

Map Plotting and Naming Evolution of South China Sea Islands during Republican Period

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Abstract:

From Han Dynasty, ancient China had many records and literature materials about the administrative jurisdiction over South China Sea Islands and the labor of generations of Chinese people. However, the names of South China Sea Islands had been in constant change ever since then and even during the Republican period. The work of map plotting of the continent and South China Sea during the Republican period had vividly recorded the evolutionary trace of the naming of South China Sea Islands. The intellectuals, education circle and government all had historic names for these islands. These names recorded the evolutionary naming history of these islands and the history of China's sovereignty over these islands.

Key words: Republican period, map of South China Sea, names of South China Sea Islands, ocean consciousness, evolution

The definition of the areas and the rights of a civilization comes into being in many different ways. Whether it is recorded in writings or images, all can demonstrate the regions and rights of this certain civilization. During the period of Republic of China, the intellectuals, education circle and government of China plotted the maps of South China Sea and named South China Sea Islands, which effectively showed the rights of China over South China Sea Islands and the maritime territory in many different ways and with many historical memories.

I. Study of Intellectuals on the naming of South China Sea Islands

1. The 23rd year of Republic, *Atlas of China Situation* by Tong Shiheng

Tong Shiheng (1883-1975), whose hometown located in Jiading, Jiangsu (now is in Shanghai), was accepted by Shanghai South China Sea School in 1899 and two years later joined a team of plotting the map of coastal areas in Shandong. He traveled to Lvshun, Dalian, Tianjin and Beijing for the study and was employed to plot the coastal map of Shandong, Zhili and Fengtian. In the meantime, he taught as a geography teacher in Shanghai Wuben Girls School, Longmen Normal School and Nanjing Advanced Normal School. In 1905, he began the 6-year overseas study in Japan. In his spare time, he wrote books, plotted maps and studied the foreign printing technology. During this period, he finished *Atlas of China Situation* and *Atlas of World Situation*. They sold very well in China. In the 3rd year of Republic, he founded Chinese and Foreign Map Bureau and wrote a lot of documents like *New Atlas of Districts in Republic of China*, *Atlas of Coastal Areas of*

Seven Provinces and New Atlas of Roads in Republic of China. Besides these academic achievements, Mr. Tong devoted himself to industrialism and was honored as the first civilian to put forward the idea of “developing Pudong”

As one of the earliest geography and map researchers in China, Mr. Tong traveled all coastal provinces of China in his early years. With down-to-earth and constantly-questioning spirit, he collected all the data about landform, hydrogeology and the conditions of local people of all coastal provinces, which provided a reliable ground for his later map plotting and a valuable reference for the later generations who studied the maritime affairs of late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period. His on-the-spot investigation and down-to-earth spirit had great impact upon his peers. For example, Mr. Tong once helped Mr. Hong Maoxi who later became a famous geologist and cartographer and influenced Mr. Hong in academic study.

Mr. Tong was a conscientious scholar and wrote many academic books. He started a new way of academic study and maintained a good relationship with the government. He compiled *New Atlas of China* (1913), *New Atlas of Roads in Republic of China* (1914) and *Atlas of Coastal Areas of Seven Provinces* (1914), which provided a valuable reference for the official map of coastal areas and islands, such as the plotting of Dongsha Islands and Xisha Islands. The importance and diversity of his books were peerless at that time. In the introductory remarks of amendments of *Atlas of China Situation*, Mr. Tong wrote that the names of coastal areas were unreliable because they were translated from the maps of western countries and my map was based on the traveling experience of my own so it was more accurate. His on-the-spot investigation

and field research left the reliable first-hand data for his peers and later generations who studied geography and maps.

His most important book *Atlas of China Situation* was accomplished in 1927 and was revised in the 23rd year of Republic. The first page of the revised edition was *Map of Republic of China*, on which the plotting of South China Sea Islands was different and significant. Nansha Islands (Zhongsha Islands now) and Disha Islands (Tuansha Islands and Nansha Islands now) were clearly labeled on the map of Guangdong province and South China Sea, which meant Nansha Islands and Disha Islands were the maritime territory of China besides Dongsha Islands and Xisha Islands. In his book he wrote that the nine small islands of South China were actually Disha Islands which were the southernmost boundary of China. Undoubtedly, he claimed and defended China's sovereignty over Nansha and Disha Islands on behalf of the academic circle of China and it could be regarded as one of the responses from academic world to the incident of French invading the nine small islands of Nansha in 1933.



