

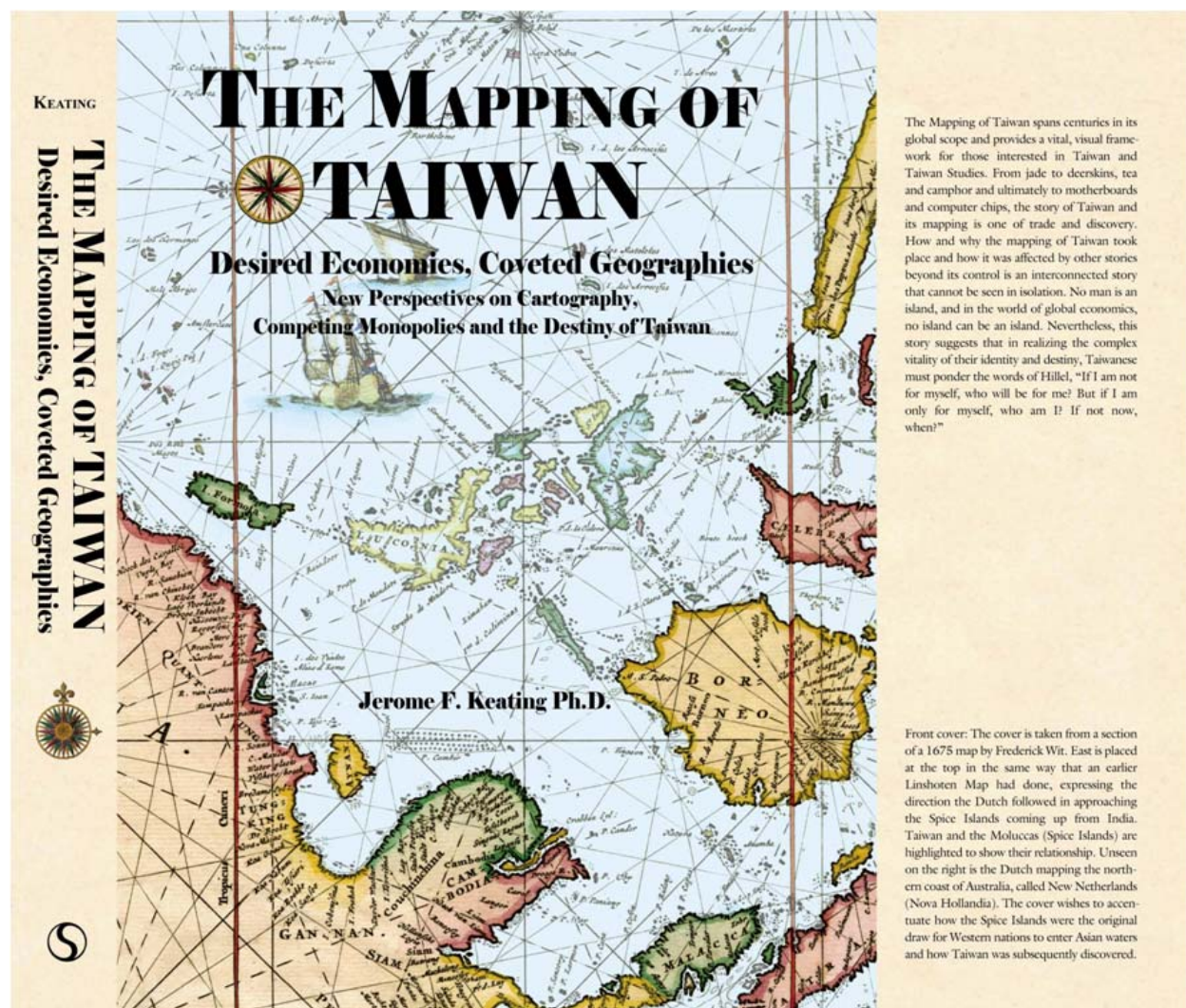
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The Driving Forces and Scope of The Mapping of Taiwan

By Jerome F. Keating

Those who define history as the heart of civic prudence and Geography as the heart and illumination of history seem to state things aright. For no exploit great or small is performed without location, nor can any place on earth be accurately defined without Geography.¹ (Joan Blaeu, Atlas Major of 1665)

There is a glib saying . . . that 'trade follows the flag'; an apothegm that succeeds in putting the cart before the horse with greater aplomb than almost any other cant phrase in common use.² (R. Hargreaves, Enemy at the Gate)



