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Mapping maritime power and control: a study of the late eighteenth century Qisheng yanhai tu (a coastal map of the seven provinces)

**Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)**

Original citation:

Po, Ronald C. (2016) *Mapping maritime power and control: a study of the late eighteenth century Qisheng yanhai tu (a coastal map of the seven provinces)*. [Late Imperial China](#), 37 (2). pp. 93-136. ISSN 0884-3236

DOI: [10.1353/late.2016.0012](https://doi.org/10.1353/late.2016.0012)

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This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/68820/>

Available in LSE Research Online: January 2017

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**MAPPING MARITIME POWER AND CONTROL:
A STUDY OF THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY *QISHENG YANHAI TU*
(A COASTAL MAP OF THE SEVEN PROVINCES)**

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Abstract

This article surveys a Chinese coastal map (*haitu*), similar to the sea charts used in the west. The map was produced in the late eighteenth century under the official supervision of the Qing court. Titled *Qisheng yanhai tu* (A coastal map of the seven provinces), this was one of very few maps made before the First Opium War that charted the contours of coastal regions and the immediate sea space under the control of the Qing Empire. It is also notable for the detailed paratextual information printed on the map touching upon various issues, such as the importance of coastal defense, the significance of the Bohai Sea, the dividing logic between inner and outer sea spaces, as well as the topographies of strategic islands off the China coast. In line with cartographic depictions, these paratextual materials indicate the way that the Manchu Empire conceptualized the maritime frontier in a deliberate and preventive manner. Through careful analysis of this coastal map, we can reexamine the overriding, conventional conception of the Qing Empire as strictly a land-based, continental power that cared little about the ocean before the arrival of western gunboats in the mid-nineteenth century

Introduction

The term “sea power” usually conjures images of western sea power – past and present.¹ Yet, in the eighteenth century, the Qing Empire also projected state power over the oceans off China’s coast. The fact that the Qing was founded and administered by the Jurchen peoples of northeast Asia, who were renowned for their land-based military campaigns, does not necessarily mean that they failed to exert their influence along the maritime frontier (*haijiang*) extending beyond continental China.² With the annexation of Taiwan by the Kangxi emperor in 1683, the Qing gained control of the maritime frontier stretching from the Bohai Sea to the

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the AAS-in-Asia Conference held in Taipei (June 22-24, 2015). The author is grateful to Helen Siu, Loretta Kim, Timothy Brook, and participants in the conference. This article also owes a great debt to Tobie Meyer-Fong and her team of anonymous reviewers, whose insights and suggestions were crucial to its gestation.

¹ See, for instance, the introductions of E.B. Potter, *Sea Power: A Naval History*; Wallinga, *Ships and Sea-Power Before the Great Persian War*; Stevens, *History of Sea Power*; and Cuyvers, *Sea Power: A Global Journey*.

² . See for instance, Zheng Yangwen, *China on the Sea*; Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean*; and Wang Wensheng, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*.

Guangdong coast. Throughout the long eighteenth century (1683-1839), the Qing exercised sovereignty over the sea by deploying a navy,³ establishing a maritime customs system,⁴ and facilitating a series of mapping and information-gathering initiatives.⁵ This paper will focus on one of these very significant developments: the charting of the Qing naval frontier in a coastal map (*haitu*), entitled *The Coastal Map of the Seven Provinces* (*Qisheng yanhai tu*; hereafter the *yanhaitu*).⁶ The *yanhaitu* is one of the few pictorial maps that depicted the contours of the coastal regions and the immediate sea space under the control of the Qing Empire before the First Opium War (1839-42). It includes detailed paratextual information that touches upon various issues, such as the importance of coastal defense, the significance of the Bohai Sea (a maritime territory that has long been overlooked by eighteenth-century historians), the logic defining inner and outer sea spaces, as well as the topographies of strategic islands off the China coast. These paratextual details provide evidence of the deliberate manner in which the Qing court conceptualized the maritime frontier. Careful analysis of this map challenges the conventional concept of the Qing Empire as a singularly land-based power that cared little about the ocean before the arrival of western imperialism. It may also help us reexamine the assumption that the Qing did not recognize the importance of the maritime world until the mid-nineteenth century.⁷ This paper does not argue for equivalency between Qing and European engagement with the sea, but rather seeks to show that the Qing dynasty was more involved in maritime management than has previously been acknowledged.

Territoriality and Cartography

In 2000, Charles Maier's conceptualization of territoriality "reconfigured the periodization of modern world history."⁸ He noted that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, new dynasties or "more cohesively organized territorial states" began to "fortif[y] their frontiers and redefin[e] sovereignty to give themselves unrestricted authority within their own domains."⁹ For Maier, the early modern period comprised "the great epoch of enclosure: enclosure of common lands within the villages of Britain and Western Europe, enclosure of state borders."¹⁰ In order to secure their territorial and social boundaries, states had to fight against

³ See for instance, Wang Hongbin, *Qingdai qianqi haifang*, and Li Qilin, *Qingdai qianqi yanhai de shuishi yu zhanchan*.

⁴ Chen Kuo-tung, *Qingdai qianqi de Yue haiguan yu shisanhang*; Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean*, 116-36; Huang Guosheng, *Yapian zhanzheng qian de dongnan sisheng haiguan*; Zhang Bincun, "Ming Qing liangchao de haiwai maoyi zhengce."

⁵ Compared to other topics such as naval development and customs management, the mapping projects of the maritime frontier in the High Qing have not been studied thoroughly. For surveys and introduction to a developing literature related to maritime China and East Asia from the 1500 to 1800, see Wills, "Interactive Early Modern Asia."

⁶ This map consists of five sheets and is meant to be spread out from right to left, followed by four submaps entitled "Qiongzhou tu" (Map of Qiongzhou), "Penghu tu" (Map of the Pescadores), "Taiwan tu" (Map of Taiwan), and "Taiwan houshan tu" (Map of Taiwan behind the mountain).

⁷ Wills, *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800*, 17.

⁸ Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 409.

⁹ Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History," 808.

¹⁰ Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History," 808.

external incursion and invasion. Maier rightly points out that this process was not limited to Western Europe. China, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire also developed more precise definitions of the space under the state's control at that time. For instance, by signing the Nerchinsk and Kiakhta Treaties with the Qing in 1689 and 1727, respectively, Russia defined its borders in the east, fixing what is now the border of Mongolia west of the Argun River and opening up the caravan trade. After eliminating the Zunghar Empire in the early eighteenth century, the Qing also reconfigured the boundary of its northwestern frontier.¹¹ Maier's concept of territoriality, although principally based on land, enables us to periodize developments in the early modern period in Asia as well as Europe. Taking China as an example, through mapping, information-gathering, and history-writing projects during the long eighteenth century, Qing rulers and scholars strove to project the all-encompassing gaze of the empire onto the maritime world. They also worked to define maritime territories by setting up administrative boundaries on the sea so that bureaucrats could carry out maritime affairs (*haiyang zhishi*) using direct, uniform rules. Two Chinese terms that recur frequently in Qing imperial edicts and official documents, *jinghai* and *dinghai*, characterize the imperial ideology toward maritime affairs. The term *hai* refers to the ocean, while the characters *jing* and *ding* mean to level, pacify, and bring under control. Sometimes these terms also imply making things permanent and fixing them in place, as well as consoling and subjugating. For example, the renowned admiral Shi Lang (1621-96), who led the Qing naval conquest of Taiwan, was bestowed the title "*Jinghai hou*" (the duke who pacified the ocean).

Examining the cartography used in mapping the maritime frontier is one of the best ways to understand how the frontier was perceived under the empire's ideology of territoriality. Maps are instruments of military, fiscal, and commercial power that define strategic locations and efficient routes for military movement. They also fix territory in space and show trade routes.¹² In facilitating a series of mapping projects, the monarchs of great powers in early modern times strived to consolidate their rules within their domains. They simultaneously worked toward establishing boundaries when "sovereignty was gradually becoming increasingly tied to territorial integrity."¹³ Cartography, therefore, had a significant role in the creation and extension of empires in the early modern period, including the Qing. From the Kangxi to the Qianlong reigns, the Qing court took the initiative in sponsoring the development of the best scientific survey and mapping technology available, while simultaneously continuing to promote indigenous cartographic conventions.¹⁴ As Joanna Waley-Cohen and Theodore Foss have persuasively pointed out, the Kangxi emperor was "well aware of the use and value of cartographic accuracy [and] was not simply a passive player unwittingly allowing outsiders access to information about his realm."¹⁵ In a similar vein, the Qianlong emperor was also obsessed with large-scale mapping projects. He seems to have viewed the practice of mapping as

¹¹ See Kessler, *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule*, 97-103; Mancall, *Russia and China*, chaps. 2-5.

