



Paracel Islands in the Eyes of European People in the Eighteen Century- Nineteenth Century: Descriptions from Contemporary English Document Sources

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Abstract. After geographical discoveries, the formation and development of international shipping routes has rapidly changed the perception of mankind about regions and areas in the world. Paracel Islands with location next to the international Eurasian trade route passing through the East Sea was also reflected in writing and map works with increasing frequency. Basing on the English documents published in the eighteen century–nineteenth century, the article aims at exploiting the information sources mentioning the Paracel Islands to draw a true and accurate picture of them and reflecting changes in the perception of Westerners on Paracel and Spratly archipelagos during the time.

Keywords: Cochinchina, Paracel Islands, Westerners, Vietnam, maritime trade, East Sea.

From the eighteen century to nineteenth century, along with the accounts on competitive maritime trade activities to occupy markets and colonies, there was an increasing number of Western documents describing countries and territories, including those published in English. When referring or describing the country of Vietnam, the words such as Tonkin, Toquin or Tonking were employed to refer to Dang Ngoai in the seventeenth century –eighteen century or Bac Ky under the Nguyen Dynasty in the nineteenth century by the contemporary Westerners. Similarly, Cochinchina or Cochin-china were utilized for Dang Trong in the seventeenth century –eighteen century under the Nguyen Lords and the Tay Son or Nam Ky under the Nguyen Dynasty in the nineteenth century. At the same time, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were both named Pracel, Paracel or Paracels in English historical materials instead of being distinguished into two archipelagos like the current international names. This article

focuses on exploiting information from English sources relevant to Paracel and Spratly archipelagos published from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century in order to outline the changes in the West's perception over the Paracel and the Spratly Islands during these two centuries. This has a very important role to play as it gives a help to not only re-examine the domestic historical documents of Vietnam but also demonstrate an objective view concerning Vietnam's sovereignty over these two archipelagos from Western countries.

A dangerous archipelago of islets and rocks stretching offshore along the coast of Cochinchina with shipwrecks

As early as the eighteenth century, in 1717, description about the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands was known to the British through the map "A map of the East-Indies and adjacent countries" by Heman Moll printed in England. In this map, the entire Southeast Asia region including the mainland and island countries was bordered in yellow and distinguished from China's territory in pink, and the Indian region in green. Robert Morden (1717) clearly showed the territory of Vietnam including Tonquin (Dang Ngoai) and Cochinchina (Dang Trong) along with places such as Keccio (Ke Cho, the capital under the Le - Trinh dynasties), Bay of Cochinchina, Faifo Turon (Da Nang), P. de Mar (Cu Lao Thu),... Particularly, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were presented as a dense strip of star dots clearly like a knife blade lying close to the coast of Dang Trong with an inscription of The Shoal of Parcel on the side. In comparison with the previous maps, the one by Heman Moll illustrated a difference in the position equal to Da Nang where lied a small circle at the top in The Shoal of Parcel inscribed as I. de Pracel.

In the work "A new account of the East



Indies, being the observation and remarks" Alexander Hamilton (1727) wrote about the situation in Vietnam, including the seas, islands and Paracels. In his description, Dang Trong had a large sea coast of about 700 miles in length, extending from the river of Cambodia to that of Quambin with many convenient harbors although these ports were not frequently used by strangers; he found it was very deep along the East Coast, up to 60 - 80 fathoms within half a league off the shore in some places. Besides, he also pointed out that the coastal islands of Cochinchina such as Pullo Canton (Cu Lao Re, now Ly Son island district of Quang Ngai Province) were located near the coast like those of Champello (Cu Lao Cham) but causing no danger. Pullo Jecca de Terra (Cu Lao Cau - present day Phan Thiet Province) lied in the southernmost and closest to the shore. There was not inhabitation here and it looked like a Parcel of scorch'd rocks, with no trees, bushes or grass on it. He detected it lied about a mile from the shore. Also, Pullo Jecca de Mare (Cu Lao Thu - Phu Quy island in present-day Binh Thuan Province), and all the chains stretching from the unsafe shallows of Paracels were indeed rocks, not islands. Pullo Cambir, fairly large, was noted to lie about 15 leagues off the shore, near the Paracel Islands and also without signs of inhabitation (1727, p.209). It is worth noting his description of the features regarding this sea when mentioning the hydrological and weather regime of the waters of Dang Trong. He stated that because of the strong currents running to the southward during the North-east monsoons, pilots must always pay great attention to stay near the Couchinchina (Dang Trong) coast to avoid being driven among the Paracels with dangerous chain of rocks of around 130 leagues in length and 15 in width, with just a few islands either ends. There existed some inter-currents among those rocks but there were no known signals to help stay away from dangers. According to him, one English ship from Surat drove through these currents by chance but was not aware of the dangers until it was already over and unexpectedly saw the coast of Dang Trong. Hamilton also described the danger of Paracel Islands and gave quite specific warnings to ships when traveling through the East Sea with these two archipelagos. He narrated that in 1690, a ship of the Portuguese got lost in one of islands in the northernmost part of the Paracels. All people on the ship were lost except for three or four persons swimming to the ashore of one of islands nearby. However, almost all these Portuguese died and only one survived until 1701 when a ship moving to Maccao and coming near the islands unintentionally

saved him.