Underpinning the upcoming book The Mapping of Taiwan, Desired Economies, Coveted Geographies, New Perspectives on Cartography, Competing Monopolies and the Destiny of Taiwan are the concepts of geographic location and the observation that more often than not the flag follows trade instead of trade following the flag. Indeed, it was the great economic profitability of the spice trade that tempted Western merchants to venture into Asian waters to seek out the mysterious Spice Islands.³ For a long time these traders had been held back because they lacked the ships capable of the journey. This technological limitation was overcome when the Portuguese developed the ocean going caravel in the 15th century.⁴ These traders along with explorers soon, nonetheless, encountered another challenge with the realization that without maps it would still be impossible to both find and return to those lucrative islands.⁵ This difficulty was initially addressed by hiring suitable local guides thus enabling Western merchants to arrive at Asia and establish entrepôts and bases in the Spice Islands and the surrounding territory. Their national flags soon followed, but more significantly, in this process of finding and mapping the Spice Islands, numerous nations would eventually also discover and map Taiwan. Some would even come to colonize it. While the Spice Islands—and not Taiwan—were the original draw, Taiwan's strategic geographic location on trade routes, its available proximity to the upcoming potential markets of China and Japan and later the wealth of Taiwan's own resources would compel a variety of nations to give Taiwan an increasingly special place on their maps, regardless of whether the nations pursued trade or were future colonizers.⁶

In presenting a wide range of maps from the 16th century on to the present, this work provides historic visual footprints/records of the many nations that became involved in Taiwan and its mapping. The book does not eschew traditional historical methods and narrative; instead it recognizes such methods and a historical framework is provided alongside the maps. At the same time, this work aims to demonstrate that the visual itself can be its own historical record. Through all, the multiple maps serve as the concrete, visual tracks and indexes of the economic and political confrontations involving Taiwan. The maps also provide a visual record of the colonial confrontations that brought Taiwan out of relative obscurity and gave it a place in a larger world; a place that would grow in prominence and visibility, a place holding a crucial position and role on the crossroads between east and west. Readers will gain insight into how and why Taiwan has become the dangerous flashpoint that it is today.

Additionally, because the maps have different authors/makers, these maps further serve as a visual scorecard or roster of the many nations and players that influenced Taiwan—for better or for worse—as they brought Taiwan to what it is today. Finally, in an age of satellite images and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) where traditional maps would appear to be becoming obsolete, this work provides newer extra-geographic maps that demonstrate that there still remains other needed information that must be convincingly conveyed which cannot be provided by satellite images. More specifically, the book proposes that maps can serve as a new medium in the information age for envisioning much of the vital information needed to navigate the new “perilous waters” Taiwan finds itself in after having become a full-fledged democracy⁷. Even after its colonial era, Taiwan is still being mapped by outsiders; yet it has also found that it can not only shape its economy but it is establishing its own imagined community.⁸ In this it is also increasingly able to map itself.

Start with geography. As the epigraph by Joan Blaeu in his Atlas Major of 1665, expresses, geography illuminates history; maps in turn illuminate and clarify geography. Unfortunately, however, there is more than one type of geography. Besides traditional land mass geography, there are imagined geographies created and justified in the minds of avaricious merchants and expanding nations intent on colonialism. Edward Said in his monograph Orientalism analyzed how nations—and in particular western powers—in pursuit of trade and monopolies approached the militarily weaker kingdoms of indigenous peoples and perceived their lands as “imagined geographies;” that is, those lands were seen as virgin territory; there for the taking or for colonizing⁹. This “taking” was done in the name of desired economies and coveted geographies, for before nations colonize, they have to covet and map what they covet. Their reason to covet and map lands may include prestige and power, but above all, the intent is economic. Nations thereby discursively construct their potential territories as desired economies. To illuminate this proposition, The Mapping of Taiwan goes beyond examining the historic role that maps play. Readers will be challenged to rethink the paradigms by which they look at and judge historic information and the visual information of maps through a decidedly economic lens. As this book explores the contextual framework and motivations that influence the reasons why maps have become desired and necessary, it will address specific and local issues in the context of a greater international scope. The book focuses primarily on investigating the maps of Taiwan and how they provide a visual footprint of the process in which nations coveted Taiwan. In a broader context, the maps will point to the impact wrought by the changing world events as well as the multiple participants that have had influential roles on this “stage” of Taiwan. The work also intimates how those multiple participants—while caught up in their own endeavors—would often be equally challenged and affected by unforeseen events happening far outside the realm of Taiwan. The interconnectivity of these broad and narrow events as well as the wide ranging suggested influence of multiple participants and factors reflect contentions found in the field of process philosophy¹⁰. Readers will find in the mappings presented in this book, numerous interlayered stories that are involved in key world events. On the one hand the book will limit itself and focus on the concrete, specific and narrow confines of particular maps of Taiwan over the centuries, on the other, the book will also express how these maps must be seen in the overall context of numerous external events. In this way, while the maps record a continuing and involved interest in Taiwan by outsiders, the end results of the participants' efforts may more often than not, also be affected by what is occurring beyond the confines of Taiwan.

