

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY EYEWITNESSES TAIWAN' S FIRST OCEANIC NATIONAL PARK

英文電子報

Travelers around the world may not be familiar with the beautiful Pratas Island to the south of Taiwan. The good news is that it will become the first oceanic national park of Taiwan. Prof. Chang Su-bing, of Dept. of History, has participated in the project of “Interviewing the Pratas Island Fishermen and Promoting Reservation of Oceanic Resources,” commissioned by Construction and Planning Agency, Ministry of the Interior (CPAMI), and she eyewitnesses the preparation for the establishment of “Pratas Atoll National Park” to be open to the public in ten years.

The Pratas Islands is located at the node of the South China Sea, the Pacific Ocean, and the Indian Ocean. It is composed of atoll of 80,000 hectares, worthy of being one of the World Heritages. And like the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, the oceanic ecosystem of the Pratas Islands has been endangered by both the Global Warming and the fishermen' s exploitation by bombing and poisoning fish. 98% of the nearby corals are bleaching. The purpose of Prof. Chang' s research and instruction is to heal the present ecological damages for future recovery. Prof. Chang implores the urgency of the recovery works.

The Pratas Islands is stationed with Taiwan military, and civilians are not allowed to visit the islands. Prof. Chang is the first one to record the oral history of the atoll area. She has visited the atoll twice for researches. Every time, she had different discovery. Prof. Chang indicates that the objects of her researches are fishermen and officers of coastal patrol, and it is very challenging to chase them among winds and waves. Sometime she feels like sailing on a pirate ship, and sometime like throwing against the waves on a Bungy Jumping. The military has offered her a ride on the 2000 tons patrol cruiser of Coast Guard Administration (CGA).

According to Chang' s observation, the major difficulty for recruiting visitors in the future is in transportation.

Prof. Chang Su-bing is a scholar of aboriginal history and Taiwan history. She often leads students to do field studies during winter and summer vacations. The visit to and researches on the Pratas Islands is a unique chance for her and her students. Chen Kuan-wen, a second year graduate student who also participates in the project, says cheerfully, “This tour studies make me heartily understand the significance of the Chinese proverb— “To read a thousand volumes of books can not be compared with to walk a thousand miles of road.” (~ Chen Chi-szu)