Thus, in addition to describing the islands with warnings about the change of coastal currents in the northeast monsoon season so that ships paid careful attention to avoid being swept away, the author also showed the relation between the coastal islands and the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos at that time as well as the danger level of the "chains of rocks" of these two archipelagos for passing ships. That Alexander Hamilton provided information about the shipwreck of the Portuguese in the Paracels in 1690 emphasized how dangerous the Paracel Islands were in the opinion of contemporary Europeans. This indicates that until the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, Westerners did not know much about the characteristics of the ocean currents in the East Sea as well as the dangers lurking in Paracels. Therefore, ships chose a safer method, which was to follow the coast of Vietnam rather than venturing far from the shore to avoid being swept by strong currents towards the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands with a series of reefs and sandbanks up and down with the tide. It is noteworthy that for the first time, this archipelago was called Paracels or Paracel as it is today, not Pracel or Shoals of Pracel as some previously published works.

Only a few years after the work of Alexander Hamilton, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands continued to appear on map No 48 "*A map of the continent of the East-Indies &c*" printed in the atlas "*Atlas Minor*" by cartographer Herman Moll (1732). The entities on this map were drawn on a latitude and longitude coordinate system, although not as accurate as it is today. All countries in mainland Southeast Asia were outlined in pink to distinguish them from the Chinese territory outlined in saffron. The territory of Vietnam was presented quite clearly and had a dotted line to differentiate between Dang Ngoai and Dang Trong. Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands at this time were still drawn as a long strip of dots lying close to the coast as a part of Dang Trong, while the East was a wide sea without the appearance of any other Southeast Asian island nations, crossing the 15⁰ North latitude and about 110⁰ East longitude as The Shoal of Parcel. In this archipelago, there had appeared three clusters of small islands evenly distributed in the strip, in which the cluster of small islands located at the top opposite Da Nang was denoted as I. de Parcel. To the south of the Parcel archipelago were small islands designated as P. de Mar (Cu Lao Thu), P. de Terra (Cu Lao Cau), ... This map was subsequently reprinted in 1736 without any modifications. With this map, it can be seen that in



the perception of the West in general and the British in particular, the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were still considered as one of the important identifying features of the international maritime trade route passing through the East Sea. Herman Moll (1745) continued to publish the map "A chart of ye East-Indies with the coast of Persia, China also the Philippines, Moluca and Sunda Islands, &c". What was surprising about the cartographic technique in this map was that he both showed the latitude and longitude geographic coordinates while applying the traditional Western cartographic method prevailing in the world in the 16th and seventeenth century with sun-shaped circular centers and intersecting diagonal lines. Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were drawn as a dotted strip and annotated as Shoal of Paracel located close to the coast of Dang Trong and extending from the Quinin region (Quy Nhon) to the top of Faifo (Hoi An). Clearly showing that the Shoal of Paracel was attached to the territory of Dang Trong of Dai Viet at that time and completely separate from other countries in the region, showed that Westerners perceived this archipelago under the management of Dang Trong, or at least they depended on Dang Trong.

During this time, Emanuel Bowen (1750a, 1750b) also clearly showed the sea and islands of Vietnam in his maps. What is notable is that the Chinese territory, including I. Hainan Island (Hainan), was obviously shown by the author with a dark yellow national border. The entire mainland Southeast Asia bordering the Indian and Chinese peninsulas is highlighted in red. The territory of Vietnam was shown specifically and sharply by Emanuel Bowen with many annotations. The major centers of Vietnam at that time were apparently noted such as Kecho (Ke Cho), Kenam (Son Nam), Quambin (Quang Binh), Thuanoa (Thuan Hoa), Faifo (Hoi An), Pulo Campelo (Cu Lao Cham), Pulo Canton (Cu Lao Re), Quinin (Quy Nhon), Camorin Bay (Cam Ranh Bay), ... From the Gulf of Tonkin stretching down to Thuan Hoa area, Emanuel Bowen named Gulf of Coquinchina. Particularly, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were drawn by him resembling a seahorse with the back close to the coast of Cochinchina extending from above Cam Ranh Bay to the sea of Thuan Hoa and close to Cu Lao Re island for about 13^o to 17^o latitude North and 110^o East longitude, annotated in outstanding bold letters as Shoal of Pracel.

