pre-conditions of IMF $B_z < 0$ before the CIR onset (*e.g.*, Zhou & Tsurutani, 2001; Luan *et al.*, 2013), which was probably the scenario associated with the driver of Trouvelot's aurora.

On their basis, we locate Trouvelot's auroral observation during the initial phase of this storm. We interpret this as a result of a strong compression of the magnetosphere by an interplanetary shock leading to the triggering of substorms in the nightside magnetosphere (Tsurutani & Zhou, 2003; Yue *et al.*, 2010; Oliveira & Raeder, 2015). This may imply that the compression of the magnetosphere by an interplanetary shock/pressure pulse could have triggered a substorm and then manifested the said auroral display.

5. Possible Recurrent Magnetic Activity at that Time

This work has confirmed the occurrence of a great auroral display and a short magnetic storm on 2 March 1872. Bernaerts' sunspot drawing on 28 February 1872 (Figure 5) confirms one large and complex sunspot group and four more moderate sunspot groups near the disk center. Given their geo-effective position, it is possible that one of these groups to have triggered the source disturbance for this storm and aurora.

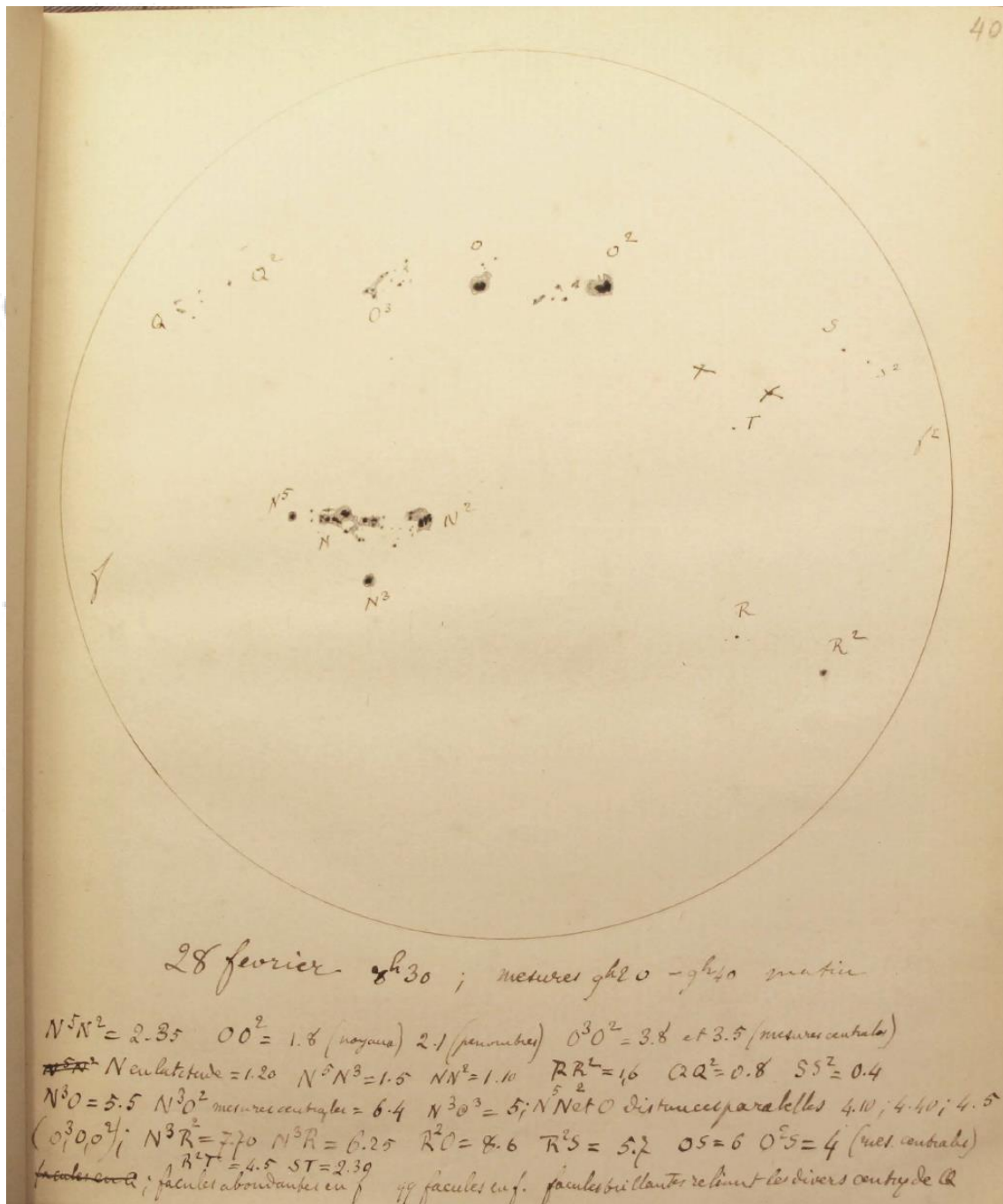


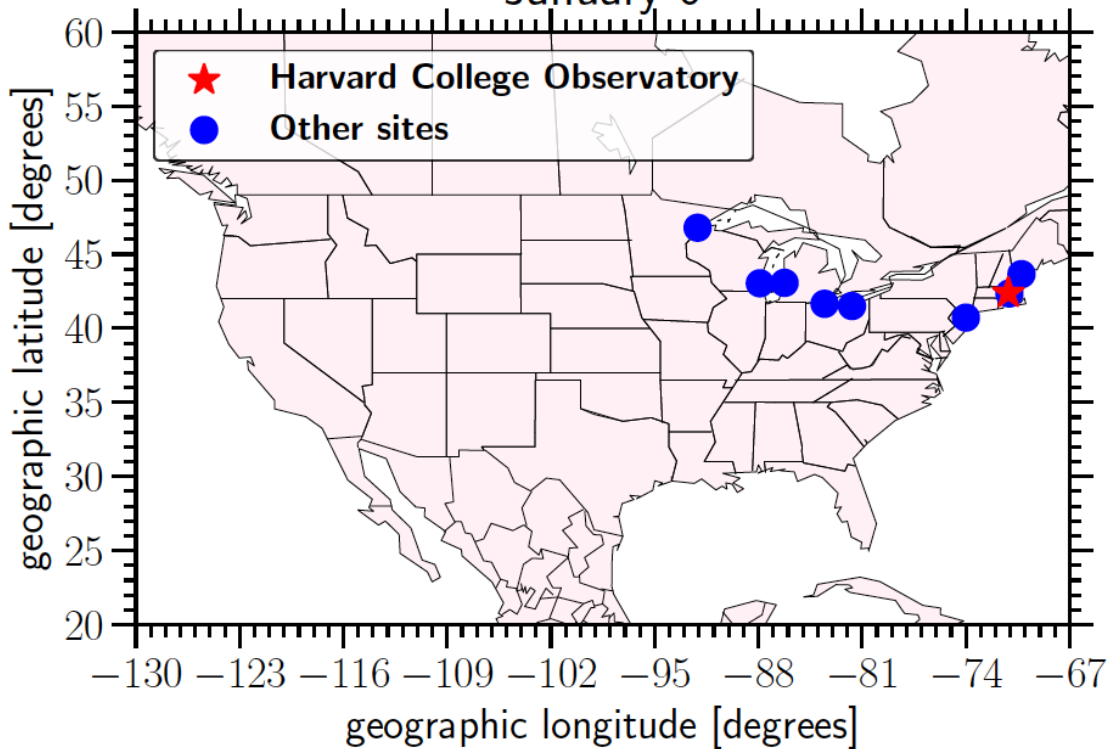
Figure 5: Bernaerts' sunspot drawing on 28 February 1872 (MSS Bernarts, 3, v. 3, f. 40), courtesy of the Royal Astronomical Society. One large complex sunspot group is located near the solar disk center along with other moderate sunspot groups.

Interestingly, there have been earlier reports of aurorae on 6 January 1872 (Trouvelot, 1882, p. 30) and 4 February (Tsurutani et al., 2005; Silverman, 2008; Hayakawa et al., 2018a). The

January aurora is simultaneously reported in “Boston, Cleveland, Duluth, Grand Haven, Milwaukee, New York, Portland, ME, Toledo” (Greely, 1881, p. 74). As summarized in Figure 6, these auroral displays widely covered the New England region. In addition, disturbances to the horizontal geomagnetic field were registered for 6 January (≈ 107 nT), 4 February (≈ 1023 nT) and 2 March (≈ 195 nT) at the Colaba observatory (Moos, 1910b, p. 452).