The first page of *Atlas of China Situation* by Tong Shiheng, Commercial Press, the 23rd year of Republic

2. The 29th year of Republic, *Modern Atlas of China* by Tu Sicong

Tu Sicong (1894-1969), aka Zhesheng, was born in a publisher's home in Tuzhuang Village, Shangyu County, Zhejiang Province, on November 18th, 1894. He graduated from Shanghai South Sea School in 1920. Mr. Tu was extremely fond of geography and drawing so he took the job of teaching geography after graduation and spent his spare time in plotting maps. It took him more than a year to accomplish *Atlas of Provinces of China* and later it was renamed as *New Atlas of China Situation*. The book became a bestseller soon after it was published, which laid a good foundation for his later expansion of business scale.

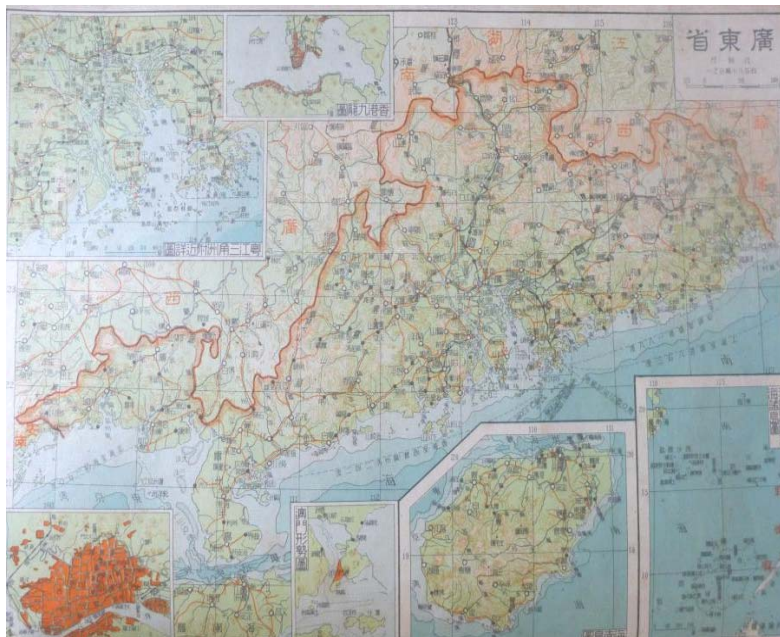
Mr. Tu emphasized the importance of maps when it

comes to the spread of knowledge. In the meantime, he was committed to fostering talents of geography and map plotting. To practice his empirical approach in the academic study and plotting of maps, Mr. Tu visited Japan and collected many European and American literature materials about maps. Mr. Tu and many map experts who worked in World Geography Society for him demonstrated great national integrity in defending sovereignty and territorial integrity. They ignored the pressure exerted by Japanese imperialists and the puppet Manchukuo and resisted the order to publish Manchurian maps even when their materials and equipments were destroyed.

Mr. Tu has made a significant contribution to the demarcation and formation of boundary line of modern South China Sea. *New Atlas of China Situation* was published in 1927, the seventh map of which was *Map of Territory Transition in China*. This map marked the boundary line continuously from Guangxi to the mouth of Yalu river, including all South China Sea Islands. Mr. Tu's *Map of Territory Transition in China* was a role model in adopting continuous line to mark maritime territory of South China Sea.

Modern Atlas of China, one of Mr. Tu's masterpieces, contributed a lot to the naming of South China Sea Islands. Dongsha, Xisha, Nansha and Tuansha Islands of South China Sea (Nansha is Zhongsha now, and Tuansha is Nansha now) were clearly marked in this book. The 26th map of this book clearly showed the map of South China Sea Islands in China territory. In this map, Louisa Reef which was located 3 degrees longitude to the west of British Borneo and at about 113 degrees 14 minutes east longitude (It was renamed as Nantong Reef in 1947 and now is controlled by Brunei) was marked as a part of Tuansha Islands which was the southernmost point of

China territory. Compared with Mr. Tong Shiheng's *Atlas of China Situation*, Mr. Tu's maps were more detailed in marking island and reef, especially in the plotting of Tuansha Islands (Disha Islands). The entry of Guangdong Province in the appendix of this book explained the entry of South China Sea Islands, with the introduction of accurate locations and disputes of Dongsha, Xisha, Nansha and Tuansha Islands. It also mentioned the incident of French invading the nine small islands of Nansha in the 22nd year of Republic. All these facts of his book above indicated that the naming and marking of South China Sea Islands by Mr. Tu was not only objective and accurate but also with national integrity and patriotism.