The work by Rollin referred to all the lands and territories including a section about the nation of Dai Viet. At this time, Dang Trong was divided "into five or six Provinces" (Rollin, 1755, p. 338)

with Kehue (Hue) as the capital of the kingdom as well as the living place of the King. When referring to the seas and islands of Dang Trong, he described that on the coast he situated some easily accessible ports on the east, and the water near the shore was in sixty or eighty fathom deep in some places. Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were also mentioned in the section on the dangerous warnings of the sea and islands of Dang Trong with many dangerous shelves on their coasts known as the Paracelles by European people. That was the reason why shipwrecks happened so often that Lord Nguyen in Dang Trong took advantage of this to send some vessels at different times of the year for collecting the stuff and other parts of the shipwreck like the one happening with the ship Arion, a famous European trader, lost on these coasts in 1714. It is significant that this information is quite consistent with the Vietnamese historical sources that recorded the birth of the Paracel islands team under Lord Nguyen Phuc Nguyen. Le Quy Don (2007) reflected that Lord Nguyen had ordered the Hoang Sa team of 70 people recruited from An Vinh commune. The Hoang Sa team carried enough food for 6 months, and in February every year, they went out to Hoang Sa to collect goods, gold, silver, bronze, guns and other items from shipwrecks. Le Quy Don also represented that in the sea of Quang Ngai there was Cu Lao Re island and beyond it was an archipelago called Dai Truong Sa. Lord Nguyen in Cochinchina established the Hoang Sa team to go out to Dai Truong Sa to collect the belongings of the shipwrecks. It took 3 days and 3 nights to get there, near Bac Hai zones. This was also stated by the Chinese monk Thich Dai San when he went to Dang Trong, every year, the Nguyen lords sent boats to the islands and sandbars of the Paracel islands archipelago to collect gold and silver tools of the damaged boats drifted in (1963). In short, the consistent information clearly shown in the sources of written history and maps shows the perception of Europeans in general and the British in particular about the Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands, which they called Paracels archipelago, Pracel or Shoal of Pracel being traditional fishing grounds of Cochinchina fishermen and under the management of the Cochinchina government. The description reflected by Rollin is completely objective and accurate when compared with Vietnamese historical sources about the process of establishing national sovereignty of Vietnam during the feudal period over these two archipelagoes.

In the years that followed, the Paracel Islands were widely recognized and disseminated by Westerners through historical, geographical and



cartographic works. In volume 7 of the series "*The Modern part of an Universal history from the earliest account of time*" (1759), the authors introduced the large islands along the Dang Trong coast of Dai Viet at that time such as Pullo Sicca (including two the islands of Cu Lao Thu and Cu Lao Cau), Publlo Secca de Mare (Cu Lao Thu), Pullo Cambir (Con Dao), Pullo Canton (Cu Lao Re), Cam-Pello (Cu Lao Cham) and added that an island namely Publlo Secca de Mare island, a chain of other barren and rocky islands, stretching themselves from the dangerous shallows called Paracel. This means that Cu Lao Thu and another chain of islands were close to the dangerous shallows of the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands, which were then called Paracel.

The map "*East Indies*" by the cartographer Thomas Kitchin (1770) published was not much different from that by Emanuel Bowen printed earlier. Furthermore, he omitted a lot of the information notes about the place names of both the Indian peninsula and Southeast Asia, showing only a few important centers with the same names of countries at that time. Vietnam on this map included Tonquin (Dang Ngoai) and Cochinchina (Dang Trong). In Dang Ngoai, there were places like Cachao or Kecho (Ke Cho), Hean (Pho Hien), Domea system, and Kehoa (Thanh Hoa). The Gulf of Tonkin from the waters of Quang Ninh extending down to present-day Nghe An was named Gulf of Tonquin, not Gulf of Coquinchina like some previous maps. The Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands were still represented as Pracel consisting of groups of small islands. The most obvious point is that the coastline and islands near the coast of Vietnam were colored blue by Thomas Kitchin. Beyond the waters of central Vietnam today are the Pracel Islands drawn from about 12⁰ to 17⁰ north latitude and between 110⁰ and 111⁰ east longitude. In the same year, Thomas Kitchin (1770) had the map namely "*A Map of the East India Islands*" published in the "*Millar's New Complete & Universal System of Geography*". Basically, his representation of the Pracel Islands was not much different from the previous map.

In volume 2 of the encyclopedia "*Encyclopedia Britannica*", first published in 1771, a brief introduction to Dang Trong was given. From 1778 to 1783, this encyclopedia continued to be organized, compiled, supplemented and republished up to 10 volumes. The description of Dang Trong of Vietnam at that time was in the COC section of volume 3. Geographically, Dang Trong was described as a kingdom in Asia, bordering with Tonquin to the north; the sea of China to the east,

the Indian ocean to the south, Cambodia and a range of mountains called Kemois (Truong Son) by a group people living there to the west. The people here were supposed to be the happiest under the reigns of the first six kings before Lord Nguyen diminishing the simple habitation of his ancestors and starting to build castles and palaces in the model of Pekin (Dong Kinh, ie Thang Long) over the following century. The people of Dang Trong were exploited by heavy taxes and by the local government, so many had to leave the village to make the fields more desolate (Encyclopaedia, 1778, p. 2049). In the history of Vietnam, the 6th lord to rule Dang Trong was Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu. The next rulers of Dang Trong were Nguyen Phuc Chu (1725 - 1738), Nguyen Phuc Khoat (1738 - 1765) and then Nguyen Phuc Thuan (1765 - 1777). Perhaps, the authors described the decline and crisis of Dang Trong under the rule of Lord Nguyen Phuc Khoat or Lord Nguyen Phuc Thuan. The climate characteristics of the sea between Dang Trong and Malacca were also described in specific details. From April to August with the act of western monsoons, the currents fet eastward against the general motion while they moved westward and conspired with the general motion for rest of the year and. These currents operated so strongly in these seas that many unexperienced sailors mistook them for waves beating the rocks, known as breakers. Especially, after the 15th of February, the currents occasionally fet towards India on the east from the Maldives, against the general motion of the sea. For the coast of China to the waters of Cambodia, the currents fet to the north-west during the two ending months of a year, and to the south-west from January onward with rapidity like an arrow to the shoals of Paracel (Encyclopaedia, 1778, p. 2343).