Aurora visibility in 1872 from the United States

January 6



March 1

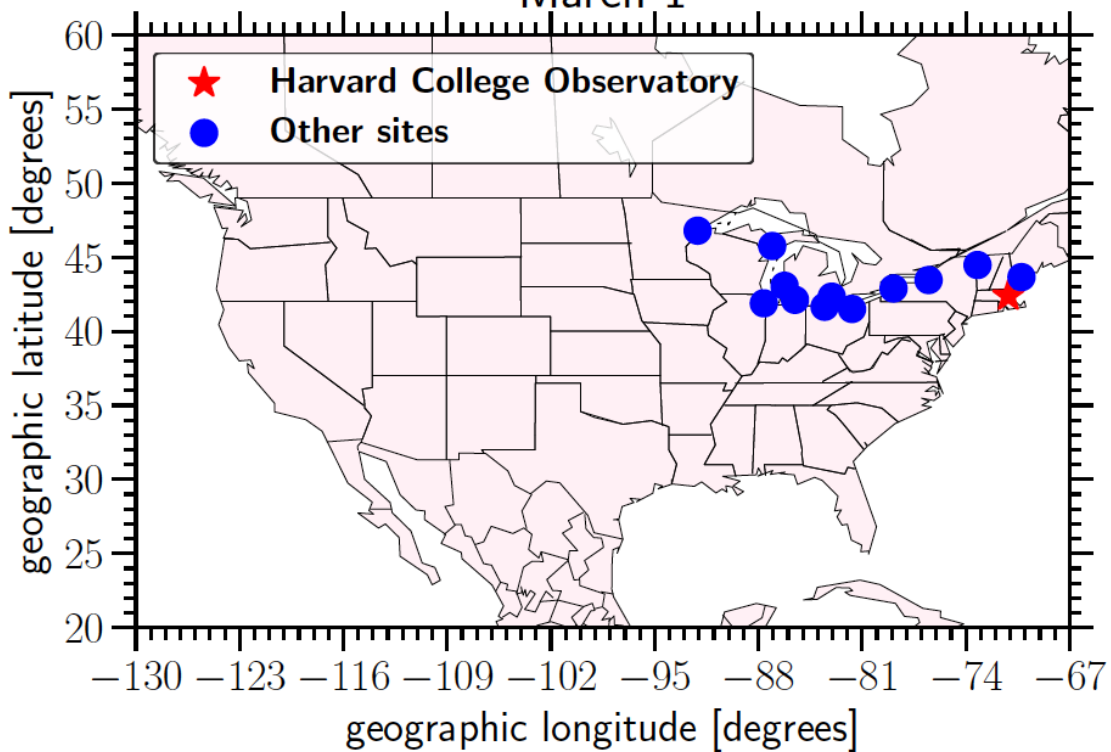


Figure 6: Auroral displays on 6 January (top panel) and 1 March (bottom panel) in 1872 in the United States according to Trouvelot (1882) and Greely (1881). Harvard College Observatory is shown in a red star and other sites are shown in blue circles. The dates are shown in LT.

The occurrence intervals of all these auroral observations and geomagnetic disturbances are consistent with the duration of solar rotation (≈ 27 days.) and may indicate recurrent geomagnetic activity in early 1872, as inferred from the modern scientific literature (see *e.g.*, Burlaga & Lepping, 1977; Baker *et al.*, 1997; Willis and Stephenson, 2001; Tsurutani *et al.*, 2006a, 2006b; Willis & Davis, 2014). Further simultaneous auroral reports confirm the occurrences of these recurrent storms. European records show auroral reports in Norwegian cities (Tromholt, 1902, p. 242) for the 6/7 January storm; and those in Norwegian cities (Tromholt, 1902, p. 246), Swedish cities (Rubenson, 1882, p. 184), Ösel Island (current Saaremaa Island, the largest island in the Gulf of Riga) in Estonia (Heis, 1872, p. 339), and even down to Florence (Denza, 1872, p. 827) for the 1/2 March storm. These European observations may have formed an arc with the auroral observations in the Northern part of the United States, while they may have fallen in different phases of the same storm.