The 26th page of Modern Atlas of China by Tu Sicong, World Geography Society, the 29th year of Republic

3. The 33rd year of Republic, *Pocket Atlas of Provinces of China* by Zou Xingai

Zou Xingai (1915-1975), was born in a family of maps in Xinhua (Longhui), Hunan Province. His granduncle, Zou Daijun, one of the advocates and founders of modern geography in China, founded the earliest organization of geography of China — Geography Society, in Wuchang, 1895. His grandfather, Zou Yongxuan, was the founder of Yaxin Map Publishing House, the first private map publishing house in China. After his graduation from Geography Department of Tsinghua University in 1939, Zou Xingai stayed there as a research assistant and later he returned home to host Yaxin Geography Society.

The Anti-Japanese War broke out during the period of his management of Yaxin Geography Society. However, Mr. Zou did not stop pursuing his career. He was in charge of compiling the 1:2000000 navigation map of East Asia and Japan and publishing the general maps for reference and teaching. In the meantime, he took the position of editor-in-chief for the journal *Collected Papers of Geography Studies* hosted by Geography Society of Tsinghua University, as well as teaching in several middle schools and National Normal University. Therefore, Mr. Zou was an educator and an influential geographic cartography expert who worked in the field of map making for a very long time with so many great academic accomplishments as *Classified Atlas of Chinese Provinces*, *Atlas of World Countries*, *An Outline for World Geography*, *Aeromap of East Asia*, *Atlas of Postal Routes* and many other papers published in the *Collected Papers of Geography Studies*. From 1954 till his retirement, he worked as deputy editor-in-chief in joint state-private publishing house. During this period, he made the rules for

compiling different maps and wrote the design outline for map making, the plan for compiling and the summary for work. He emphasized that the small scale map was the leading direction for geographic cartography and pointed out that compiling maps was a creation process and it ought to show the inner link among all geographical entities and reflect the geographic nature. He wrote: the graph teaching in geography education was the direct tool to reveal the geographic regular patterns, foster the geographic space concept of students' and help them form geographic thinking pattern. He also emphasized the artistic quality of maps and demanded the art designers with abundant geography knowledge. These ideas for map making are still of great instruction significance today.

Mr. Zou's book *Pocket Atlas of Provinces of China* made a systematic research to the geographic districts and administrative division of all Chinese provinces and listed the relevant knowledge for each province, such as terrain, politics, history, hydrology and scenic spots. The name marking of South China Sea Islands in this book was one of the important materials to study the change of naming of South China Sea Islands during the Republican Period. Down on the right corner of the 12th page of this book (Map of Guangdong Province) was Map of South China Sea Islands, which marked South China Sea Islands including Dongsha, Xisha, Nansha and Tuansha Islands and the most southwesterly point of Tuansha as the southernmost point of South China Sea Islands. In the below text it described Dongsha and Xisha Islands as abundant in marine products and Xisha abundant in phosphorus and sulfur. The area to the southeast of Tuansha Islands was marked as dangerous zone because super powers interlaced in this area with two neighbors of

Tuansha Islands being British Borneo and United States Palawan Island and French invaded the nine small islands of South China Sea which was still an unsettled dispute at that time. *Pocket Atlas of Provinces of China* was compiled later than other books so the marking names of South China Sea Islands accorded more with the practices



and political situation at that time. Besides, it was more knowledgeable in the contents of human geography.

The 12th page of *Pocket Atlas of Provinces of China* by Zou Xingai, Yaxin Geography Society, the 33rd year of Republic

II. Research of Education Circle on Naming of South China Sea Islands

1. The 36th year of Republic, Jin Qingyu and his *Maps for Teaching Geography of China* published by Yaguang Geography Society

Jin Qingyu (1918-) was born in a downfallen scholar-gentry family in Wujin, Jiangsu Province. His five brothers and other family members got involved in the

map plotting and publishing. Among them, Jin Qingyu and his other two brothers Jin Zhenyu and Jin Weiyu were the best ones and did their job pretty well.