During the last 20 years of the eighteen century, a series of maps in English were published. In the map "*A New & accurate map of Asia*" (Bowen, 1777), Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands were still drawn as a strip of slashes running close to the coast of Dang Trong called Pracel. They extended and lied in the east of the coastal islands of Dang Trong from present-day Binh Thuan up to the upper part of the Faifo Sea (Hoi An), along about 110⁰ East longitude. The most notable is the map "*A New General Map of the East Indies*" (Laurie & Whittle, 1794). A special feature is that the countries on the map were shown through the intensity of different colors with a lot of geographical indication information. Vietnam was quite clearly divided into two regions including Tonkin (Dang Ngoai) and Cochinchina (Dang Trong) with a groove line like a



trench in the smallest waist of Quang Binh Province with the caption *A Wall to defend Cochinchina*. Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands on this map were still referred to collectively as "Paracel" but were drawn into two distinct clusters of islands, concentrated in the north and south of the 15⁰ North latitude running along the coast of Dang Trong. Of these, a group of small islands of the northern part of Paracel was annotated as Northern Islands (present-day Da Bac island cluster). Thomas Kitchin's maps continued to be reprinted without changes compared to his original versions (1789, 1795). In 1792, Britain sent a visiting delegation to China led by Macartney with Staunton's assistant. On May 20, 1793, the British delegation moved into the East Sea, came near Dang Trong, and passed between its shores and a varied range of rocks and islets, called the Paracels. On May 23, 1793, the British delegation arrived at Da Nang Bay and stopped here for a while (Staunton, 1797a, 1797b).

In short, although there had been many works and maps that provided important information to guide them, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands adjacent to the international maritime trade route of the East Sea still remained an obsession for passing trains in the last years of the eighteenth century. In the eyes of the British, the archipelago they called Pracel and Paracels, which was initially vague, gradually became clearer. This is most evident on maps published in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, where Paracels were shown as two clusters of islands concentrated in the north and south off the coast of Dang Trong. The northern island cluster was still known as Pracel or Paracels with some small islands having geographical indication names.

Clearing the vague perception about Paracel Islands with updated information

It is also worth mentioning the maps by Robert Laurie and Whittle. In terms of the layout and geographical indication information, the two maps reflected exactly the same, just with different map colors. Like the previous maps, the map clearly distinguished the mainland Southeast Asian countries in blue-gray and India and China (including Hainan) in light yellow with dark yellow borders. Inheriting the features from a map published earlier by Robert Laurie, this map divided Dang Ngoai and Dang Trong by a groove in Quang Binh called Wall. Some important landmarks of Vietnam were also noted, such as Kecho (Ke Cho, ie Dong Kinh), Domea (port system of the Dang Ngoai rivers), Kehoa (Thanh Hoa) and Gulf of Tonkin in Dang Ngoai; Sinhóa (Thuan Hoa), Turon (Da

Nang), Faifo (Hoi An), Cantan (Cu Lao Re), Pulo Condore (Con Dao), Pulo Sapata (Hon Hai island) of Dang Trong. Unlike previous maps, Paracel and Spratly archipelagos were shown as two separate archipelagos stretching and being close to the coast of Dang Trong, from Thuan Hoa to Binh Thuan sea, and lying between 15⁰ North latitudes with the inscription Paracel splitting the two archipelagos into two parts in the North and the South. Also on this archipelago was a small dotted to the east of the Paracel Islands above 15⁰ North latitude called Macclesfield Shoal (1799a, 1799b). This shoal was named after the English ship Macclesfield that got lost here in 1701 and saved the Portuguese sailors who survived their shipwreck here in 1690 that Hamilton once described (1727).

Right at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the widespread knowledge of Dang Trong and the Paracel Islands, Westerners' perception of the territories of nations associated with the East Sea became increasingly obvious, especially their understanding of the dangerous threats on the international maritime trade route of the East Sea. Thomas Pennant (1800) reflected Paracels as an archipelago off the coast of Dang Trong with a vast area of rocks, reefs, sand-banks, and small isles, extending from Lat, 12⁰10' N to 6⁰45' N with two hundred and seventy-six miles in length, and sixty in width. A group of small reefs and rocks, called the Triangles lied to the north-east, and a great uncommon shaped shoal namely the Macclesfield lied a little to the south-east. Distance between Hainan (Hainan Island) to the nearest extremity of the Paracels was around one hundred and thirty miles with clear and deep waters where trains passed. They sailed between the coast of Dang Trong and the Paracels until they got to Campellos (Cu Lao Cham) islets in lat. 16⁰10'.

A series of geographical works and travelogues published in English in the early years of the nineteenth century referring to the Paracel Islands supplemented the geographical indications of the previous maps and further showed the importance of these two archipelagos in the Western perception of international shipping routes through the East Sea.