¹² As succinctly argued by Benedict Anderson, "the development of cartography paralleled the growth of national consciousness and an era of exploration abroad." See his *Imagined Communities*, chap. 10, "Census, Map, and Museum." See also Buisseret, ed., *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps*, chap. 5, "Space."

¹³ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 74.

¹⁴ Mark Elliott also argues that cartographic projects in the Qing were important because they enabled the representation of a space that the Manchus could claim as their own, thereby sustaining the idea of superior Manchu power. See Elliott, "The Limits of Tartary."

¹⁵ Cohen and Foss's argument is quoted from a footnote in Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 4fn9.

a means to legitimate Manchu rule and glorify his empire.¹⁶ One of the most striking examples of this is a series of sixteen prints by highly skilled French engravers. These prints, like the maps of the “Jesuit Atlas” (*Huangyu quanlan tu*),¹⁷ combined Chinese and western cartographic traditions in projects sponsored by the Qing court so as to project imperial might.¹⁸

In addition to maps produced in the Beijing imperial court, other notable mapping projects were also initiated by motivated officials inspired to undertake projects in historical cartography.¹⁹ Provincial officials, in particular, even promoted such mapping to produce “a total view of the empire” (*quanlan*) for different purposes, e.g. showcasing the empire’s prosperity or providing a more detailed picture of frontier regions to the government. Unlike private maps of western and northern Europe (such as Niels Darre’s map of Norway) that were produced wholly independently of government influence, most of the maps produced by Qing provincial officials were generated under imperial supervision and aimed at serving the imperial court.²⁰ As Richard J. Smith points out, “map making was closely connected with both the officials and the throne, who tried to control the production and circulation of maps, in late imperial China.”²¹ These “provincial cartographers” worked as ordinary civil servants in their mapping projects for Qing monarchs and the imperial government. Thus, maps produced in provinces (which should rightly be called “provincial maps”) served the same goal and agenda of consolidating the empire’s sovereignty and its “territorial identity” as those produced in Beijing. Even though these provincial maps were not printed inside the Forbidden City, they were considered official and were part of the empire building project of the Qing.

Recent studies of the cultural history of cartography have pointed out that geographic knowledge is inextricable tied to the political environment.²² In the words of Jeremy Black, “there is no sharp distinction between cultural and scientific styles of representation.”²³ In other words, cartography did not simply evolve toward exactness, but responded to changing cultural conditions. In eighteenth century China, the cultural environment was very much dominated by Han Chinese culture, despite the ongoing flow of geographic and topographic knowledge between Europe and Asia. The effectiveness of the Qing court and the literati in promoting the might of the empire through cartography depended on its ability to communicate its claims across the country in the language of indigenous maps, which the majority of educated Chinese

¹⁶ Millward, “Coming onto the Map.”

¹⁷ The Jesuit Atlas has been called “the Kangxi Atlas” and the “Kangxi Jesuit Atlas.” These expressions reflect the debate among historians as to whether this achievement was a Chinese or a European product. See Cordell D.K. Yee, “Traditional Chinese Cartography and the Myth of Westernization,” 184-85; Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, reprinted 1995), vol. 3, 590. For a classic study on the Atlas, see also Fuchs, *Der Jesuiten-Atlas der Kanghsi-Zeit*.

¹⁸ Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 3, 585-86.

¹⁹ Cordell D.K. Yee, “Chinese Maps in Political Culture,” 91-92.

²⁰ Pettersen, “The First Privately Produced Map in Norway with a Geodetic Reference Frame”; Zögner, *China cartographica*.

²¹ Smith, “Mapping China’s World,” 58.

²² See for instance, Jacob, “Towards a Cultural History of Cartography,” and Kagan and Schmidt, “Maps and the Early Modern State,” 661-63.

²³ Jeremy Black, *Maps and History*, 96.

had come to understand and respect. Consequently, the Qing court continued to build on the long tradition of indigenous Chinese mapping that dated back to the Han Dynasty.²⁴

The Qing court launched a series of mapping projects featuring its maritime frontier. The size and extent of maritime frontiers that were recognized as having political or military value in China fluctuated during the Qing. Moreover, the maritime space claimed by the Qing court did not have an exact boundary. Instead, time and space were the foundation of Qing justifications for sovereignty over its maritime frontier. On the one hand, a long history of shared culture served as the basis for common bonds and a sense of belonging among the coastal population. This historical connection provided the empire with a form of authority that can be derived only from associations with the past. On the other hand, during the Qing, sovereignty required a degree of maritime militarization. Deploying warships to patrol sea zones on a regular basis provided the Qing court with the legitimacy to police the region and to spread its imperial might over the ocean. The limit of navy patrols, in some cases, also served as an indicator of the extent of imperial rule, or the outer boundary of the empire. The annexation of islands off China's coast likewise displayed the state's power to legitimate its sovereignty on the sea. The *Qisheng yanhai tu* provides an excellent example of Qing scholar-officials graphically imposing their conceptualization of empire on the maritime landscape so as to serve the grand strategic vision of the Qing state toward the ocean.

In a discussion of Qing cartography in the early modern period, Laura Hostetler argues that too often we look at the Qing from the perspective of the circumstances and events of the nineteenth century.²⁵ Historicizing Qing ethnographic and cartographic initiatives in the eighteenth century, Hostetler transcends the assumptions that have obscured our view to conceptualize the Qing Dynasty as an independent entity with its own history and momentum. The premise of her work is that we need to get away from arguments based on assumptions about the superiority of the west over the east in terms of political and cartographic visions. In particular, she argues that the Qing did not only participate in the development of cartography but also helped shape the new emphasis on empirical scientific knowledge that was unique and distinctive at the time.²⁶ We can profit from approaching the *yanhaitu* in the same critical spirit in order to analyze the way the Qing interacted with the maritime frontier according to its distinctive logic and policies. Only then can we realize how the Qing helped to shape the East Asian maritime landscape and the global history of sea power in the early modern era.

The Coastal Map

Between the 1780s and 1880s, local officials produced several editions of the *Qisheng yanhai tu*. My goal here is not to give an exhaustive account of these various editions, but to illustrate how the *yanhaitu* conveyed the imperial project of the Qing. The various extant versions of the *yanhaitu* contain few significant differences. For the purposes of this paper, I am essentially relying on three versions: the 1780s, 1866, and 1881 editions, kept in the National

²⁴ See Cordell D. K. Yee, "Traditional Chinese Cartography and the Myth of Westernization."

²⁵ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 26.

²⁶ Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 25-32.

Library in Beijing, the Library of Congress in Washington, and the Academia Sinica in Taipei, respectively.²⁷ Furthermore, judging from the style and textual information in the *yanhaitu*, it derives its basic features from a map entitled *A Completed Map of the Coast (Yanhai quantu)*, which is attached to *Things Heard and Seen from Foreign Countries (Haiguo wenjianlu)* authored by Chen Lunjiong (?-1751). Yet the *yanhaitu* was more thorough and accurate in terms of the location of and distance between islands, reefs, and sandbars. Furthermore, compared to the *Yanhai quantu*, the *yanhaitu* provides more strategic and navigational details about harbors, cities, and islands through both graphic and paratextual information (see Figures 1 & 2).²⁸

²⁷ The different versions of the *yanhaitu* are printed on scrolls (ca. 32 x 894 cm). While the 1780s version is printed in color (mainly red, myrtle green, and yellow), the other two editions are printed in black and white. Considered a material artifact, the artistic value of the *yanhaitu* is highly regarded. In the first place, the map remains in its outstanding quality: the coastline and those port cities are sharply delineated and clearly identified. In the second place, the paratexts on the map are beautifully written and readily readable, not to mention that a number of landmarks, including the Great Wall, the Sea Mountain Pass, as well as the batteries and towers along the coast, are exquisitely featured. If we agree with Jeremy W. Crampton that maps should be studied according to a “tripartite classification system” – the map as (1) artifact, (2) image, and (3) vehicle – the artistic and cultural value of the *yanhaitu* certainly deserves our attention. For Crampton’s theory, see his *The Political Mapping of Cyberspace*, 185.

²⁸ Unless stated otherwise, all maps used in this article are retrieved from the Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress.