When Mr. Jin Qingyu was 15 years old, he was introduced by his brother Zhenyu to Shanghai Geography Society as a trainee. With his talent and hard work, he soon mastered many skills of map plotting and drawing. Shanghai almost became an isolated city with Anti-Japanese War breaking out and situation changing. In order to help the front troops and people in the rear get maps in time, the three brothers co-founded Yaguang Geography Society in 1938 and set up offices successively in Kunming, Jinhua, Wuhan, Hengyang, Xi'an and Chongqing responsible for the supply of maps. In tune with World Anti-Fascist War and Anti-Japanese War in China, the Society compiled and published *Detail Atlas of World Countries*, *Detail Atlas of Southeast Provinces*, *Detail Atlas of Southwest Provinces*, *Traffic Maps of China-India-Burma*, *Atlas of Second Front in Europe*, etc., under the guidance of Mr. Jin Zhonghua, a well-known expert in the study of international affairs.

It had been 16 years since Yaguang Geography Society was founded till it became a joint state-private organization. During this period, it published many maps of ancient times and contemporary time, China and foreign countries. Some of these maps were made with high standard. Both the contents and the print quality were ranked in the first class in map publishing at that time. In his practices, Mr. Jin Qingyu realized that map study and plotting were closely related to such subjects as history, geography and geology so the communication and cooperation with scholars of these fields were extremely important. Therefore, Mr. Jin got acquainted with such

experts as Gu Jiegang, Ge Suicheng and Zhu Shaotang. Yaguang Map Publishing House employed many map plotting and printing staff. They took some measures to upgrade the way of getting map information and the printing method. They treated their career of map making and printing as an academic research study, which won them a good reputation in this field and high prestige among masses.

After Chinese people won the Anti-Japanese War, new maps were desperately needed by government departments, schools and other readers, so Yaguang compiled and published *Detail Atlas of Provinces of China*, *Detail Atlas of World Countries* and many wall maps of China and World for reference. Several kinds of wall maps for geography teaching in primary and middle schools were published many times but still in short supply, because at that time school education was in great demand of maps consisting with the historic facts. The good reputation and the mature map making system of Yaguang Geography Society helped them undertake this important task. On July, the 36th year of Republic, the 4th edition of *Maps for Teaching Geography of China* was born.

The book *Maps for Teaching Geography of China* was marked “for middle school”, so it was a textbook for middle school students learning geography at that time. There were 46 maps in this book, including astronomical map, world map and climatic map, etc. Nanjing as the capital city was listed the top of all provincial and local maps. As for the names of South China Sea Islands, they were named as Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Islands on the right corner map of South China Sea Islands on page 27 of this book for the map of Guangdong Province, which are exactly the same with the names now. The name for Tuansha Islands was replaced by Zhenghe

Reefs belonging to Nansha Islands. The similar naming method was also used in Yongxing Island (Lin Island), Zhongjian Island (Tulaitang Island) and Taiping Island (Chang Island). Zengmu Reef (James Shoal) as the southernmost point of South China Sea was marked in this book, which was farther south than all maps mentioned above and was clearly in the southwest of British Borneo. The area to the southeast of Nansha Islands was marked as dangerous zone, which was the same with *Pocket Atlas of Provinces of China* and indicated that the situation of South China Sea was still complicated.



The 27th page of *Maps for Teaching Geography of China* by Jin Qingyu, Yaguang Geography Society, the 36th year of Republic

2. The 36th year of Republic, Jin Qingyu and his *Maps for Teaching World Geography* published by Yaguang

Geography Society

Maps for Teaching World Geography was published at the same time with *Maps for Teaching Geography of China*. This book adopted hypsometric maps, which kept close cooperation with the middle school geography textbooks. They were used as the maps for middle school education and very popular among the teachers and students.

This book changed the convention of attaching a corner map of South China Sea Islands to the map of Guangdong Province. On the 30th page, it showed the whole maritime territory of South China Sea with the scale of 1:10000000, which made it the most detailed map of South China Sea Islands at that time. The book used continuous lines to claim the South China Sea territory. The location and name of islands and reefs were marked, including Dongsha, Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha Islands, as well as the alternative name of some islands and the dangerous zone. Yaxi Reef was marked on this map but it was not in the territory claimed by the lines which meant it was not under the control of the government of ROC. Another feature of this book was the hypsometric maps, which used different water layers to distinguish the continental shelf, continental slope and abyssal region.