John Barrow - a member of the British delegation in the years 1792 - 1794 (1806), on the way to China, the British delegation stopped in Da Nang from May 24 to June 16, 1793. He described the types of ships used by the Vietnamese including sailing ships, the vessels used in maritime trade, the fishing crafts to collect the Trepan and swallow's nests. According to him, many of these ships were the Chinese Sampans, covered with sheds of mats



under which a whole family dwelled and of other types, resembling the common proas of the Malays in hulls and rigging. Dang Trong fishermen harvested swallows' nests in great quality on the large cluster of islands running parallel with the coast, and known in the charts as the Paracels, the Bichos do Mar, as well as other marine products such as sea -snakes, sea-slugs (Trepan) sharks' tins, Molluscs or sea-blubbers, animal or vegetable. As reflected by Barrow, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands at that time were still collectively known as Paracels and were the traditional fishing grounds of Dang Trong fishermen. However, it is hard to believe that bird's nest can be found in the Paracels as mentioned by John Barrow. In fact, swiftlets nest mainly in the coastal islands of Central Vietnam. In the records of Le Quy Don mentioning that the Paracel Islands team was sent out to the Paracel Islands to collect the remains of the shipwrecks, it was only "*tha hồ bắt chim cá mà ăn*" (Đôn, 2007, p. 155). In the state documents of the Nguyen Dynasty (*châu bản*) and other historical and geographical works at that time, there was no information about bird's nest when mentioning the Paracels. Perhaps this was a mistake in the process of collecting information about the fishing activities and collection of products of Dang Trong fishermen, especially in the Turon area (ie Da Nang). Until 1926, the French Gouvernement general de l'Indochine made a survey of natural condition, biological resources, and fishing in the East Sea, including two archipelagos of Paracels and Spratly. The published results showed that there were no nests and swiftlets in Paracel and Spratly archipelagos (Delacour, 1930). The accounts that John Barrow described about Cochinchina, including the fishing activities of Dang Trong fishermen in the East Sea, were cited by Taylor, so there were also the same incorrect information as mentioned above (Taylor, 1807). On map N^o 28 by Thomas Brown(1808), the boundary between mainland Southeast Asia was clearly distinguished from the southern part of China at that time. The annotations about Vietnam on this map still included two parts, Tonquin and Cochinchina, and a series of landmarks from North to South. Paracel Islands were drawn as a series of islands located outside the waters of Dang Trong between 110^o East longitude and 15^o North latitude along with a number of islands and rocks called Lincoln, Triangles, Maccelsfield and a small dotted circle near the sea of the Philippines annotated as Scarboro Shoal. The remarkable thing is that this map is different from the previous map, a series of small islands lying horizontally with Khanh Hoa waters dragging down

to Binh Thuan waters with a series of annotations such as Hardy (Da Phat Tu), Middeberg, Esscel and Cambridge. They are entities belonging to the present day Spratly Island.

Thanks to the continuous investigation of the expeditions and the recorded information of the merchant ships when going to the East Sea, Paracel Island was increasingly recognized by Europeans more clearly and accurately. James Playfair (1813) stated that the archipelago to the eastward of Da Nang was called Paracels, at some distance from the coast in 15^o North latitude, with a chain of islets, rocks and shoals, about 100 leagues in length and 15 leagues in width, with a group of shoals called Lunettes, in 17^o North latitude beyond it. Of note is the "ASIA" map (Pinkerton et al., 1818), on which the Paracel Islands were plotted as a number of island clusters located off the coast of Vietnam across 15^o North latitude and between 110^o and 112^o East longitude with the symbol I. Pracels. In addition, a number of other shoals and reefs were also noted near I. Pracles, Macclefield Bank, Scarborough Shoat. From 10^o to 15^o North latitude and 110^o to 115^o East longitude were a series of coral reefs, reefs, islands that were named as Low Sandy, Falmouth, Breckers, Isle seen by the Carmel, Middleburg, Gaspar Shoal, ... This distinction shows that, in the common perception of contemporary Westerners, Paracel Islands was located just off the coast of Dang Trong of contemporary Vietnam. The highlight of this map is that although the Spratly Islands had not been internationally named as Spratly Islands today, the authors showed that the Paracels archipelago was separated into two archipelagos quite clearly.

From surveys, investigation and mapping measurements, the world's understanding of Paracel Island has become accurate, gradually dispelling the fear of navigators when moving through the East Sea. The perception of Paracel Islands, which used to be the obsession of these navigators since ancient times until recently, was pointed out by John White as a "chain of low islands, coral reefs, and sand banks, extending from the latitude of 12^o to 17^o north" (1824, p. 95). The north-north-east and south-south-west looked like the human foot, and within a distance of about 16 leagues from the coast of Cochinchina. Its widest part, in the latitude of about 16^o north, was about 30 leagues. Lying between the latitudes of 15^o46', and 17^o6' north; and from longitude 111^o121-2' to 112^o42' East, the archipelago which had been believed as a formidable place was now certified to be a group of islands and reefs with good and safe channels in between, especially with many good anchorages.



