

Chapter 6

Commentary: Mapping the Known and the Unknown Worlds

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First, I would like to thank Professor Takahashi for inviting me to serve as a commentator. Today, I will reflect on my reading of four papers on mapping.

Professor Toby's paper is about the territorial boundaries of what we call "Japan." Before the nineteenth century, Japan's definition of its national territory was unclear. Then, with the threat of external forces and the development of international politics, the Japanese began to define the scope of their national territory. We can see that mapmakers treated Ezo, Ryukyu, and Korea as having equivalent foreign boundary conditions beyond the margins of Japan.

Professor Toby's research points out that one important factor in mapmaking is political appeals and needs. Japanese authorities and cartographers did not claim the scope of Japanese territory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because there was no political need to do such things. Another important reason is that the Shogunate referred to Japan as comprising "sixty-six provinces" or "sixty-six provinces plus two islands," Iki and Tsushima. This popular discourse implicitly excluded from Japanese territory both the islands of Ezo and Ryukyu, which were popularly regarded as alien territories. This administrative division and discourse remained unchanged until the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Finally, as Professor Toby told us, because Japan is entirely surrounded by water, it may not be surprising that Japanese authorities and cartographers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries felt no need to delineate clear, explicit national boundaries. I think this situation occurred not only in island-type countries but also in continental countries during the same period. For example, the relationship between Taiwan and China was also a national or foreign issue after the seventeenth century.

The next paper is by Professor Lin Tien-jen, who is a well-known map researcher in Taiwan. He has collected many Chinese maps related to China and Taiwan from all over the world for many years, which is of great help to historical and map researchers. This article shares some of the experiences and methods of Professor Lin's map research in recent years.

Professor Lin thinks that cartography is a study combining various branches of knowledge: the interpretation of historical documents, the knowledge of chorography, and

the academic backgrounds of geography and toponymy. The researcher should also do internal and external analyses of a map, taking into consideration the historical background, the style, and the drawer's habits. Indeed, the study of antique maps is like a process of decoding and translating—the language of old maps especially needs to be translated. In addition, a map has different themes: politics, economy, military, engineering, feng shui 風水, and so on.

Lin's paper mentions several methods for studying maps. I think there is another point that is important. Researchers should get out of the research room and go to the historical site to examine the landscape and route of the ancient map. Researchers will thus find that maps can reflect reality. If the ancients travelled with any of these maps, they would not get lost.

The third article is a study by Professor Watanabe Miki about the map of the Ryukyu Kingdom made and donated to Dazaifu Tenmangū Shrine by Takenomori Dōetsu in 1696. Professor Watanabe has compared several different versions. The map of Ryukyu in 1696 actually reflects the earlier Ryukyu Kingdom. Map researchers often face the problem of version differences, which is one of the interesting points of map research. By comparing different versions, map researchers can understand the difference in map drawing time and arrange it chronologically because, interestingly, the later map does not necessarily reflect the latest historical geography information. Professor Watanabe gave us a good case study of this phenomenon, and it shows us that, not only the drawing era, but also the historical era as well is reflected in a map. The map of Ryukyu was the outcome of collaborative work by Takenomori Dōetsu and his colleague Kumamoto Ensei, which Professor Watanabe notes, brings up the influence of the social network of the mapmakers. In other words, the information that the drawer refers to and the map depiction of a certain area actually reflect the historical view and geographical view of the collective members of a social network. Therefore, for the study of old maps, in addition to the personal image, the social network, and the era, the influence of the atmosphere also needs to be noticed.

The fourth paper is Professor Takahashi's research on Ryukyu and Taiwan as depicted on a map of China during the Edo period in Japan. Professor Takahashi's paper refers to the *Big Ryukyu* (*Da Liuqiu* 大琉球) and the *Small Ryukyu* (*Xiao Liuqiu* 小琉球) on the Chinese map. The Big Ryukyu and the Small Ryukyu should be named after the Chinese voyager and fishermen in the southern Fujian Province. The sailing needle books of the Ming Dynasty, commonly refer to the Small Ryukyu and the *head of Small Ryukyu*, which is often known as *Taiwan*. In the documents of the late Ming Dynasty, there are two names in Taiwan: the *Beigang* 北港 (north harbour) of the southwest and the Small Ryukyu of the north. Probably because the northern part of Taiwan is close to the Chinese Ryukyu tributary route, it is called "Small" Ryukyu relative to "Big" Ryukyu.