These two atlas published by Yaguang Geography Society with middle school teachers and students as their target readers reflected the thoughts and opinions of publication and education fields on the naming evolution of South China Sea Islands. According to Mr. Jin Qingyu, the two atlas books and the geography textbooks were complementary with such examples of the latter as *Fuxing Middle School Geography Textbook* published by Commercial Press, *Geography of China for Middle School* by Zhou Lisan, *Geography of China for Senior High*

School by Zhang Qiyun. Since 1936, geography textbooks were revised according to the curriculum standards. In 1942, Ministry of Education established a national textbook organization responsible for editing textbooks with the revision of curriculum standards. The textbooks edited by them were sent to Ministry of Education for approval and then published by the seven national textbook publishing houses with the mark “approved by Ministry of Education”, usually called “National Version”. Although the two atlas books published by Yaguang Geography Society were not “National Version”, the impact of the two books was unprecedented, particularly after the publication of *Detail Atlas of Provinces of China* and *Detail Atlas of World Countries* in 1946. They received a lot of praises from education field and geography field. Therefore, it is appropriate to view the two books as the exploration of education field on the map plotting and naming of South China Sea Islands.

The 30th page of *Maps for Teaching World Geography* by Jin Qingyu, Yaguang Geography Society, the 36th year of Republic

III. The Names of South China Sea Islands defined by Government of ROC

1. On April, the 35th year of Republic, *Pocket Detail Atlas of World* by Jin Qingyu

Pocket Detail Atlas of World, approved by Ministry of the Interior and published by Yaguang Geography Society on April, the 35th year of Republic, reflected the attitude of government of ROC toward the situation of China and World. At that time, “WW II broke out and spread globally, so the territorial maps of countries of world changed greatly”. Mr. Jin Qingyu and his geography and map peers “tried their best to collect materials and gathered the experts up to plan elaborately” in order to edit the precise maps according with the international situation. A series of treaties were signed after the war and a new world order was established. The new changes on the long disputed issues of Outer Mongolia, Taiwan and South China Sea Islands awaited the official declaration.

Pocket Detail Atlas of World answered all these



questions above. The government of ROC acknowledged the independence of Outer Mongolia on January 5th, the 35th year of Republic but the territory was still not

demarcated. Ryukyu Islands were occupied by United States. Taiwan and Penghu Islands were returned to China. In South China Sea, Zengmu Reef was marked out and demarcated as Chinese territory. Besides, the name of Nansha Islands was changed into Tuansha Islands.

The 6th page of *Pocket Detail Atlas of World* by Jin Qingyu, Yaguang Geography Society, the 35th year of Republic

2. On August, the 36th year of Republic, *New Atlas for Teaching Chinese Geography* by Chen Duo and Shi



Zhonghua

Chen Duo (1887-1968), aka Jia Xuan, was born in Huai'an, Jiangsu Province. From 1920s to 1930s he worked in Commercial Press responsible for compiling geography textbooks for primary and middle school and plotting maps. This book, *New Atlas for Teaching Chinese Geography*, was published in the 36th year of Republic and

was an important atlas of great significance at that time.

With the end of World War II, the territorial disputes between China and other countries had finally been settled. These changed border lines had to be reflected in textbooks to set the record straight. Therefore, as the director of geography department in Commercial Press and one of founders of Shanghai Geography Society, Mr. Chen Duo used former maps for reference to compile this book based on his serious reading about the political and diplomatic situation of China. This atlas was approved by Ministry of the Interior (No. 0852). The contents of *New Atlas for Teaching Chinese Geography* were up-to-date and it was approved and published by government, so it was an important academic atlas with great authority.