John White (1824) also stated that the recent investigations, discoveries in these seas by Lieutenants Ross and Maughan, of the Bombay marine, Discovery and Investigator were productive of correct charts and helpful information, making the navigation far less arduous and dangerous. The French works translated into English also provided the specific location of the Paracel Islands with the latest results. According to M. Malte Brun (1829), the Pracel or Paracels was an labyrinth of islets, rocks, and shallows, extending in a line parallel to the coast of Cochinchina (Dang Trong) between north latitude $10^{\circ} 45'$ and $16^{\circ} 30'$, and east longitude 109° like in the most approved charts. Surprisingly, some French navigators crossed a part of it without encountering any rocks or shallows, meaning that this archipelago was less extensive than it appeared in maps. The difference in the geographical location of the Paracel Islands by Brun compared to White's is due to his use of measurements basing on the Paris longitude.

The written documents and maps were found to make great contributions to changing the view of the British in particular and Europeans in general about the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos, which they collectively called Pracel or Paracel, full of unpredictable dangers with small islands, reefs or shoals forming a strip running close to the coastal islands and archipelagos of Vietnam in the prior period. The Paracel archipelago also appeared increasingly clear with the gradual formation of two archipelagos at its northern and southern ends. In addition, the names associated with some islands in the Paracel and Spratly archipelagoes began to appear as a geographical indication for navigators when passing through the East Sea (see Laurie & Whittle, 1799a, 1799b; Brown, 1808; Playfair, 1813; Pinkerton et al., 1818). People's perceptions changed quickly when they noticed "this archipelago, once so formidable from its great imaginary extent and terrific character, is now ascertained to be a group of islands and reefs, of no great extent, with good and safe channels between most of them, and in many places good anchorage" (White, 1824, p. 96). Also, the threat of the Paracel Islands significantly lessened because "some French navigators have crossed a part of this space without encountering any rocks or shallows, whence we must conclude that this archipelago is in reality less extensive than it appears in our maps" (Brun, 129, p. 286). It can be seen from the documents that the Paracel archipelago was always located in the space of Cochinchina (ie Dang Trong in the eighteenth century and Nam Ky in the nineteenth century), and it was a traditional fishing ground for Vietnamese

fishermen (Barrow, 1806). At a certain time annually, the Cochinchina authorities sent a fleet of boats to the Paracel Islands to collect stuff from shipwrecks and many of them lost their life in the sea. In Ly Son (Quang Ngai Province today), there are still commemoration activities held to remember those in the Paracel squad who died in the East Sea (see Roszko, 2010).

Comprehensive Awareness of Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands

On the map "ASIA" No.27, Arrowsmith (1834) drew regions and territories of Asian countries with different colors on a latitude and longitude coordinate system. The territory of Vietnam and Southeast Asia area were colored in light blue, completely different from the Chinese territory including Hainan island with the border in yellow. At that time, Dai Nam was the national name of Vietnam and under the reign of Minh Mang King. This map showed that Dai Nam consisted of two regions, Tonquin (North Vietnam, ie Bac Ky) and Cochinchina (South Vietnam, ie Nam Ky) and called it Anam (An Nam). The coastline of Vietnam from the North to the South was colored blue-gray with a series of names of islands, estuaries and bays and some local landmarks of the time. The highlight of this map is that the Paracel Islands were no longer shown as a strip of dots or clusters of small islands running parallel to the coast of Nam Ky (ie Dang Trong prior). Near the Nam Ky coast of Vietnam were the Paracel Islands with landmarks such as Robert (Huu Nhat Island), Tritons (Tri Ton Island), Amphitrite (An Vinh Island group), Lincoln (Linh Con Island), Bombay Shoal (Bong Bay reef), Macclesfield Bank (Bai can Macclesfield) and Scarborough Shoal (Bai can Scarborough) located above 15° North latitudes between 110° and 115° east longitudes. He also represented the features of the present-day Spratly Islands by small plus signs spanning a large space completely separating from the Paracels. There were some geographical indications such as N.W Island (present-day Northeast Cay, Song Tu Tay Island) and South I (present-day Southwest Cay, Song Tu Dong Island), Ganges (Ganges Reef, Nui Da Troi), Investigator (present-day Investigator Northeast Shoal, Bai Phu My), Cornwallis S.Sh (present-day Cornwallis Shoal Reef, Da Nui Le), Investigator (present-day Investigator Shoal, Bai Tham Hiem), London Shoals (present-day London Reefs, Truong Sa group), Amboina (present-day Amboyna Cay, An Bang Island), R. Charlotte (Charlottle Bank, Bai Charlotte), Louisa (present-day Louisa Reef, Daouisa), ... In short, up to this point, the former



Paracel Islands were clearly distinguished into two archipelagos, Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands. A special feature is that the English names of the features of these two archipelagos are similar to the current English international names.

Although the international name Spratly Islands did not appear on this map, the presence of the above mentioned features demonstrates that the Paracels archipelago, as traditionally called, was divided into two completely separated archipelagos. This map can be seen as a beautiful map and shows accurate geographical position of the entities in the Paracel Islands at the time.

