

PREFACE

Taiwan, when it first emerged onto the world stage in the 17th Century, was already a maritime state and a transport hub for international trade in East Asia. Taiwan's development has always been closely linked to the ocean. The 17th Century was a golden age in the history of Taiwan, during which Taiwan vigorously reached out and embraced the ocean, bringing about a period of dynamism and immense possibility. After being annexed by the Ming and Ching Dynasties, Taiwan became an outlying island distant from the Central Plains of the mainland China. Following strict ban on maritime trade and exchange with foreign countries that lasted for several hundred years, Taiwan was closed off from the ocean and faded away from the world stage.

We now must renew our commitment to reach out and embrace the ocean, for it is certainly not where our footsteps end; rather, it is the infinite extension of our horizon and the springboard for our future development. As people of a maritime nation, we are endowed with the richness of the sea. We should, therefore, cherish and respect the oceans, for the abundant resources we are stewards of, and with better knowledge and greater understanding.

With the publication of this book, we wish to present an easy-to-understand and comprehensive introduction of Taiwan's "Blue Territory"—the oceanic coverage, geographical characteristics, humanity, culture and customs of the surrounding archipelagoes, outlying island chains and reefs. These territorial waters and archipelagoes are part of Taiwan's national territory where we have built a homeland of our own. It is my earnest hope that all people of Taiwan will develop a sense of belonging and identity towards this land and our country. In this light, I believe this innovative book will serve as an excellent reference to all.

To promote our vision for Taiwan—an oceanic state that safeguards the ocean, manages maritime resources, and embraces the ocean—this book adopts a straightforward approach to give the readers a broad understanding of topics pertaining to Taiwan's territorial waters. We also hope it will ignite our compassion for the oceans and re-establish the position and developmental strategies for Taiwan as a maritime nation in the 21st Century.

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