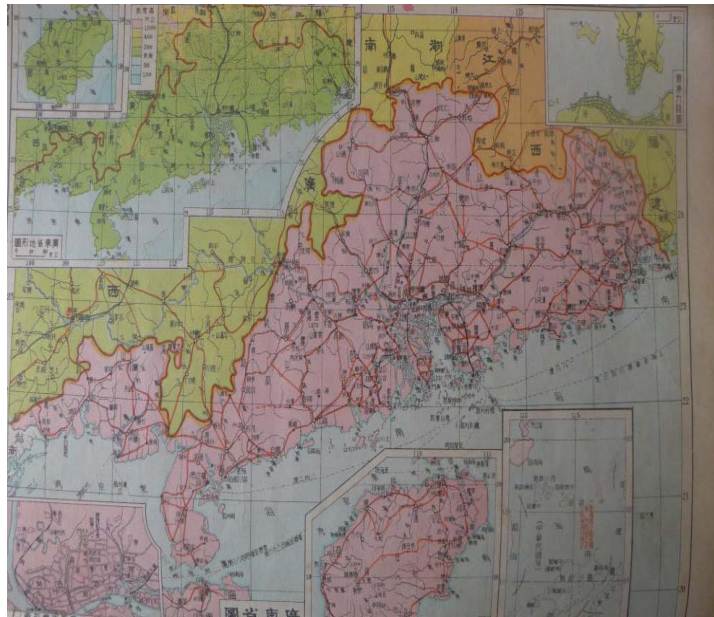
This atlas was compiled for “geography teaching in middle school”, so it tried its best to go into details. The names of South China Sea Islands were approved by Ministry of the Interior with marking “Xisha Islands”, “Zhongsha Islands” and “Nansha Islands”. Nanping Reef, located 4 degrees north latitude, was the border of South China Sea and the southernmost point of “the domain of ROC”. “The names of South China Sea Islands were revised, approved and revised again by Ministry of the Interior.” The maritime territory of South China Sea was marked by the seven-dotted line in this book, which was different from *Atlas of Administrative Districts of ROC* officially published by Ministry of the Interior of ROC one year later. In the latter one, *Map of South China Sea Islands* used eleven-dotted line. It indicated that Ministry of the Interior had no way to mark the maritime territory border line. They adopted the dotted line, a simple geographic stenography, to demarcate Chinese maritime territory. The dotted line was drawn according to the outermost islands so it included all islands avoiding

naming them one by one.

The 20th page of *New Atlas for Teaching Chinese Geography* by Chen Duo and Shi Zhonghua, Commercial Press, the 36th year of Republic

3. On March, the 37th year of Republic, *New Pocket Atlas of Chinese Provinces* by Zhang Qiwen

In the 37th year of Republic, *New Pocket Atlas of Chinese Provinces* was approved by Ministry of the Interior with “certificate for publishing maps” so it was also an official map to some degree. In 1948, *Atlas of*



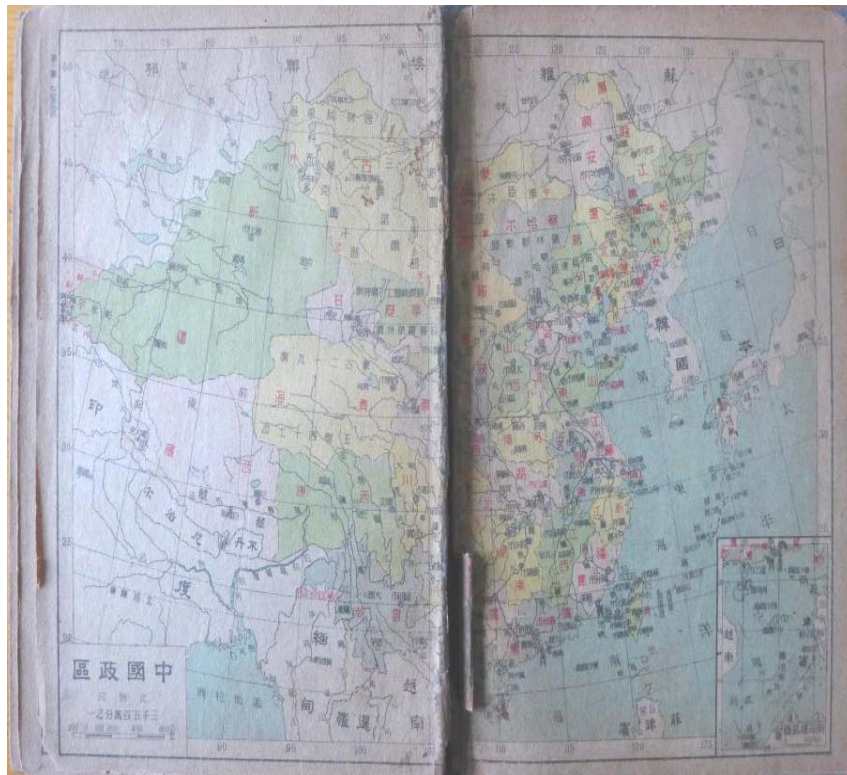
Administrative Districts of ROC and its attached *Map of South China Sea* edited by Fu Jiaojin and Wang Xiguang were officially published by Ministry of the Interior. These two maps adopted eleven-dotted line to demarcate Chinese maritime territory. It was the first time that South