Inheriting the achievements of the survey, measurement and maritime mapping of the survey team in the East Sea and Paracels Islands in the years from 1806 to 1820 by Lieutenants Ross and Maughan, information about the Paracel Islands appearing in geographical and historical works and encyclopedias has become reliable. One typical work compiled by James Horsburgh (1836) and evaluated as a standards work on Eastern maritime at that time. In volume 2 of this work, the author dedicated a separated session to write about "Paracels, and Banks or Dangers in the Northern part of the China Sea" (Horsburgh, 1836, p. 331 – 336). He described Paracel Islands as a collection of entities including a continuous large bank, alternating groups of large and small islands, stretching north and south from lat. 12° to about 16° or 17° North, in a distance of 15 to 20 leagues from the coast of Cochinchina (Nam Ky in historical and geographical works of contemporary Vietnam). Other shoals and islands, known as Amphitrite, Lincoln, &c. were about 3° farther to the eastward. All the dangers described formed only one archipelago which consisted of shoals and low islets not far from one another. According to the data provided by James Horsburgh, we can see the geographical location, identification features as well as the relationship of each island, reef to surrounding features: North Shoal was in lat. $17^{\circ}6'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}32' \frac{1}{2}'$ East, as the North Westernmost danger of the Paracels; the group Amphitrite was formed from five low narrow islands, connected with each other by a rock reef of 2 to 3 miles in length. Meanwhile, the western extremity of danger was in lat. $16^{\circ}59'$ North and can. $112^{\circ}12'$ East, at about 4 leagues East – South East, and the eastern extremity extending from lat. $16^{\circ}54'$ North to can. $112^{\circ}23'$ East, forming the danger to the North of Archipelago; Other islands such as Woody Island, in lat. $16^{\circ}50'$ North and can. $112^{\circ}18'$ East, distance of $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, connected with Rocky Island which was in lat. $16^{\circ}52'$ North and

can. $112^{\circ}20'$ East, and nearly of the same height as Woody Island; Lincoln Island was in lat. $16^{\circ}40'$ North and $112^{\circ}37'$ East, and this was the easternmost island of the Paracels; Pyramid Rock was in lat. $16^{\circ}36'$ North and $112^{\circ}37'$ East; Bombay's Shoal was in lat 16° to $16^{\circ}6'$ North and $112^{\circ}26'$ to $112^{\circ}38'$ East, forming the eastern boundary of the Paracels.

When referring to the Crescent Chain group (Nguyet Thiem or Trang Khuyet in Vietnamese), Horsburgh pointed out that this island group included islands such as Money, Robert, Pattle, Drummon and Duncan, extending from lat. $16^{\circ}27'$ to $16^{\circ}32'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}29'$ to $111^{\circ}44'$ East; Observation Bank was in lat. $16^{\circ}35'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}40' \frac{1}{2}'$ East, situated on the North side of the Crescent Chain; Discovery Shoal or Reef was in lat. $16^{\circ}11'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}32' \frac{1}{2}'$ East, in $5 \frac{1}{2}$ leagues length with its eastern extremity being in lat. $16^{\circ}16'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}46' \frac{1}{2}'$ East; Vulador's Shoal stretched from north to east and from south to west about 7 miles. Captain Ross made the centre of this shoal in lat. $16^{\circ}18'$ North and lon. $112^{\circ}2'$ East. The Portuguese Snow showed it in lat. $16^{\circ}19'$ North and lon. $112^{\circ}5'$ East, bearing South 15° West from Amphitrite Islands; Passo Keal in lat. $16^{\circ}2'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}45'$ East, was a small sandy island to the southward of Discovery; Triton Island in lat. $15^{\circ}46'$ North and lon. $111^{\circ}11'$ East was the southernmost and westernmost danger of the Paracels, bearing from Pulo Canton (Cù Lao Ré), the nearest land of Nam Ky, in lat. 11° North, distant 122 miles; Macclesfield Bank was in lat. $15^{\circ}17'$ to $16^{\circ}19'$ North. In this work, Scarborough Shoal was also described in quite detail by him.

Thus, until the first half of the nineteenth century, the Paracel archipelago was described pretty carefully with important features such as the Amphitrite group in the East and the Crescent group in the West. In the Amphitrite group, James Horsburgh provided information on the geographical location and identification of the entities Woody Island (Phu Lam Island), Lincoln Island (Lin Con Island), Rocky Island (Da Island), Pyramid Rock (Hon Thap), Bombay Reef (Bong Bay reef). Similarly, the entities of the Crescent group (Nguyet Thiem or Trang Khuyet Group) were described by him as North Shoal (Da Bac Island), Money Island (Dao Quang Anh Island), Robert Island (Huu Nhat Island), Pattle Island (Paracel Island), Drummond Island (Duy Mong Island) and Duncan Island (Quang Hoa Island), Passo Keal (international name today Passu Keal, ie Bach Quy Island), Triton Island (Tri Ton Island) and the



Observation Bank (Bai Xa Cu). Cu), Vulador reef (Chim En Rock), Discovery Reef (Da Loi reef). What is remarkable is that in the detailed statistics and description of the Paracel Islands at this time, there was the presence of Macclesfield Bank and Scarborough Shoal or Reef. This shows that the Paracels appeared in complete clarity and accuracy in the eyes of Westerners.