Modern observations show that such a “clock-like” recurrent geomagnetic activity is generally caused by coronal holes and high-speed streams. As viewed from the Earth, coronal holes act as rigid rotators and keep reappearing at ≈ 27 -day intervals, due to the rotation of the Sun (Tsurutani *et al.*, 1982; Lefevre *et al.*, 2016). High-speed solar-wind streams with peak speeds of $\approx 750 - 800$ km/s emanate from these coronal holes (McComas *et al.*, 2002). The high-speed streams interact with the upstream slow-speed solar-wind streams, forming compressive Corotating Interaction Regions (CIRs) (Smith & Wolfe, 1976; Tsurutani &

Gonzalez, 1987; Tsurutani *et al.*, 1995; Richardson *et al.*, 2006). CIRs can have a forward shock at the antisolar edge. When the CIR-driven shock impinges on the terrestrial magnetosphere, it may be able to trigger a substorm causing nightside aurorae as if the ICME-driven shock can do (Zhou & Tsurutani 2001; Tsurutani & Zhou, 2003; Hajra & Tsurutani 2018).

At the same time, Richardson *et al.* (2006) in their study of CIR magnetic storms from 1972 to 2005 found a maximum storm intensity of $Dst = -161$ nT. Meng *et al.* (2019) have studied all extreme storms with $Dst < -250$ nT from 1957 to 2019 and have not found CIR-storms of that intensity. Therefore we conclude that the February 1872 storm was most probably caused by ICME impact, based on its auroral visibility even down to Bombay (Tsurutani *et al.*, 2005; Silverman, 2008; Hayakawa *et al.*, 2018a).

As such, it is plausible to explain these recurrent aurorae with a combination of ICMEs and CIR shocks. Further, it is known for coronal holes to be located at the place of decayed active region (Karachik *et al.* 2010). The interplanetary high-speed stream originated from the already co-existing or newly formed coronal holes from the decayed active regions that could not be seen in the visible light back in 1872. CIRs typically cause weak magnetic storms to no storms at all (Tsurutani *et al.*, 1995, 2006). This is in good agreement with the auroral reports with apparent moderate geomagnetic activities on 6 January and 2 March (Figures 3 and 7). Meanwhile, the cause of Trouvelot's aurora on 2 March 1872 still remains controversial, as (i) the CIR shocks at 1 au are not frequent (Borovsky & Denton, 2006; Tsurutani *et al.*, 2006), while we should also reserve possibilities for CIRs bounded by strong shocks. (ii) the storm amplitude recorded at the low-latitude magnetic observatory, Colaba,

reached ≈ 195 nT (Moos, 1910b, p. 452), and (iii) the storm recovery looks faster than typical CIR storms (Figures 4 and 5; see also Borovsky & Denton, 2006; Tsurutani *et al.*, 2018).

Generally, recurrent geomagnetic activity is associated with CIRs, however for transients to be responsible for the recurrent geomagnetic activity, the Sun needs to eject a continuous stream of transients from a fixed location. It is unlikely to observe this scenario, whereas Crooker and McAllister (1997) have reported such a scenario as a cause of recurrent large magnitude storms. Also, the amplitude of the reported storm in our study is not small, but still within the extent of reported CIR induced storms (O'Brien & McPherron, 2000; Richardson *et al.*, 2006). It is therefore conservative to reserve both CIRs and ICMEs for its possible cause.