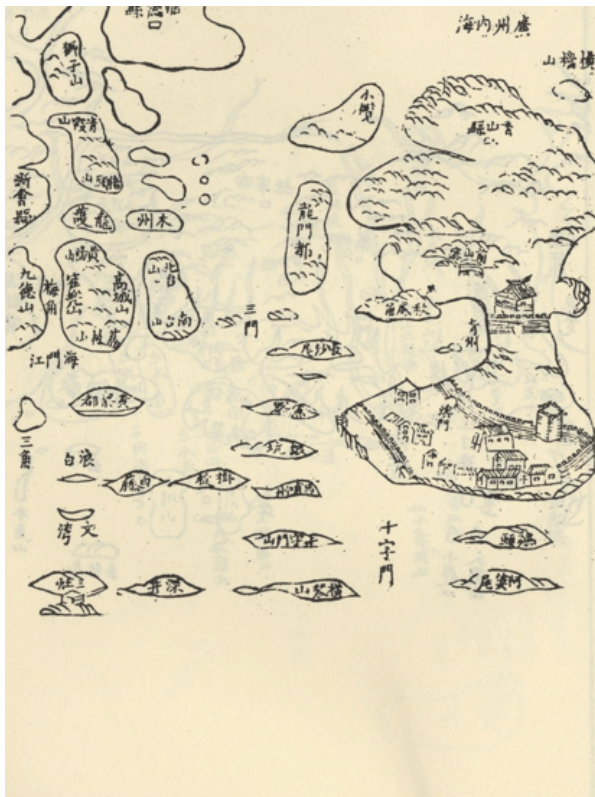


Fig. 1 Part of the Guangdong sea space (*Yanhai quantu*, 1730 edition)



Fig. 2 Part of the Guangdong sea space (*Yanhaitu*, 1780s edition)

Unlike other maritime maps produced in the Ming-Qing period, such as the *Topographic Map of Maritime Defense* (*Wanli haifang tu*), the *Complete Topographic Map of Maritime Defense of the United Empire* (*Qiankun yitong haifang quantu*), and the coastal maps collected in the *Siku quanshu* (see Figure 3), the *yanhaitu* depicted the maritime frontier horizontally, placing the land mass of coastal China in the upper half of the map and the vast body of water in the lower half. In this sense, the map renders the eastern side of China and the western side of the East Asian Sea in a landscape orientation (see Figure 4).²⁹ The 1780s version of the *yanhaitu*

²⁹ Timothy Brook skillfully pointed out how looking at the *yanhaitu* was like “viewing the coast from the sea,” while in other maritime maps such as those produced in the Ming dynasty, it was like “looking at the sea from the coast.” Brook made this comment at a panel entitled “Frontiers in Late Imperial and Modern Asia: From Inner Mongolia to the East Asian Sea” at the AAS in Asia Conference (Taipei; June, 2015) (cited with permission). In fact, one of the very few exceptions that demonstrates the similar spirit of “viewing the coast from the sea” would be the Selden Map produced in the first half of the seventeenth century. As Brook argues, “the man who designed the map came up with an ingenious method for picturing the world by working from the sea and not from the land.” See Timothy Brook, *Mr. Selden’s Map of China*, 175. See also his forthcoming article, “Charting Maritime Asia,” in David Ludden (ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, 12 (cited with permission).

includes the following anonymous introduction describing the importance and significance of maritime governance:

Maritime defense is totally different from river defense. Even though we can construct watchtowers and fortresses along the coast as we build them along the rivers, the method (*dao*) of maritime governance is not the same as river management. In the past, we have books like *The Complete Records of Maritime Defense* (*Haifang tongzhi*) and the *Illustrated Collection of Maritime Management* (*Chouhai tubian*), but these books were more or less about the strategies for suppressing pirates. These books were also not up-to-date because the contemporary situation has changed dramatically. We are now living in a great empire with less violence and proper order. Our maritime frontier is risk-free. We not only have techniques to overcome flooding along the coast and rivers, we also set up a series of maritime policies to attract foreign traders to come visit our empire. These foreign merchants traded exotic goods, luxury products, and seafood from all over the world with us. There is no doubt that our coastal population has benefited considerably from this sea trade. However, we have to be aware of our elongated coastline from the north to south. There are numerous islands scattered along the coast. These are favorable places for pirates and other potential dangers. As a result, we cannot ignore our maritime frontier. Instead, we have to patrol the area cautiously and deliberately. But before we set up a scheme for naval patrolling, we must first evaluate coastal conditions. Even though it is true that the officials of each county are able to evaluate coastal conditions in the province by referencing the respective gazetteers, the information recorded in the gazetteers is not comprehensive enough for a thorough overview of the entire maritime frontier of our empire. As far as I know, there is a comprehensive coastal map preserved in Beijing, but officials in other provinces rarely have the opportunity to examine it. This maritime map [the *yanhaitu*] was produced using books and maps produced in the past, as well as a series of local surveys. Having this map in hand enables one to better understand the overall situation of our great maritime frontier.³⁰

This introduction clearly indicates that the *yanhaitu* mapmaker was targeting a broader audience, mainly non-capital officials in different provinces. Even though the primary purpose of this *yanhaitu* is not clearly indicated, the introduction suggests that it was produced for the imperial court and the scholar-official community. This map aims not only to suggest defense against pirates and managing coastal issues, but to encourage officials to better evaluate the coastal conditions of the empire. If the Jesuit Atlas was a geographical overview (*quanlan*) depicting the territory of the realm,³¹ the *yanhaitu* was both a visual representation and cartographic diagram that allowed a select group of people to grasp the empire's maritime frontier as accurately as

³⁰ This passage is printed on the front sheet of the *yanhaitu*.

³¹ Geoffrey C. Gunn, *First Globalization*, 126; Fuchs, "Materialen zur Kartographie der Mandju-Zeit"; Perdue, *China Marches West*, 449. See also Jami, "The Jesuits' Negotiation of Science between France and China (1685-1722)," 70.

possible. Furthermore, the 1866 edition of the *yanhaitu* includes a preface written in 1842 by Shao Tinglie, a native of Jiangsu. Shao mentions that the *yanhaitu* was produced by a scholar-official named Zhao Beitang who held several official titles related to maritime affairs in Zhejiang province. Yet in a study conducted by Wang Qiuhua in 2008, Wang pointed out that the *yanhaitu* was produced by Dong Gao in the 1790s; and it was the Qianlong emperor who ordered and directed Dong to produce the map.³² Even though it is not certain that Dong Gao was the first and only mapmaker of this *yanhaitu*, it and other coastal maps, such as the *Map of Coastal Defense of Fujian* (*Fujian haifang tu*) and the *Map of Coastal Defense of Guangdong* (*Guangdong haifangtu*), were part of a Qing empire-building project that took place before the outbreak of the First Opium War.

³² Wang Qiuhua, “Qingdai Qianlong shiqi Qisheng Yanhai tu kao,” 98.



Fig. 3 A coastal map (printed in 1613) collected in Zhang Huang, *Sikuquanshu zhenben*, “tushu bian,” juan 5, vol. 12, 5a.



Fig. 4 Part of the *Yanhaitu*

The Bohai Sea

The *yanhaitu* clearly documents the topography in the Qing Empire. Most of the river-mouths, harbors, and islands are identified in Chinese.³³ Compared to representations in maritime atlases produced in the previous dynasties, where most littorals faded into the unknown,³⁴ the coast was carefully mapped in the *yanhaitu*. The coastline was even clearly delineated and the northern and northeastern borders were indicated in a short paratext printed on the map:

The northern border of the maritime space begins from the coast of Tianjin and then [goes] all the way east to the Sea of Liaodong (Liaodong). This part of sea includes Iron Mountain Island, Yellow Castle Island, and Pi Island, facing the Korean peninsula. The northeastern border starts from the water off the Sea

³³ The languages (i.e. Manchu and Chinese) used in Qing maps have generated much scholarly interest among cartographic historians. Some argue that the uses of both Chinese and Manchu on maps reflects the juxtaposition of Chinese and Manchu identities. For example, in the largest edition of the Jesuit Atlas, place names within China's provinces are written in Chinese characters whereas territory beyond, including Liaodong, is labeled exclusively in Manchu. See Matteo Ripa, "A Map of China and the Surrounding Lands Based on the Jesuit Survey of 1708-1716" (British Library, 1719). Therefore, as Laura Hostetler suggests, "we see [in the Kangxi Atlas] China as one distinct part of the larger Manchu empire. Its status as a colonized territory that formed only one part of the empire stands out vividly on this map." See her *Qing Colonial Enterprise*, 75. The *yanhaitu* by contrast were printed entirely in Chinese with no Manchu script. It seems plausible that the exclusive use of Chinese language in the *yanhaitu* may have simply been to facilitate its use among Han officials.