China Sea eleven-dotted line was announced to the world in the name of government. Therefore, Mr. Zhang Qiwen adopted the same marking method with government in his book *New Pocket Atlas of Chinese Provinces*, which was only different from the above-mentioned maps in some details.

The eleventh map of the atlas was the map of Guangdong Province, attached to which was the map of South China Sea. The area of South China Sea was marked as “the domain of ROC” and “South China Sea”. All the islands on South China Sea were officially marked as “Dongsha Islands”, “Xisha Islands”, “Zhongsha Islands” and “Nansha Islands”. Nansha Islands were still marked as “dangerous zone” and the maritime territory of South China Sea was also marked with eleven-dotted line, which adopted the same drawing method as Ministry of the Interior.

The eleven-dotted line, first announced in the name of government by Ministry of the Interior, and the publicly-published maps approved by government declared that South China Sea Islands enclosed with the dotted line were Chinese maritime territory, which was an important historic evidence of defining Chinese maritime territory. According to the recall of Wang Xiguang and Ju Jiwu, a plotter, the boundary line was drawn in the middle of Chinese islands and the islands of neighboring countries, so the distance between the line and Chinese islands and the one between the line and the islands of neighboring countries were the same. This dotted line was acknowledged as the highest level “national boundary line” (the same with the border line drawing method used by continental countries) in the authoritative papers officially published by government in 1947, because using the dotted line to mark the boundary of maritime territory,

rivers or lakes was the international convention and the common practice of cartography.



The 11th page of *New Pocket Atlas of Chinese Provinces* by Zhang Qiwen, Shanghai Continent Geography Society, the 37th year of Republic

In 1949, maps published by People's Republic of China basically followed the way practiced by the dotted line of 1948. Since 1949, all maps of China published publicly adopted eleven-dotted line. In 1953, according to the national regulations, two lines in Beibu Gulf were deleted so it became nine-dotted line till now.



Map of South China Sea Islands and nine-dotted line
The 7th page of *Collected Historical Literature of South China Sea Islands* by Han Zhenghua, Lin Jinzhi and Wu Fengbin, Orient Press, 1988.

IV. Conclusion

Republic of China was a historic period in which China went through the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society and became a democratic republic. During this period, ocean consciousness grew mature in China. The administrative jurisdiction in Han Dynasty, the commerce

and trade in Tang and Song Dynasties, the maritime embargo policy in Qing Dynasty and the total awakening of ocean consciousness in Republic period demonstrated a long way that China had gone through. All the cases of atlas above clearly told us that the naming of South China Sea Islands had a historic development track. The names of South China Sea Islands were different in each period, but Chinese people never stopped exercising sovereignty on South China Sea Islands to administer and construct.

During Song, Ming and Qing Dynasties, South China Sea had already been the patrol area of Chinese navy. Ancient Chinese people had left us a historical record named *Geng Lu Bu*, in which the history of utilizing and developing the islands and waters on South China Sea had been recorded. However, only writing the sovereignty in the stone was clearly not enough. The voluntary development activities from nongovernmental individuals and organizations were also supporting evidence indicating that South China Sea was Chinese maritime territory. Therefore, map plotters discovered and declared the evidence of China's sovereignty over South China Sea from many different perspectives. The map plotters of Republican period provided more evidence for the later generations in solving the disputes of South China Sea. The eleven-dotted line was part of foundation for the sovereignty claims on South China Sea of People's Republic of China. Besides, the names for "Dongsha Islands", "Xisha Islands", "Zhongsha Islands", "Nansha Islands" and many other islands and reefs had been confirmed, which laid the contextual foundation for the development of the marine industry of new China.

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