In maps of China drawn in Europe in the sixteenth century, the Small Ryukyu was often painted south of the Big Ryukyu and occasionally added to *Formosa* in the north of

Small Ryukyu. Before the seventeenth century, Taiwan often appeared as the “Small Ryukyu.” After the Dutch came to Taiwan, the name of “Formosa” gradually became exclusive to Taiwan. Therefore, in the map of Matteo Ricci, he did not name the part of Taiwan between Ryukyu and Luzon as “Formosa,” and the name of Small Ryukyu has been used to mark the north of the Big Ryukyu.

The study of the Small Ryukyu should be an interesting topic. At that time, there was not only one Small Ryukyu in Taiwan in the East Asian waters. The island near Big Ryukyu was often also called “Small Ryukyu,” including Small Ryukyu in the outer sea of Pingtung County in Taiwan and even Luzon Island. It is also known as the *Little Ryukyu*.

The study of maps of the Ming Dynasty, especially in the area around Ryukyu and Taiwan, which includes a key navigation route, must also take into consideration the problem of sailing. The *Book of Sui* (*Sui shu* 隋書) records that the navigation route was started by Yi'an 義安 (today's Chaozhou 潮州) and then went to Ryukyu via Gaohua Island and Jubi Island (Jubi actually is Minnan dialect for *ku-pih* 龜繫, which means *turtle*). If we look at China's nautical needle book of the early sixteenth century, the reasonable route from Chaozhou to Ryukyu should be from Chaozhou to Zhangzhou 漳州, then to Wuqiu 烏丘 Island, and then to the east via the head of small Ryukyu and Pengjia 彭家 Island, Diaoyu 釣魚 Island, Chiwei 赤尾 Island, and Kume Island. Looking back at the route may give us some different ideas about the locations of Gaohua Island and Jubi Island. Perhaps Jubi Island may also be Wuqiu Island; the old name of Wuqiu is *oo-ku* in Minnan dialect, which means *Turtle Island*.

Professor Takahashi's research tells us that the reason for making a China-centred map of China in Edo Japan is because of the love of Sinology, and the sign of Dongning (the country that Zheng Chenggong established in Taiwan) on the map also reflects Japanese interest in Zheng Chenggong, especially after the popularity of Chikamatsu's long-run staging of the historical drama *Kokusen'ya kassen* 国性爺合戦. This is how we know that maps are a product of culture and reflect the ideal worldview of cartographers. For this reason, the information on a map is not necessarily the latest and most correct but is usually a reasonable representation and observation of the outer world.

The last thing I want to talk about is some thoughts I had on map research after I read the four papers. The study of maps does not focus on the map alone but also puts the map back into the overall social context and the context generated by the map. In addition, because a map is used as a visual representation, its production is also a part of the overall social and cultural production field. The images on maps may also be repeated in contemporary image works. If the map can be regarded as a cultural product, the symbols and concepts of the map are naturally the focus of the researcher. As a researcher and curator in the history museum, I am concerned with the material culture research of maps. What is the material culture represented by the map and what is its relevance to daily life? I think these considerations should also be the focus of attention.

In the past, mapmaking was basically in the hands of rulers, whether in the East or the West. Therefore, the maps we discussed here were mainly for the purpose of governance reference, the promotion of political achievements, and so on. Contemporary map production is an activity in which all people can participate. People can express their own views and voices through maps and also express their own cultural characteristics and local knowledge. After the 1990s in Taiwan, the government promoted community building, with the aim of enabling local communities to establish their own cultural characteristics and identities. In the period of community construction and promotion, many people showed their local cultures through community maps. In the process, the emotions and identities of the community residents were condensed to some extent. I think that, through the historical study of maps, we can see the development of civil society and see the development of social power.

I would like to use the words of Oscar Wilde, the famous Irish writer, as my conclusion: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing." Regardless of the purpose of maps, maps store humanity and human will, and we can, therefore, see the known and unknown world in them. I think this is what makes map research interesting and valuable.