During this time, the Paracel archipelago continued to be described by Napier (1842), but it was no longer relevant, as continuous explorations and measurements had provided more detailed and accurate information about it. The authors (Smedley, et al., 1845) once again mentioned the Paracel archipelago not only a fishing ground but also a place for collecting stuff from the shipwrecks drifting in the islands of this archipelago of Vietnamese fishermen. And in Lowry's map (1848), Paracel Islands were drawn at about 15° North latitude and 112° East longitude located just off the coast with Hue down to Cham Callo (Cu Lao Cham) with the words Parcel R., Amphitrite, and Macclesfield. Unlike John Arrowsmith's map (1842), the Spratly Islands features did not appear on this map in terms of signs and geographical designations.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a series of published works in English continued to reflect on the Paracel archipelago. For example, in volume 5 of *"Gazetteer of The World, or Dictionary of Geographical Knowledge"* (1856), Paracels were described as a group of islands and rocks in the China sea, extending between 15° 46' to 17° 8' North latitude, and between 111° 10' and 112° 44' East longitude. About 15 miles from the Southeast of Hainan and from the East coast of Cochinchina were several groups such as Discovery, Amphitrite, and Voadore. The authors also noted that this archipelago was politically considered a dependency of the Annam empire. From the records of this dictionary, it can be seen that, in the perception of Europeans, the Paracel archipelago under the management of the contemporary Vietnamese government and was a traditional fishing ground for Nam Ky fishermen.

When Knight (1866) wrote about the Paracels, he also pointed out that it was rocky and fringed by a great number of islands, including a group of small reefs called the Triangles and the dangerous Macclesfield shoals. And these waters and islands were where Nam Ky fishermen operated fishing as well as collecting items from shipwrecks. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, another map titled *"Siam and the Malay Archipelago"* (1895) showed the entire Southeast Asia region with

full countries. Vietnam was shown on this map as Anam (ie, An Nam), whose coastline and border with China are colored in light purple, while the southern border of China and Hainan Island was highlighted in dark yellow. Paracel Islands with island groups were represented between 16° North latitude and 111° to 115° East longitude close to the coast from Hue down to Quang Ngai. The Spratly Islands with its features were shown in the middle of the East Sea, completely separate from the Paracel Islands to the north. It can be said that this is one of the most beautiful and informative maps of the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos in the nineteenth century.

After centuries of exploration, the Paracel or Paracels became apparent from one archipelago to two separate archipelagos, Paracel Island (India Dickey, 1836; Arrowsmith, 1842) and the Spratly Islands (see Andree, 1895; Hancox & Prescott, 1995) as it is today. The series of features of these two archipelagos were specifically pointed out in terms of their geographical location, characteristics with surrounding islands and reefs, as well as convenient locations for ships to anchor. In the eyes of Europeans, "this archipelago is politically considered a dependency of the Annam empire" (Gazetteer, 1856, p. 779). Also, they acknowledged the activities of Vietnamese fishermen "who sail up and down looking out for such windfalls, falling upon and plundering the wreck without mercy" (Knight, 1866, p. 521).

Conclusion

Along with the strong development of the world's maritime trade, Westerners' understanding of countries and peoples in the world has been increasingly enriched through the reflection of geographical and historical works, nautical charts and maps. The Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands located off the coast of Vietnam, known by Europeans as Pracel, Paracel or Paracels with a series of shipwrecks that were especially noted by navigators when they moved through this sea. Since then, we have witnessed a process of changing the perception of Westerners for a long time.

In the eighteenth century, the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos in the eyes of Europeans were somehow vague as a collection of very dangerous shoals and shoals stretching off the coast of Dang Trong. They were like an unpredictable trap set out on the international maritime trade route through the East Sea, forcing ships to stay close to the Dang Trong coast of Vietnam if did not want to be stranded or shipwrecked. However, according to what they observed and reflected, the East Sea and



Paracels were fishing grounds for fishing and collecting fossils of the shipwrecks of Dang Trong fishermen. By the end of the nineteenth century, with a series of maps, records, and measurements in the East Sea, Paracel Islands and Spratly Island in the perception of Europeans became more and more clear. Especially on the maps, Paracel Islands began to appear as clusters of islands and shoals with specific names. Some documents also clearly reflected that Lord Nguyen of Dang Trong sent a fleet of ships to Paracels to retrieve goods and parts of shipwrecks.

In the nineteenth century, many expeditions and surveys took place continuously in the East Sea, which fundamentally changed the perception of the West and the rest of the world. The geographic location of the Paracel Islands were shown specifically with its islands and rocks and shoals. Moreover, the relationship of each island with other islands and their hydrological regime was also clearly described and in detail. Besides, in the eyes of the West, Paracel Islands were associated with Cochinchina (Nam Ky in documents of contemporary Vietnam) as an identifying feature for navigators when entering the East Sea. And politically, some documents even claimed that Paracel Islands were under the management of the An Nam empire. This paper is completed on the basis of the research project code B2019-TTB-04. The author would like to thank the members of the project B2019-TTB-04.

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