³⁴ For study of coastal maps in the Ming, see Schottenhammer and Ptak, eds., *The Perception of Maritime Space in Traditional Chinese Sources*, section "Maritime Space and Maps."

Mountain Pass. This area of the sea covers Jinzhou island, Lüshun City, and the Yalü River mouth. The Yalü River mouth is the point that marks the boundary between the Qing and Choson Korea.

The eastern part of the [Bohai Sea] is where the Shandong merchants made considerable profits. Dengzhou, a city located in Shandong, and Lüshun face each other. These waters are strategically important as they connect Pi Island in the east and the capital area in the west. The distance between Temple Island [an island situated off the eastern coast of Shandong] and Lüshun is 550 *li*. The journey only takes one night when sailing in favorable winds.

The above paratext introduces the mapped northern and the northeastern boundary of the late-eighteenth century maritime frontier. Using Tianjin as a starting point, the cartographer first draws our attention to the Bohai Sea, the closest maritime space to the capital area (*jingji*). The inscription indicates that the Bohai Sea is considered a strategic gateway linking three provinces: Zhili, Liaodong, and Shandong. In fact, the Bohai region was a seascape that the Qing rulers and their ministers determined to keep safe. As a Qing scholar-official in the late eighteenth century, Xue Chuanyuan, pointedly argued in another context,

Regarding previous studies on coastal defense, scholars generally saw the coast of Guangdong as the most strategic and important, followed by the coast of Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangnan, and finally Shandong and Liaodong (i.e. Bohai Sea). However, in my viewpoint, the importance of the Bohai region should come first mostly because it is the nearest sea space guarding Shengjing (the Manchu homeland) and Beijing (the center of the Qing Empire) against external threats and dangers.³⁵

In a similar spirit, the mapmaker of the *yanhaitu* also viewed the Bohai Sea as a sea space that the intended viewers of the map should study very carefully due to its proximity to central authority. It is worth noting that the map even provides the specific time it took to sail from eastern Shandong to Lüshun harbor. Most likely, sailors and merchants at that time usually followed this route to travel between those two points.

This explanatory text also indicates the eastern limit of the Shandong coast. The mapmaker made it clear that “the eastern limit of Shandong province ends at Mount Sheng (Shengshan). Merchants intending to sail to Chengde and Tianjin use Mount Sheng as their standard point of departure.” Mount Sheng is located at the tip of the Shandong province on the map, near Rongcheng City and Fishpond Harbor (*Yangyuchi*), two significant naval stations

³⁵ Xue Chuanyuan, *Fanghai beilan*, 13:140.

established by the Yongzheng emperor. They were administered by the Shandong navy and patrolled by the Rongcheng naval force (*shuishì*).³⁶ This implies that Mount Sheng was securely protected by the Shandong navy and was one of the best strategic entrances to the Bohai area from Southern China (see Fig. 5).

The fact that the map identifies coastal locations in the Bohai region makes it clear that the Qing paid considerable attention to the Bohai Sea. In the northern part of Shandong province as well as the southern part of the Liaodong peninsula, the names of the harbors were clearly labeled in Chinese. Even though the *yanhaitu* was not made to scale and bears no indication of latitude and longitude, the mapmaker was able to approximate the distances between these harbors. Compared with modern maps, distances represented in the *yanhaitu* are, in fact, very close to those calculated by contemporary geographers (see Figure 6). This underscores the fact that traditional Chinese coastal maps were not always inaccurate compared to western scientific maps.³⁷



Fig. 5 Part of the Bohai Sea (*Yanhaitu*)

³⁶ Shandong shifan daxue lishi xi Zhongguo jindaishi yanjiushi, ed., *Qing shi lu Shandong shi liao xuan*, 1753.

³⁷ In fact, Qing monarchs in the eighteenth century were aware of the wide-ranging diversity of their empire and desired to produce accurate cartographic surveys based on thorough observation and personal consultation. As the French Jesuit Joseph-Anne-Marie de Moyriac de Mailla (1669-1748) recorded, “the Kangxi emperor’s desire is to have one atlas which would unite all the parts of his empire accurately in one glance.” See de Mailla, *Histoire générale de la Chine*, vol. II, 314. Similarly, Qianlong also requested that cartographic projects be uniform and comprehensive under his reign.



Fig 6 The Bohai Sea (Yanhaitu)

The sea surrounding northern China out to the edge of the continental shelf is relatively shallow. The seafloor of the continental shelf is composed primarily of sand, silt, and mud from the Yellow River.³⁸ This geographical feature was described in the *yanhaitu* as follows:

Between Haizhou and Miaowan is the river mouth of the Yellow River. The sea is clearer than the Yellow River in terms of the amount of sediment. When sediments of the Yellow River flow into the sea, the bottom of the sea is elevated and the seabed structure changes. The depth of the seawater thus becomes shallower. In order to sail across the shallow waters, merchants must sail with sand ships (*shachuan*) constructed in the Jiangnan region. The bottom of a sand ship is flat and smooth, so it can enter the northern seawater with less obstruction. By contrast, merchant vessels constructed in Fujian called *Minchuan* [Fujian ships] usually have difficulty coping with this geographical situation because of the round-shape of the bottom of the *Minchuan*. The best way to sail across this section of sea is to wait for low tide. The receding tide means that the seawater will become deeper. It is safer to proceed in this circumstance.

³⁸ Pietz and Giordano, "Managing the Yellow River," 100-101.

The above paratext indicates the mapmaker's familiarity with the topography, sedimentation, and tides of the Bohai Sea floor. He gives readers a reason why the Bohai Sea is shallow and suggests the type of ship that sailors should use to traverse the "troubled waters." He also highlights guidelines for merchants to sail safely (see Figure 7). By providing general information regarding sailing and shipbuilding, this paragraph shows that the *yanhaitu* was not simply aimed at showcasing to scholar-officials the maritime territory governed by the Qing Empire. The mapmaker may also have hoped this general information would better enable scholar-officials to analyze coastal conditions as well as appreciate the empire's maritime frontier. Even though the map itself might not have circulated as widely as atlases showing the empire's land territory, the content of the *yanhaitu* seems to be intended to enhance the reader's strategic and geographical knowledge of the coast.

The map also clearly indicates the littoral cities of Shandong, Zhili, and Liaodong provinces. Cities like Rongcheng, Ninghai, and Fushan were closely linked to coastal shipping and/or maritime militarization. For instance, Ninghai and Fushan were trading destinations for merchants from southeastern China, while Rongcheng was a naval base guarded by the Rongcheng naval force. The map depicts a region functionally interconnected across islands and coastal cities. The *yanhaitu* provides a conceptual map of the region as understood by eighteenth-century scholar-officials. In other words, they emphasize not the absolute distances and specific contours, but rather the interconnections and activities associated with particular locations. The makers of this map did not survey each sea port and island or even necessarily experience maritime travel before compiling the *yanhaitu*.³⁹ As Donna J. Peuquet has argued, space can be defined conceptually, rather than geographically, within its setting.⁴⁰ And as Cordell Yee points out, "the classical Chinese language is highly metaphorical, and so are traditional Chinese maps." In describing Chinese maps as metaphorical, Yee refers to the fact that Chinese maps did not have to be numerical, measurable, or even directly perceivable.⁴¹ Therefore, although the mapmakers may not have specified the precise geographical connections between seawaters, islands, and coastal cities, they presented information that their contemporaries would have found useful and meaningful, through metaphor and conceptual mapping.

³⁹ As pointed out by Timothy Brook, some people even have the notion that Chinese (mostly in the Ming) were not seafarers and disapproved of compatriots who went to sea. See Brook, *Mr. Selden's Map of China*, 111.

⁴⁰ Peuquet, "Representations of Geographic Space," 375.

⁴¹ Cordell D.K. Yee, "Foundation for a Future History of Chinese Mapping," 228.