The sequence of observed aurorae on 4 – 6 February is more plausibly caused with the CIRs after great ICMEs (cause of the 4 February storm) as the magnetic activity became rather moderate after 5 February (Figure 3) and single ICMEs cause aurorae only for few hours (Lakhina *et al.*, 2013; Lakhina & Tsurutani, 2017). Therefore, the February sequence could be considered as a combination of intense ICMEs and high-speed streams following the CIRs resulting in high-intensity long-duration continuous AE activities (HILDCAAs) (Tsurutani and Gonzalez 1987; Tsurutani *et al.*, 1995, 2006; Kozyra *et al.*, 2006; Turner *et al.*, 2006; Hajra *et al.*, 2014).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Our analysis of Trouvelot's aurora record dated on 1 March 1872 confirms that his aurora was indeed observed on that day, removing earlier doubt on his original dating. The manipulated dating proposed by Kataoka *et al.* (2019) contradicts Trouvelot's own

observation (see Figure 2) and the original dating is robustly supported with the simultaneous auroral observations. Moreover, by investigating the star positions from Trouvelot's drawing and the simulated star charts, we have confirmed the date and time of the auroral observations. Astronomical records have been very important in dating historical events. This event was one such case. The star positions painted along with the aurora by the astronomer Trouvelot were of paramount importance for us to use them to confirm the original dating.

While the magnetic activity was moderate on 1 March 1872 according to the daily Aa index, the location of its observational site requires us to take the time difference with respect to GMT. On this basis, this aurora fell on 2 March 1872 in GMT and its geomagnetic activity was slightly more notable. Moreover, the ground magnetograms with more than hourly resolution showed that there was a short geomagnetic storm during this period, and a relatively moderate geomagnetic disturbance was also registered at Colaba for this time-period. The aurora occurred during the initial phase of the storm and hence may have been associated with a substorm event most likely triggered by the compression of the magnetosphere by a moderate/strong interplanetary shock (*e.g.*, Oliveira & Samsonov, 2018). Shiokawa *et al.* (2005) have shown that low-latitude aurorae were observed at Rikubetsu (34.7° magnetic latitude) in Japan not only during the storm main phase but also during the initial phase.

This result implies that a short magnetic storm may have been smeared out by the daily Aa index due to its short duration and the time difference. As the existing sporadic aurorae were investigated with a threshold of *daily* Aa index ≤ 55 (Silverman, 2003; Willis *et al.*, 2007), there are probably more than a few events whose magnetic disturbance was overlooked because of these two reasons. Therefore, the geomagnetic profiles of the reported historical

sporadic aurorae need further investigations using such high-time resolution geomagnetic field data and the observational metadata, if available, to compare with their detailed descriptions and to see possible contributions of supersubstorms (see *e.g.*, Hajra *et al.*, 2016; Hajra & Tsurutani, 2018).

Additionally, the investigated aurora appears to be associated with the other mid-latitude aurorae on 6 January and 4 – 6 February, given their intervals of ≈ 27 days. This sequence indicates recurrent solar activity caused with a combination of CIRs and CMEs. This documented historic event shows that even moderate geomagnetic activity can trigger visual aurorae in mid-latitudes. The relevance of these observations has space-weather implications, as combinations of CIRs and ICMEs could be responsible for periodically observed historic intense/moderate geomagnetic activity events.

Data Availability

Trouvelot's auroral drawing and Bernaerts' sunspot drawing are preserved in the archives of the New York Public Library and the Royal Astronomical Society. The magnetic measurements at Greenwich, Helsinki, and Colaba are available at the British Geological Survey (BGS), the Finnish Meteorological Institute, and Moos (1910a, 1910b), respectively. The American auroral visibility reports in 1872 are available at Greely (1881).

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(<https://space.fmi.fi/MAGN/magn/Helsinki/H/H.tables/H1872vk.lis>) for providing the Helsinki magnetic field data. We thank Colaba Observatory (now administrated by Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, India), Helsinki Observatory, and Greenwich Observatory for the recording of magnetic field measurements. AB is supported by funding from Van Allen Probes Mission and HH is supported by Young Leader Cultivation (YLC) program of Nagoya University, the 2019 Collaborative Research Grants for YLC (grant # YLC2019A02), the Unit of Synergetic Studies for Space of Kyoto University, BroadBand Tower, and JSPS grant-in-aids (JP15H05812 and JP15H05816). SPB is supported by the NASA's Living With a Star program (17-624 LWS17 2-0042). HH and SMS thank Rachel Rosenblum for her valuable help, considerations, and arrangements during their discussions. The Greenwich magnetogram was digitised using the WebPlotDigitizer software (automeris.io/WebPlotDigitizer).

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