Origins of the ‘U-shaped-line’

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China’s southernmost point...
Continental shelf?

- James Shoal
‘Since ancient times’

- “The Nansha Islands have become an inalienable part of Chinese territory since ancient times.”
  
  *Historical Evidence To Support China's Sovereignty over Nansha Islands* MoFA, Beijing 17 November 2000

- How ancient?
No islands included in 1897...
‘Century of national humiliation’
Timeline

- 1840  First ‘opium war’
- 1894-5  Japan seizes Korea & Taiwan
- 1901  International suppression of ‘Boxer rebellion’
- 1907-9  Occupation of Pratas by Nishizawa Yoshiji
- 1911/12  Overthrow of Qing Empire
- 1912  Republican government prints first map
- 1914  ‘New Geographical Atlas’ published
- 1915  Japan’s “Twenty-one Demands” – May 7-9
- 1916  ‘National humiliation day’ marked for first time
The trigger...

- October 1907 (?)  Nishizawa Yoshiji lands on Pratas
- May 1909  Governor of Guangdong sends boat to Paracels*
- October 1909  Viceroy of Canton & Japanese Consul agree deal to buy out Nishizawa
- 1909  New map of Guangdong published showing Paracels for the first time
Paracels ‘mapped’ in 1909...
1912 First map of Republic of China

- Published in founding *Almanac of RoC*
- No borders marked
- “The sovereign territory of the Republic of China continues to be the same as the *domain* of the former Empire”
- “Originally our vassal”
- From William Callahan *China: the pessoptimist nation* OUP 2010
Lines in the sea

- 1914
  A private cartographer, Hu Jinjie publishes ‘New Geographical Atlas of the Republic of China’. This is the first map to show a line across the SCS. (Zou Keyuan)

- Hu entitled the map the ‘Chinese territorial map before the Qianglong-Jiaqing period’ [AD 1736-1820].

- Only islands inside the line were Pratas and the Paracels. It went no further south than 15° N.
1916 Map of National Humiliation
1927 Map of National Humiliation

- More ‘lost territory than 1916!
- Current territory
- “Old National Boundary”
- Sulu islands

From William Callahan *China: the pessoptimist nation* OUP 2010
Timeline

- 1930 (Jan) Inspection Regulations of Land and Water Maps (Shuilu ditu shencha tiaoli) announced
- 1930 (April) French ‘occupy’ several islands in Spratlys
- 1933 (April) France annexes the islands
- 1933 (June) RoC establishes ‘Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee’
- 1933 (July) Annexation publicised in Chinese media
  Chinese diplomats tasked to find out about islands
- 1933 (Aug) Maps of islands reach Nanking from Manila
- 1933 (Sep) RoC Military Council meeting agrees not to press claim to Spratlys
- 1935 (Jan) Maps Inspection Committee publishes ‘Chinese’ names for 132 islands and islets in SCS
- 1935 (April) Committee publishes ‘The Map of Chinese Islands in the South China Sea’ including all the features to 4° N – the location of James Shoal.
Chinese’ names

- Mis-translation of ‘shoal’ as 滩 - James Shoal becomes ‘Zengmu Tan’ – a land feature!

- Names evolve in 1947 and again in 1983
In the new map of China published in 1935 (Map 5), Scarborough Shoal, called Si ge ba luo (phonetic for Scarborough island), was part of a group called Nansha [southern sand] comprising also Macclesfield Bank, Druro Bank, and other submerged features. The Spratly Islands claimed by France were called Tuansha [chao tic sand]. It should be noted that some Chinese researchers discovered in 1977 some sketches, made by a fisherman from Hainan in 1935, showing the fishing grounds of the South China Sea. This sketch was made into a map. As can be seen on this map (Annex 1, Map 8), Scarborough Shoal does not appear; only the Paracels, Macclesfield Bank, and the Spratly Islands are marked. In 1947 the name Nansha was given to the Spratly Islands, and Macclesfield Bank, etc., were named Zhongsha [middle sands].

Thus, before the Second World War, in the context of Japanese expansion, the Philippines and China made parallel claims to Scarborough Shoal, each without knowing that the other was doing the same. Both claims were unofficial in the sense that there was no notice to the whole world, to avoid attracting the attention of the Japanese. Nevertheless, in the case of the Philippines, the State Department had more specific information about Scarborough Shoal than the Chinese had. For the Chinese government, Scarborough Shoal was simply one small feature among all the South China Sea islands and reefs. They had no information about this shoal but were expecting that in the future their researchers would find some evidence of Chinese ownership. In conclusion, the Chinese claim was as recent or as old as the one of the Philippines.
Bai Meichu – father of the line

- One of the founders of the China Geographical Society
- “Loving the nation is the top priority in learning geography, while building the nation is what learning geography is for”
- 1930 draws his own version of the ‘Chinese National Humiliation Map’
- 1936 publishes his ‘New China Construction Atlas’ including a U-shaped line snaking around the South China Sea as far south as James Shoal.
1930 Map by Bai Meichu
Bai Meichu’s line?
Bai’s line adopted by others

- *New map of the provinces of China* by Tu Sicong and Wang Zhen Bian Zuan, Chongqing published in 1939

- China’s national territory

- Bai’s line
1946 RoC Navy map

- “Drawn by Naval Command Headquarters Third Office Marine Department”
- Probably intended to guide the 1946 ‘reclaiming’ expedition to the Spratlys and Paracels.
- Shows an 8-dash-line
- First state-produced map to show the U-shaped-line?
1946 RoC Taiping Landing Party
1948 RoC 11-dash-line map

- ‘Location Map of the South China Sea Islands’
- Drawn in December 1947
- Formally published by RoC Ministry of Internal Affairs in February 1948 as an adjunct to its new ‘Administrative Division Map of the Republic of China’
- No official explanation of the meaning of the line
- Cartographer Wang Xiguang reported to have said that the dashes simply indicated the median line between China’s territory – ie each claimed island – and that of its neighbours
Conclusions

- U-shaped-line emerged haphazardly from 1914 onwards
- Chinese historians misunderstood nature of ‘tribute system’
- Confusion over the nature of borders in the transition from empire to republic
- Map-making conventions emerged in private sector and moved into state sector
- More research is needed...
Further research

- Cartographers’ understandings of the ‘tribute system’

- How and when ideas about territory and cartography moved from private individuals to state policy

- Original documents of RoC Land and Water Maps Inspection Committee (from 1929-Jul-11th to 1940-Mar-21st) can be viewed online (http://dft.drnh.gov.tw/textdb/drnhBrowse/)