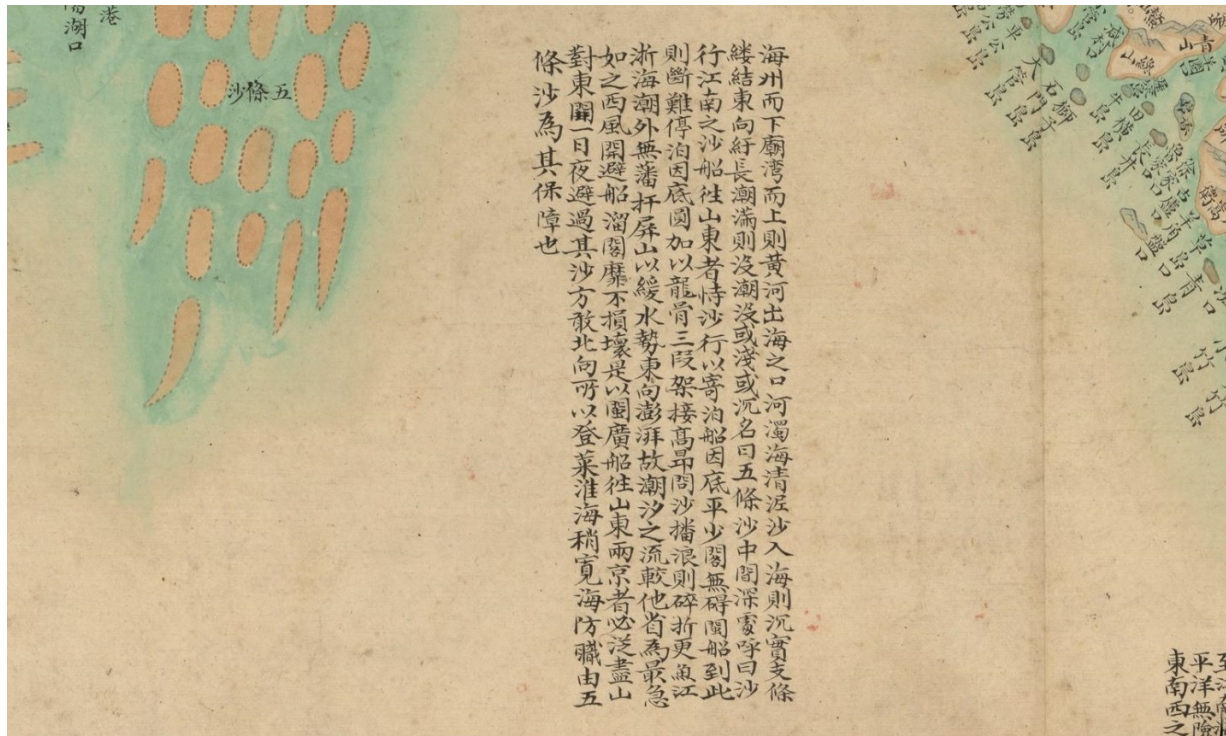


Fig. 7 Part of the *Yanhaitu*

In another passage, the mapmaker reminds us:

If you turn southwest from Mount Sheng, you can reach another cluster of islands located in the southern part of Shandong. If you continue sailing south, the maritime space between Shandong and the Jiangnan region is calm and risk-free.

The mapmaker left the maritime space between southern Shandong and the Jiangnan blank on the *yanhaitu*. This might be because the region “was calm and risk-free,” as the mapmaker notes, with no further description needed. Or it might have been because accurate information was not available, or because the area could not be surveyed in detail. Some scholars might argue that a blank region on a map implies that it was beyond imperial control.⁴² It seems, in this case, extremely unlikely that the Qing would have abandoned its claim to this region during the long eighteenth century. According to imperial documents recorded in the *Qing shilu* and the *Qing shigao*, for example, the Jiangsu navy was assigned to police the respective sea zones linking the southern part of Shandong to the Jiangnan region. On occasion, the Jiangsu navy had to collaborate with the Shandong navy in patrolling this area to ensure it was “risk-free” for merchants and the coastal population.⁴³ As a result, this sea connecting southern Shandong and

⁴² Emma Jinhua Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, 143.

⁴³ Zhu Zhengyuan, *Zhejiang yanhai tushuo*, 1.

Jiangsu was not insignificant at all, at least from a military perspective. In Qing political language, this sea space was clearly an “inner sea” according to the inner-outer conceptualization, which we will discuss more thoroughly in the subsequent section to examine how the Qing court modelled its maritime frontier.

Dividing the Maritime Frontier

The *yanhaitu* divides the maritime frontier into an inner sea space (*neihai*) and an outer sea space (*waihai*).⁴⁴ During the Qing period, especially after the Kangxi emperor conquered Taiwan in 1684, officials tended to perceive the inner sea as the farthest extent of their maritime authority, a region legitimately subject to sustained governance and state possession; whereas the outer sea space was considered a capricious blue-water domain beyond the reach of administrative control and economic extraction.

The ocean’s boundlessness made dividing lines between the inner and outer realms problematic. There are no clear physiographical boundaries such as mountain ranges or dense forests that can help demarcate the two conceptual zones. The division of a natural and cohesive realm into two discrete parts was a sociopolitical construction rather than something based on fixed topography and ecology. While making little sense to seafaring peoples who regarded the sea as a more-or-less boundless resource for their survival, the separation into inner and outer ocean functioned primarily to set limits on the reach and responsibilities of the state and to regulate government operations across the sea space. The Qianlong emperor and his son Jiaqing (1760-1820; r. 1796-1820) noted that officials in coastal provinces dared not venture into the outer sea space. They often wrote off incidents in these waters as beyond their jurisdiction and thus insignificant. Some officials even ordered that official salt junks avoid passing over the outer ocean, suggesting the government had no business policing this unfamiliar sea space at all. While the outer sea represented where maritime governance ceased, as Wensheng Wang has argued,⁴⁵ it was also a space where pirates sought to maximize their autonomy and power, as indicated as follows on the *yanhaitu* (see Fig. 8):

The sea off the coast of ports Qianyu and port Jinghai has the reputation of being a pirate hangout. In the morning, pirates massed their ships in the outer sea, watching for an opportunity to plunder the coast in the evening. They would also ravage the islands located on the western side. They used to hide out near those western islands under favour of the complex and variable tidal flow.

⁴⁴ In the later edition of this *yanhaitu*, a dividing line (*fengjia*) was introduced to demarcate particular maritime sectors from one another. For example, the Shandong and Jiangsu sea spaces were divided by the “Shandong Jiangsu *fengjia*,” and the Zhejiang and the Fujian sea spaces by the “Zhejiang Fujian *fengjia*.”

⁴⁵ Wensheng Wang, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*, chap. 3, “The Piracy Crisis in the South China Sea.”



Fig. 8 Part of the Yanhaitu

However, this does not necessarily mean that the former was necessarily less strategically attached to empire's defense than the latter.

The terms *nei* and *wai* also were used to differentiate categories of sea space in relation to each other. For example, looking out at the ocean from the coast of Fuzhou, mapmakers termed the shallower, more easily accessible waters as the inner sea space. They termed waters beyond sight or reach as outer sea space.⁴⁸ In this case, the deep seawater around the islands that were located a hundred miles away from Fujian would be labeled as outer sea space. In her discussion of the dividing line between the inner and outer ocean, Dian Murray explains this terminology:

Offshore, as the open expanse of the South China Sea stretched from the border of Guangdong and Fujian provinces, around Hainan island and the Leizhou peninsula to the Gulf of Tonkin, the saltwater realm of shallow seas and inshore islands were referred to in Chinese sources as the inner sea (*neihai*) or inner ocean (*neiyang*). Once the shallows deepened, the inshore islands gave way to offshore islands farther from the land, and the South China Sea became the southern ocean (*nanyang*). This region of deep seas, offshore islands and coral reefs constituted the outer sea (*waihai*) or outer ocean (*waiyang*).⁴⁹

The Qing government invoked the terms inner and outer from a state-centered perspective. For instance, in most cases monarchs of the high Qing regarded seawater that was instrumental to their maritime and economic policies as inner sea, whereas anything that fell outside of the purview of such policies was seen as outer sea.⁵⁰ When the Qianlong emperor prescribed the patrol perimeter (*xunshao jiangji*) of the Fujian navy, he declared that the navy was responsible for policing all of the assigned area across the “inner sea sector (*liuzi neiyang xunqi*).”⁵¹ On another occasion, he declared that inner sea was subject to imperial prerogative since it was more “manageable and accessible” (*neiyang yiyu kanding*) than the *waiyang* surface.⁵² In the *Record of Prominent Officials in the Qing* (*Guozhao xianzheng shilüe*), Li Yuandu (1821-87) also recalled the directive promulgated by Yongzheng to expel unregistered

⁴⁸ See Fang Junshi, *Jiaoxuan suilu*, 8: 35b–36a; Chen Changyuan, *Guangdong tongzhi*, 123:1093; Jiang Chenying, *Haifang zonglun* in *Congshu jicheng chubian*, 3229, 8a–8b. In addition, the Chinese occasionally regarded the sea space beyond their sight and reach as an area where the pirates congregated and sat up their bases. See Chen Lunjiong, *Haiguo wenjian lu* “tianxia yanhai xingshi lu,” 1:2a-3a.

