

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN MAPS STATE THAT THE SENKAKUS
ARE "JAPANESE TERRITORY"**

Historical documents refute China's claim of ownership of the Senkaku Islands prior to the
First Sino-Japanese War
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British and German maps produced in the second half of the nineteenth century include the Senkaku Islands (part of Ishigaki in Okinawa Prefecture) as Japanese territory--Japan's national border lines west of Kuba Island (of the Senkaku Islands). These newly discovered historical sources date from before the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), demolishing China's claim that Japan had stolen the Senkakus from China during that war.



From the Handatlas published in 1868 (some of the names of the islands are different from their current names). By the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868), the Senkaku Islands were already internationally recognized by Great Britain and Germany as being Japanese territory.

The maps were found and examined by Ishii Nozomu, associate professor at Nagasaki Junshin Catholic University and a specialist in the history of the Senkaku Islands. The two maps are the London Atlas, published in 1887 in Great Britain by Stanford, the world's largest map shop in the nineteenth century, and the Handatlas, published in 1868.

When Professor Ishii found the 1887 edition of the London Atlas in July of last year among documents digitized by the National Library of Australia, he checked to see which nation the map would indicate as being the owner of the territory around the Senkaku Islands.

He observed that a dotted line was drawn to the west of Kuba Island, which the map referred to as "Hoapin-su". The London Atlas was not an exception. Over the next year, Professor Ishii compared the London Atlas with other sources, and it became clear that the dotted lines denoted land and sea territorial boundaries and that the map recognized Kuba Island as Japanese territory.

The 1868 Handatlas also drew a line to the west of Kuba Island. The Senkaku Islands are given the same color as Okinawa (prior to Japan's annexation of it and the other Ryukyu Islands in 1879), labelling them as "Japanese territory". This map is in the Tokyo University General Library.

What is the significance of these maps, which clearly show the Senkaku Islands as belonging to Japan even before the cabinet of the Japanese government declared the Senkaku Islands to be "terra nullius" ("nobody's land"), fit for occupation under international law?

From the year 1885, the Japanese government spent a decade cautiously confirming that the power of no nation, including China's Qing Dynasty, extended to the Senkaku Islands. In January of 1895, during the First Sino-Japanese War, the Japanese cabinet finally decided to incorporate the Senkaku Islands into Okinawa Prefecture.

Nonetheless, China has asserted, in the words of Hong Lei, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, that the Diaoyu Islands (the Chinese name for the Senkaku Islands) "are a part of Taiwan Province that were seized from China during Japan's invasion of Taiwan." In other words, China argues that the Senkaku Islands belonged to Taiwan, which was controlled by Qing China, until they were ceded to Japan along with Taiwan upon the conclusion of the peace treaty that ended the war (the Treaty of Shimonoseki) on April 17, 1895.

However, the maps discovered by Professor Ishii not show only that the Senkaku Islands were not controlled by China in the decades prior to the First Sino-Japanese War, but in fact were long acknowledged by the great powers of Europe as Japanese territory in spite of the decision ultimately reached by the Japanese cabinet. The maps appear to contradict the arguments made by the Chinese.

The map published in Great Britain by Stanford that deemed the Senkaku Islands to be Japanese territory seems to have been based on surveys conducted by the British Navy utilizing contacts within each country and its cutting-edge navigational technology.

At that time, the area around the Senkaku Islands was part of a sea route linking the British territories of Hong Kong and Port Hamilton, located off the coast of southern Korea. Therefore, it was a highly important avenue of navigation for the British Navy.

According to Professor Ishii, "To ensure the safety of their ships, it was essential for the British to know which country held ownership of the islands in the surrounding ocean. Mapmakers probably created their maps using the latest information from newspapers of the region. At the very least, the maps do seem to prove that the international community recognized Japan's right to control the Senkakus."

Among specialists in world maps, Stanford produced maps in the heart of Great Britain, a maritime empire, and for this reason, its maps are believed to reflect contemporary territorial relationships more accurately than any others.

Concerning the reason why world maps by such nineteenth century luminaries such as Stanford and Stieler had never been examined until now, Kuniyoshi Makomo of the Senkaku Islands Documentary Material Compilation Association stated, "Digitization of documents held by universities and libraries has only just begun in the last few years. Furthermore, few researchers are studying the dispute over the Senkaku Islands. As research progresses, I expect that many new discoveries like these will continue to be made." (Kyushu Bureau – Okuhara Shinpei)

Glossary:

Terra nullius ("nobody's land") – Land not owned by any other nation that may be legally occupied under international law by the first country to claim it and incorporate it into its territory.