The book begins with trade and desired economies as prelude. Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations postulated and then concluded that mercantilism or mercantile trade is a crucial part of any developing and desired economy.¹¹ Trade not only opens new markets for surplus goods produced by the specialized divisions of labor in a country, but trade also supplies goods for sale that are not available locally. If a nation can control the supply of such goods, it can profit immensely by their sale. However, while all merchants desire and prefer monopolies, in a changing world, monopolies are transient. The Venetian transport monopoly and then

the later Ottoman control of the spice trade drove Portugal and Spain to seek alternate routes to the famed Spice Islands. Spain found its way to the Americas (1492) and the Portuguese found a route around Africa to Goa, India (1497). Both were in pursuit of the desired economy of the spice trade. Their attempts at monopolies would eventually lead the Dutch, the British and other colonizing nations to desire and seize their “piece of the pie” eventually bringing Taiwan into the web of international mercantilism.

Maps can serve a variety of social, religious, cultural and national functions, but as the world of trade opened for western merchants, the specific need and demand for functional maps to determine locations took priority. How could western mariners in the 15th and 16th centuries navigate the unknown seas to unknown lands and establish trade routes if they did not have maps? That was the challenge facing those mariners and their cartographers; as trade increased, the demand for a greater quantity of maps increased proportionately, specifically maps with improved accuracy.¹²

The first maps presented in the book date back to the 16th century when western nations first entered Asian waters. The book’s opening section (16th and 17th centuries) focuses on Taiwan’s early colonizers including the Dutch, the Spanish and the Ming loyalists under Zheng Cheng-gong (Koxinga) as they fled from China.¹³



Figure 1: A section of a 1570 map by Abraham Ortelius. Taiwan is listed as Fermosa and is inaccurately portrayed as above the Tropic of Cancer. This is a common mistake since the main area of attention at that time was on the Spice Islands.

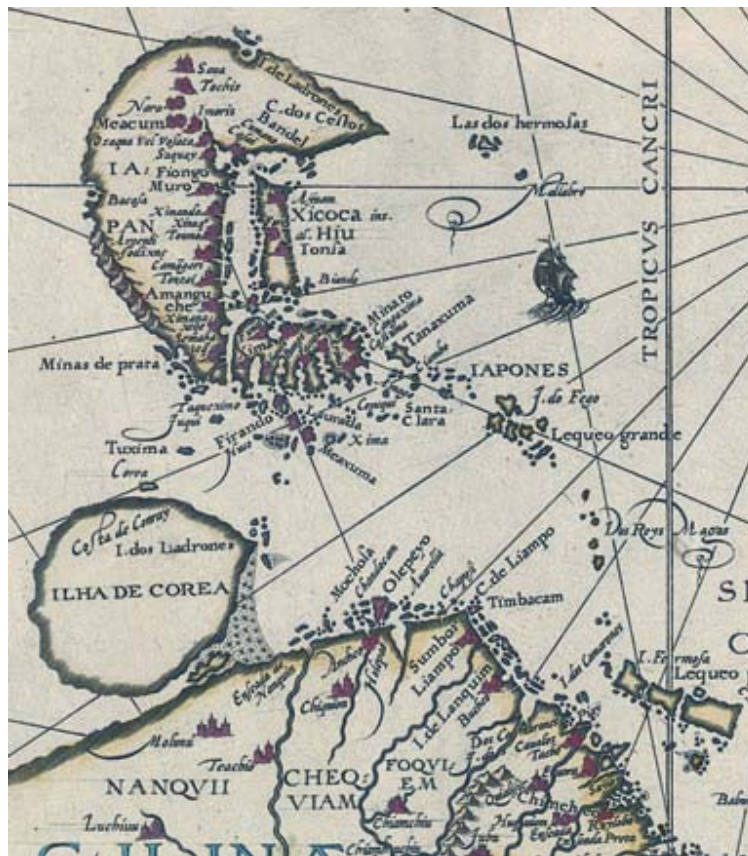


Figure 2: This 1596 map by Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1562--1611) is one of the many he secretly copied from the archives of the archbishop of Goa and thus aided the Dutch and the British in finding their way to the Spice Islands.