⁴⁹ Murray, “Piracy and China’s Maritime Transition, 1750-1850,” 55.

⁵⁰ See, for example, *Da Qing Shengzu Renhuangdi shilu* (Taipei: Xin wenfeng chubun gongsi, 1978), 232; see also *Da Qing Shizong Xianhuangdi shilu* (Taipei: Xin wenfeng chubun gongsi, 1978) *juan* 72, “Yizheng wang dachen deng yifu,” *Da Qing Gaozong Chunhuangdi shilu*, *juan* 105, “Jiangsu xunfu Zhangqu zou,” *juan* 167, *dinghai*, “Yuju Zhejiang tidu Peishi zou,” *juan* 176, “Zai ju Min-Zhe zongdu Nasutu zou.”

⁵¹ *Da Qing Gaozong Chunhuangdi shilu*, *juan* 156, “bingbu deng bu yizhun yuanshu LiangJiang zongdu Yangchaocong huiyi” (Qianlong 156 nian, xinyou, shieryue, renchen shuo, jihai).

⁵² *Da Qing Gaozong Chunhuangdi shilu*, *juan* 750, “Xingbu deng bu yifu: LiangJiang zongdu Gaojin dengzou, xunfang haiyang ge shiyi” (Qianlong 30 nian, yiyou, shier yue, renyin shuo, bingchen).

foreign battleships that anchored in or sailed across the inner sea space (*waiyi bingchuan huoji neiyang, ju diaobing jishi quzhu*).⁵³ In Li's account, the inner sea space, in this respect, was not conceptualized as a contact zone where international trade and cultural interactions could be forged freely. Instead, all maritime activities across the inner sea were under strict state supervision. From the 1720s onward, most of the maritime activities conducted by western merchants with their Chinese counterparts were mediated by government-designated monopolistic guilds known as *cohong*.⁵⁴ Partly as a measure of cultural protection, direct contact between Chinese (other than the *cohong*) and "barbaric merchants (*yishang*)" was strictly forbidden.⁵⁵

The language of inner and outer could also be invoked to differentiate spaces within the "inner" or proximate waters. Cartographers and writers during the Qing, including the makers of the *yanhaitu*, deliberately divided the inner waters into another layer of *wai* and *nei* (see Fig. 10). As written by the cartographer of the *yanhaitu*, "the *waiyang* was strategically important, while the *neiyang* was full of scattered islands and tiny isles." The author distinguishes between inner and outer primarily based on the depth of seawater and the geographical distances off the coast. On one hand, because large-sized war junks found it difficult to come close to shore in a low tide, only smaller warships were effective in carrying out the policing there. Large war junks were thus responsible for patrolling the deeper "outer coastal water" (a part of "outer water" that was notably still included in the inner sea region) so as to "defend the frontier" (*han bianzu*). On the other hand, small patrol warships were given the duty of policing the shallower "inner coastal water" so as to "strengthen the foundation" (*cun genben*). Another illustrative example appears in the *Overview of Coastal Defense in Guangdong* (*Guangdong haifang huilan*) published in the 1760s. Across the Guangdong sea space, the maritime military consisted of 167 war junks of various sizes in the 1700s. In order to interdict smuggling activities occurring in shallower seawaters, the inner sea space was divided in 1730 into two sectors based on the aforementioned logic. Therefore, the 167 vessels (and perhaps even more) were divided into 38 separate units under the command of an admiral (*shuishi tidu*) along the Guangdong coast, covering some 3,000 *li* of the seawater from Chaoyang on the eastern flank to Hainan on the western flank. Islets, harbor-areas, shoals, and half-tide rocks were meticulously patrolled by the "inner-water fleet," while the "outer-water fleet" was responsible for policing the region at a greater distance. Yet unfortunately, the exact limit (in nautical miles) patrolled by the "outer-water fleet" was never recorded in official gazetteers or memoirs. Still, sources do note that land-based military units across Guangdong, which were close to seaports, had the dual responsibility of cooperating with the "inner- and outer-water fleets" to help defend the maritime frontier.⁵⁶

⁵³ Li Yuandu, *Guozhao xianzheng shilüe* [collected in *Sibu beiyao*] (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju, 1989), vol. 46, *juan* 21, "Mingchen Wu Huaijiang gongbao shilüe," 275.

⁵⁴ According to John Phipps, the *cohong* system system in the 1790s, founded by the merchant Pang Qiguan, Immanuel Hsu believed that it started in the 1720s. Immanuel Hse, *The Rise of Modern China* [Chinese edition] (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2001), 149.

⁵⁵ Speaking of *cohong*, Gang Zhao has recently published a ground-breaking and fresh analysis on the system, in which he successfully demonstrates the uniqueness, adaptability, flexibility, and openness of the High Qing *cohong* policy. See his *The Qing Opening to the Ocean*, esp. chap. 6.

⁵⁶ Lu Kun and Deng Tingzhen, eds., *Guangdong haifang huilan*, 12: 25a-27b.

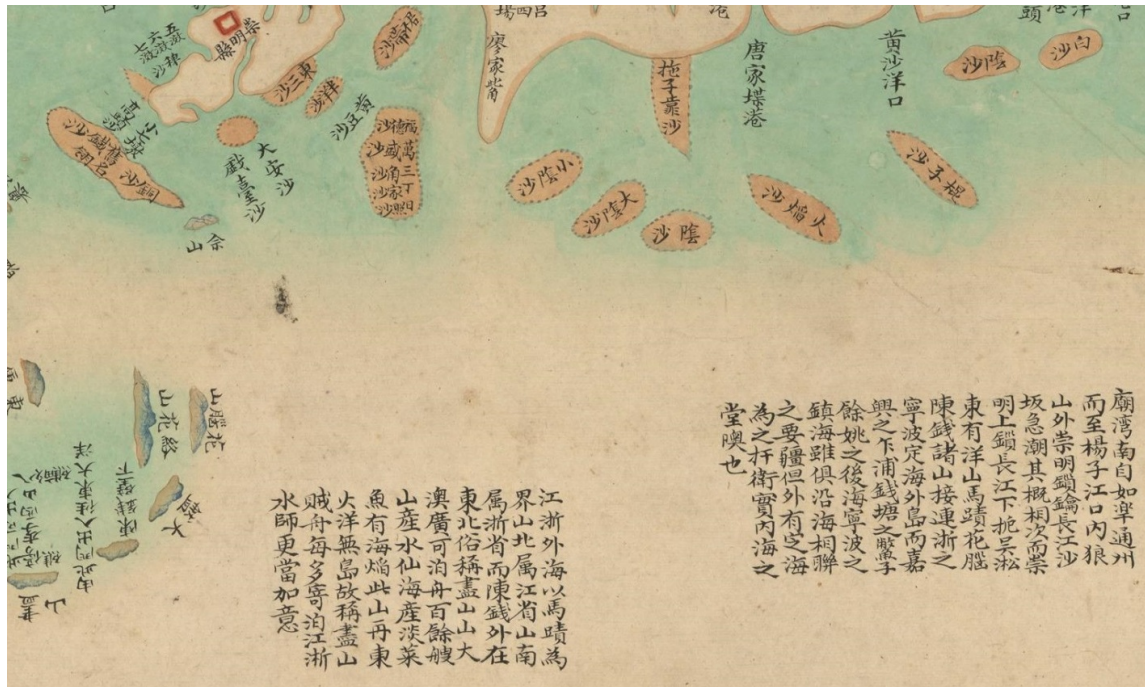


Fig. 10 Part of the *Yanhaitu*

The Qing government also sought to demarcate “inner” and “outer” zones on land in their diplomatic negotiations along the inner Asian frontiers. Under the tributary system, the Manchu court deliberately divided its tributary states into inner polities (dependencies) and outer polities. Only the inner polities (such as Nepal and Kanjut) were granted military protection;⁵⁷ the outer polities (such as Tashkent, Bukhara, Badakhshan, and Kazakas) were client states that were not directly linked to the Qing Empire.⁵⁸ In 1751, for instance, the Qianlong emperor issued an imperial decree stating that

our dynasty has unified the vast terrain that lies within the frontiers. The various barbarians, inner and outer, have submitted and turned toward civilization. Each of them has a different costume and appearance. We order the governor-general and provincial governors along the frontiers to have illustrations made copying the likeness of the clothing and ornaments of the Miao, Yao, Li, Zhuang, under their jurisdiction, as well as of the outer barbarians, and to submit these

⁵⁷ See Di Cosmo, “Qing Colonial Administration in Inner Asia.”

⁵⁸ See Fletcher, “Ch’ing Inner Asia c. 1800,” 35-38.

illustrations to the Grand Council, so that they may be compiled and arranged for an imperial survey.⁵⁹

In this edict, Qianlong not only instructs his officials to compile the *Imperial Tribute Illustrations of the Great Qing* (*Huang Qing zhigong tu*), but also deploys the inner-outer binary as a language of governance and control. Here, the language of “inner” and “outer” asserts Qing power over certain regions and peoples – whether on land or sea.⁶⁰ By the eighteenth century, as Pamela Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton have argued, “these degrees of inner and outer were distinctly narrative, that is, they might be contrasted to moral, ethical, or cultural criteria.”⁶¹ The inner-outer model thus is demonstrably hierarchical, with the innermost enjoying the greatest intimacy with the ruling lineage and the outermost having the least.

Expanding the Imperial Gaze to Taiwan and Nan’ao

Taiwan and the South China Sea are striking examples of formerly external territories that were incorporated into the Chinese Empire very late in its history. Even when the Kangxi emperor conquered Taiwan in the late seventeenth century, he showed little appreciation for the island. As he explained to his officers, “Taiwan is a place beyond the sea; it is no bigger than a ball of mud. We gain nothing by possessing it.”⁶² Consequently, the court’s emissary Su Bai proposed to abandon the island once the remaining rebel troops and the Chinese civilian population were evacuated. The majority of the high officials in Beijing supported this plan; only Shi Lang, the admiral who led the conquest of Taiwan, voiced an objection. Far from being a wasteland, Shi asserted, Taiwan was strategically situated and amply endowed with natural resources and arable land. The Qing should not abandon this strategic island guarding its maritime frontier. To Shi, Taiwan served as a kind of palisade protecting the empire from outside invaders – not a ball of mud outside of the Qing’s domain.⁶³ The question of whether or not to withdraw from Taiwan became a topic for heated debate in the late seventeenth century. After learning more about Taiwan’s situation, the emperor finally sided with Shi Lang and had the

⁵⁹ See Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, ed., *Qing zhigong tu xuan*, 3; this imperial edict is translated by Emma Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*, 149.

⁶⁰ Some scholars such as Pitman B. Potter also apply the inner-outer model to analyze the PRC’s frontier management. According to Potter, “conditions in China’s inner and outer peripheries serve as an essential context for understanding China’s policies of governance and control.” By inner periphery, the author refers to Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang, where constitutional arrangements of local governance were applied. The outer periphery covers Hong Kong and Taiwan, where the Beijing authorities established the “special administrative region” or applied another constitutional model of governance. See Pitman B. Potter, “Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives on the Periphery,” 249.

⁶¹ Crossley, Siu, and Sutton, eds., introduction to *Empire at the Margins*, 15.

⁶² Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi (ed.), *Qing Shengzu shilu xuanji*, 129.

⁶³ Shi Lang, *Jinghai jishi*, 60-63.

island officially “included in the register” (*ru bantu*) of the Qing empire in the spring of 1684 as the ninth prefecture of Fujian.⁶⁴

Immediately following the annexation of Taiwan into Fujian province, the compilers of the 1684 edition of the *Gazetteer of Fujian* (*Fujian tongzhi*), who had already completed a draft, scrambled to add a map of this new territory to that edition. The map, entitled “A Map of Taiwan Prefecture and its Three Counties,” was appended to the overall map of the Fujian coast.⁶⁵ This is probably the earliest Qing imperial map to include Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait in its domain. From that time on, Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait appeared as important territorial features in many Qing mapping projects, including the *yanhaitu*. Like the 1684 edition of the Fujian gazetteer, the *yanhaitu* contains a separate map of Taiwan entitled “Map of Taiwan” (*Taiwan tu*) (see Figure 11). Unlike the gazetteer, the *yanhaitu* includes Taiwan in the overall map of the China coast. Illustrating the coastline of the island, the “Map of Taiwan” focuses on important Chinese landmarks such as the prefectural and county seats and important forts, as well as the central port of entry to the island. Much like most other maps of Taiwan, the *Taiwan tu* projects the dominance of the western region of Taiwan, the center of Chinese settlement since the Ming period.



Fig. 11 *Taiwan tu*

⁶⁴ On the history of the Qing annexation of Taiwan and its political and economic development in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600-1800*.

⁶⁵ Liu Liangbi et al., *Chongxiu Fujian Taiwan fuzhi*, 100.

Judging from the textual information on the *Taiwan tu*, it very probably derives its basic features from the maps printed in the *Fujian tongzhi* and the *Taiwan tu* in the *Haiguo wenjian lu*. Yet some of the *yanhaitu*'s specific features differ from the maps in the Fujian gazetteer and the *wenjianlu*. For instance, the *yanhaitu* depicts Taiwan as a long narrow island, rather than roundish, as in the gazetteer map. Compared to the map attached to the *wenjianlu*, the *Taiwan tu* provides more important navigational information about bays and approaches to the island (see Fig. 12 & 13). Notwithstanding these differences, the cartographic and conceptual frameworks of both maps clearly represent Taiwan from the perspective being approached externally from the Chinese coast. In other words, it is a symbolic representation showcasing the successful projection of Qing imperial control across the Taiwan Strait to the island. Significantly, the *yanhaitu* was among the first maps to expose viewers to the eastern side of Taiwan. As Emma Teng has argued, maps of Taiwan produced in the early and mid-Qing primarily focused on the western coast of the island. The eastern coast, by contrast, was always missing. Teng cites this practice as an example that shows how "Taiwan was itself the boundary between inner and outer" in terms of frontier management.⁶⁶ Another separate map included in the *yanhaitu*, entitled the "Map of Taiwan behind the Mountains" (*Taiwan houshan tu*), tells a different story (see Fig. 14). It maps and introduces to its viewers the eastern part of Taiwan. Even though the *houshan tu* looks crudely sketched, it introduces some navigable ports and accessible cities, as well as mountain features on eastern Taiwan. This cuts across the Central Mountain Range, which had long been considered a visual barrier between western Taiwan (part of the Qing empire) and eastern Taiwan (beyond the empire) and had long served as the horizon separating the inner and outer realms.⁶⁷ The entire island, as mapped in the *Taiwan tu* and the *houshan tu*, was included as a significant part of the maritime frontier that guarded the southeastern coast of China. As the author of the *Journey to the Sea of Taiwan* (*Taihai shicha lu*) noted, "Taiwan extends from the northeast to the southwest like a standing screen: it is the outer boundary for China's four coastal provinces."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Emma Jinhua Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, 55-60.

⁶⁷ Qing writers commonly referred to Taiwan as an island which faced the sea and was backed by the (central) mountains, rimmed by mountains, or pillowed on mountains. For instance, see Huang Shujing, *Taihai shicha lu*, 7.

⁶⁸ Huang Shujing, *Taihai shicha lu*, 3.

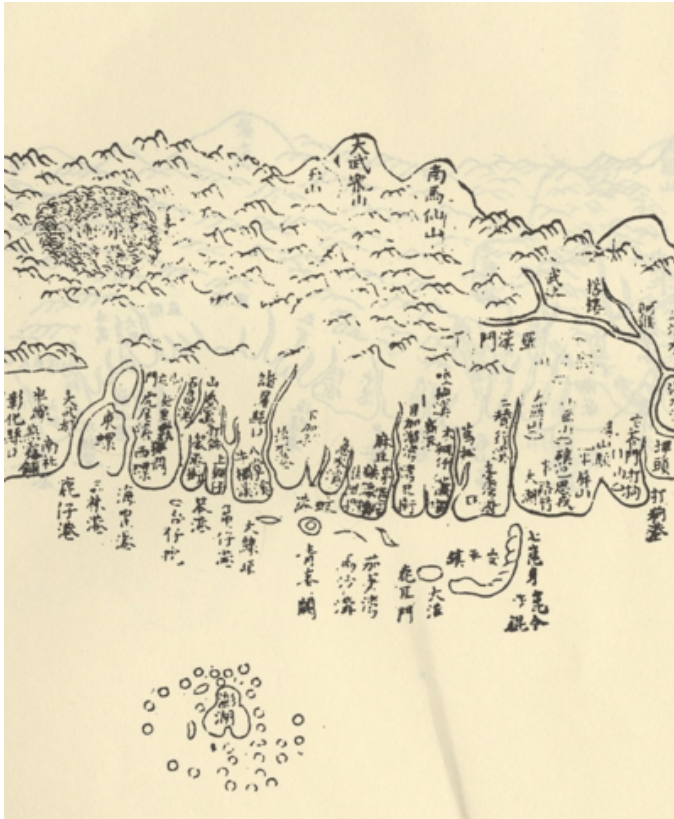


Fig. 12 Taiwan tu (Haiguo wenjian lu)



Fig. 13 Taiwan tu (Yanhaitu)



Fig. 14 Taiwan houshan tu

Taiwan is not the only maritime island that was closely linked to concerns over coastal defenses across the maritime frontier. As highlighted in the *yanhaitu*, Nan'ao Island was another gateway which guarded the southeastern coast of China. The *yanhaitu* mapmaker said this about the small island (see Fig. 15):

Situated in the eastern part of the great ocean, Nan'ao is the stronghold guarding the maritime frontier. It is a strategic island in the waters off the Fujian and the Guangdong coasts. In particular, it protects the eastern coast of Guangdong province. The coastline of Nan'ao island is approximately 300 *li*, with four important harbors. The harbor in the eastern part of the island is named Qing'ao; it is not favorable for anchoring. The harbor in the western part is called Sheng'ao. It is a nice harbor that can accommodate more than a thousand vessels.