The second section (17th to 19th centuries) examines mapping when the western half of Taiwan became a border of the Manchu Empire.¹⁴ The third section of the book (19th to 20th centuries) explores both the technological changes in mapping and also examines how the Industrial Revolution and the development of steam-powered ships upset the trade balance and the balance of sea power in Asia. This section also discusses how these constitute key geopolitical developments out of which Japan emerged from isolation.¹⁵



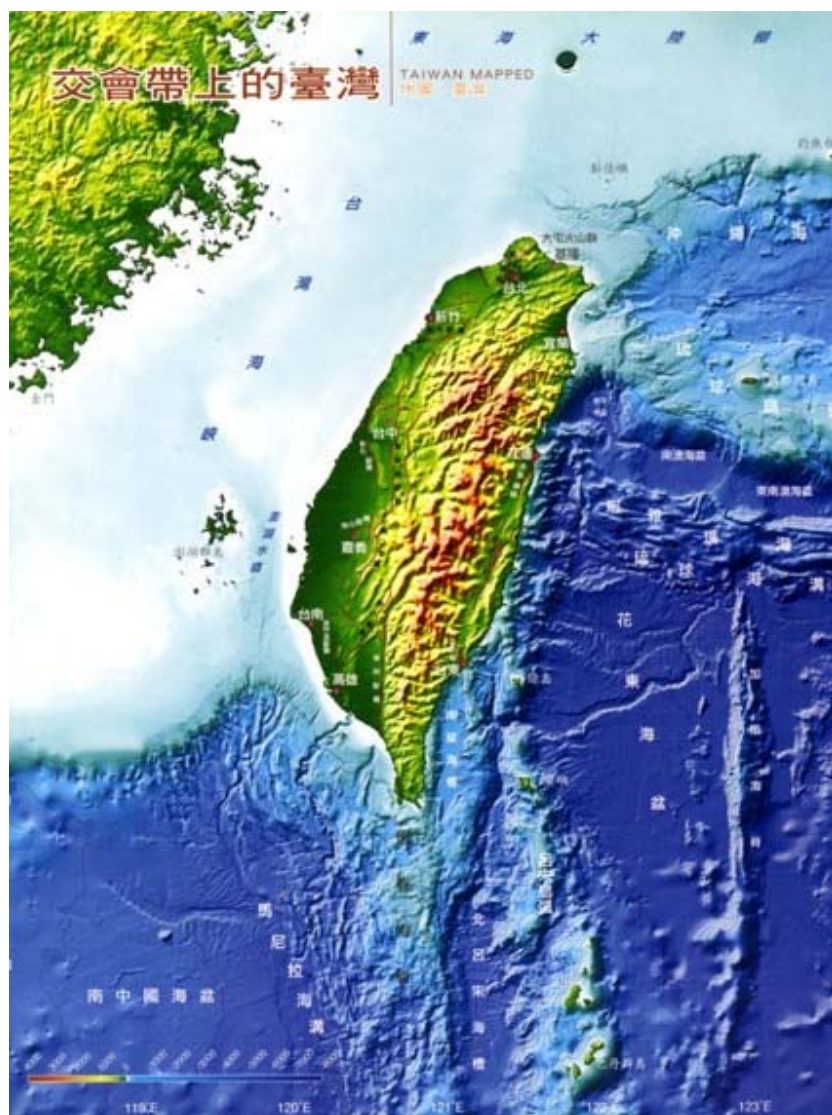


Figure 4: What could be called a "Blue Water" map from the standpoint of military strategy. This map portrays ocean depths; the shallowness of the Taiwan Strait is obvious as well as Taiwan controlling access to deep blue water off its east coast. Source: Lai Ching-gui

The historic centuries and their maps presented in the overview above are the key focuses in this book. But there is also an anthropological underpinning and identity issue that guides this work. Before Taiwan became an imagined geography for the many nations that approached it, it was inhabited by an indigenous population of various tribes with their own cultures, imagined communities, economies and even a history of trade and development. Recent research suggests that the vast Austronesian cultural empire that stretches into both the Indian and Pacific Oceans had its origins in Taiwan,¹⁷ This research proposes linguistic, cultural and DNA links between Taiwan and the Austronesian people. Other examples of research linking Taiwan to the Pacific Lapita Culture were highlighted in the Paris Quai Branly Museum exhibition (November 12, 2010 to January 9, 2011), and the November 2007 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences which revealed ancient jade discoveries and trade dating back to 3000 BC. The University of Auckland finalized Taiwan's language links with its Austronesian Vocabulary Database.¹⁸ In fact, it was only recently in the Japanese colonial era (1895—1945) that the indigenous Taiwanese on the east coast were subdued and made to play a part in the development of the new imagined community Japan sought to impose on Taiwan. The nature and extent of the current assimilation—and in part the annihilation—of these indigenous people remains an unresolved question for Taiwan's identity that is raised by this book.