Fig. 15 Nan'ao Island (Yanhaitu)

In fact, no discussion of coastal defense on the southeast coast during late imperial times could possibly omit Nan'ao.⁶⁹ This small island was situated at the intersection of the Fujian and Guangdong sea zones. In the Ming, before it was turned into a strategic naval base, this island was a paradise for pirates. In 1576, following a proposal by the maritime defense General Luo Gongchen, a lieutenant colonel was assigned to the island, and a walled defense fortification was built. The strategic position of Nan'ao continued to be highly valued in the eighteenth century.⁷⁰ The Qing court was determined to develop Nan'ao into a bastion against piracy and to integrate it into its imperial domain.⁷¹ The most important aspect of this was the establishment of five maritime garrisons on the island, as the *yanhaitu* shows. Such measures not only helped strengthen the island's defense against potential intruders but also provided a fine example of maritime governance in island management and the imperial motivation to extend territorial jurisdiction across the maritime frontier.

⁶⁹ Ng Chin-keong, "Maritime Frontiers, Territorial Expansion and Hai-fang," 232.

⁷⁰ The Dutch also showed a keen interest in this strategic island. See Weichung Cheng, *War, Trade and Piracy in the China Seas (1622-1683)*, 42-46.

⁷¹ However, it is worth noting that the violence of petty piracy in the eighteenth century rarely crossed over into the level of professional piracy and, thus, posed little threat to either government or commerce. See Paola Calanca, "Piracy and Coastal Security in Southeastern China, 1600-1780," 85-98. During this period, piracy was indeed small scale, but the reason for this must be acknowledged. I believe that the structured and comprehensive management of the inner sea (by the navy and the customs offices) was key to the coast's relative peacefulness.

By mapping and illustrating the strategic importance of Taiwan and Nan'ao in the *yanhaitu*, the mapmaker served to decrease their distance from the coast of China (in conceptual and real terms). In this connection, the case of Taiwan is particularly illuminating. Although some maritime writings and gazetteers throughout the Qing almost invariably opened with the conventional invocation "Taiwan was originally a remote wilderness beyond the sea with no connection to China proper,"⁷² coastal maps like the *yanhaitu* highlighted Taiwan's proximity and significance. In this way, the *yanhaitu* not only helped serve the practical needs of imperial administration, but arguably served an important discursive function, in linking the island symbolically to the Qing imperial domain across its maritime frontier.

Conclusion

Earlier scholarship has tended to deny the maritime initiatives and concerns of the Qing court before nineteenth-century western encroachment. More recent accounts have tended to consider the Qing Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and India's Mughal Empire as continental empires, with only weak connections to maritime management and coastal governance. Yet, as the cartographic examples from the *yanhaitu* presented in this article demonstrate the Qing empire clearly took an interest in its maritime frontiers during the eighteenth century.

Although the *yanhaitu* mainly depicts the coastal littoral, or "inner sea space," its mapmaker was acutely aware of the importance of maritime administration and territorial jurisdiction. The content of the *yanhaitu* conveys a close connection with strategic concerns. The mapmaker not only pointed out favorable routes for seafarers, but helped establish a grand strategy for the maritime frontier by mapping the locations of seaports, harbors, and islands, detailing the importance and significance of maritime defense, dividing the inner sea into separate yet interlinked maritime sectors, and fixing the limits of governance across the maritime frontier. Arguably the mapping of the *yanhaitu* was a project that displayed imperial control over the coastal frontier while conveying systematic knowledge of the maritime space at a time when the Qing was able to sustain its territorial integrity across its coastal seas.

In short, through a close visual and textual reading of the *yanhaitu*, this study highlights Qing official engagement with the maritime frontier during the eighteenth century. The map reflects the extent to which maritime commerce, defense, and migration had been a major part of Chinese life along the coast.⁷³ As correctly suggested by Gang Zhao, the High Qing was not a conservative power but rather manifested reasonable and flexible attitudes towards the maritime world.⁷⁴ At the same time however, although Chinese traders and settlers played significant roles

⁷² June Yip, *Envisioning Taiwan*, 15.

⁷³ The 1980s and the 1990s saw a dramatic growth of literature on maritime connections between China and the rest of the world in Ming and Qing. For instance, William Atwell brought to light the "great impact flow of world silver" upon the Ming and Qing economy; see his "International Bullion Flows and the Chinese Economy, circa 1530-1650" and "Some Observations on the 'Seventeenth-Century Crisis' in China and Japan." Ng Chin-keong has traced the development of coastal private trade in Amoy during the eighteenth century while touching upon some aspects of High Qing maritime policies. See his *Trade and Society*.

⁷⁴ Gang Zhao, *The Qing Opening to the Ocean*, 14.

beyond the China coast, or the “inner sea,” the Qing state only very occasionally drew on their knowledge and their presence in Southeast and South Asia. As Matthew Mosca has eloquently asserted, the Qing “information order” extended only tentatively towards Southeast and South Asian waters in the eighteenth century.⁷⁵ The primary focus of Qing strategists (such as the imperial officials, naval commanders, as well as the makers and compilers of coastal maps) was to maximize the natural advantages it enjoyed along the coast. Operations in familiar seaways enabled the navy to exploit as much as possible opportunities for deception, cover, and protection. A thorough survey and understanding of the maritime frontier was thus indispensable. Coastal mapping was, therefore, not only a tool to showcase the projection of state power onto the sea, but a way to update the imperial court and the community of officials with the most current information on the conditions of the maritime frontier. The compilation of the *yanhaitu* was a mapping project that served these diverse purposes.

⁷⁵ See Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy*, 3.

Glossary

Bohai 渤海

Guangdong haifang tu 廣東海防圖

Chouhai tubian 籌海圖編

Haifang tongzhi 海防通志

cun genben 存根本

Haiguo wenjianlu 海國聞見錄

dao 道

haijiang 海疆

DaQing Gaozong Chunhuangdi shilu 大清高宗
純皇帝實錄

haitu 海圖

*di bijin waiyang, yicang jianfei.....dizai neihe,
shiwu jianshao* 地逼近外洋, 易藏奸匪.....地
在內河, 事務簡少

haiyang zhishi 海洋之事

han bianzu 捍邊陲

dinghai 定海

Huang Qing zhigong tu 皇清職貢圖

Dong Gao 董誥

Huangyu quanlan tu 皇輿全覽圖

Fujian haifang tu 福建海防圖

Jinghai hou 靖海候

Guangdong haifang huilan 廣東海防彙覽

jinghai 靖海

jingji 京畿

liuzi neiyang xunqi 留資內洋巡緝

Minchuan 閩船

neihai 內海

neiyang yiyu kanding 內洋易於勘定

Qiankun yitong haifang quantu 乾坤一統海防全圖

Qingshigao 清史稿

Qingshilu 清實錄

Qisheng yanhai tu 七省沿海圖

quanlan 全覽

Rongcheng 榮城

ru bantu 入版圖

shachuan 沙船

Shao Tinglie 邵廷烈

Shengshan 成山

shuishi tidu 水師提督

shuishi 水師

Taiwan houshan tu 臺灣後山圖

waihai 外海

waiyi bingchuan huoji neiyang, ju diaobing jishi quzhu 外夷兵船或寄內洋, 俱調兵立時驅逐

Wanli haifang tu 萬里海防圖

xunshao jiangji 巡哨疆界

Yangyuchi 養魚池

Yanhai quantu 沿海全圖

yu zhu waiyang, buru yu zhu neihe 禦諸外洋,
不如禦諸內河

Zhao Beitang 周北堂

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