

RCYC LUMINARA · HONG KONG TO TOKYO

The Islands Everyone Wanted

From Taiwan to the Ryukyu Kingdom

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Yesterday in Taipei



Dihua Street



Imperial jade seals



Lungshan Temple

Five flags. Five sets of buildings, languages, grievances. Everything you saw yesterday sits on the same layers of commodity history.

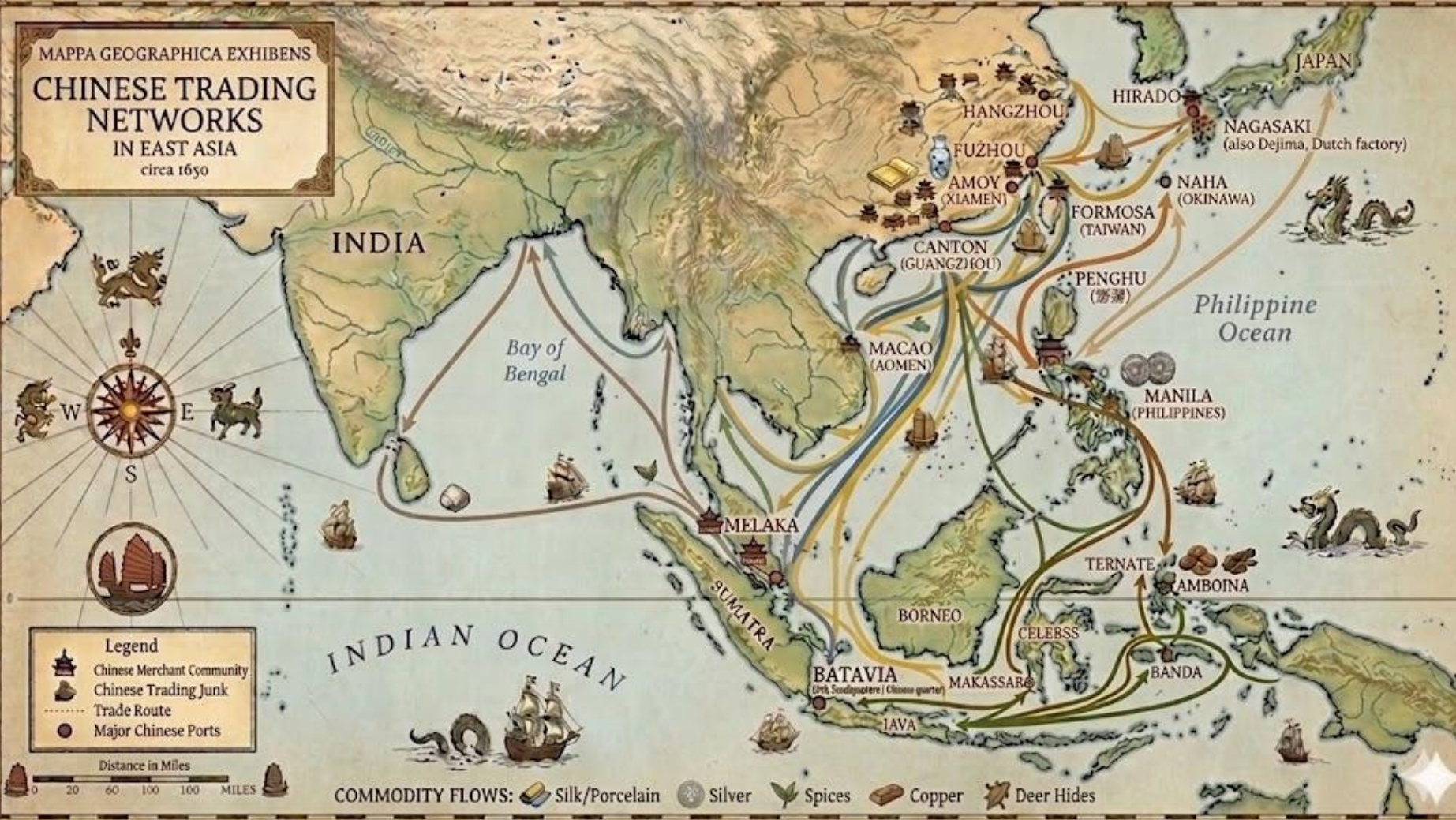
This Morning in Ishigaki

- *270 km from Taipei. 410 km from Naha.*
 - *Closer to yesterday than to tomorrow.*
-

**What happens to islands
caught between empires?**



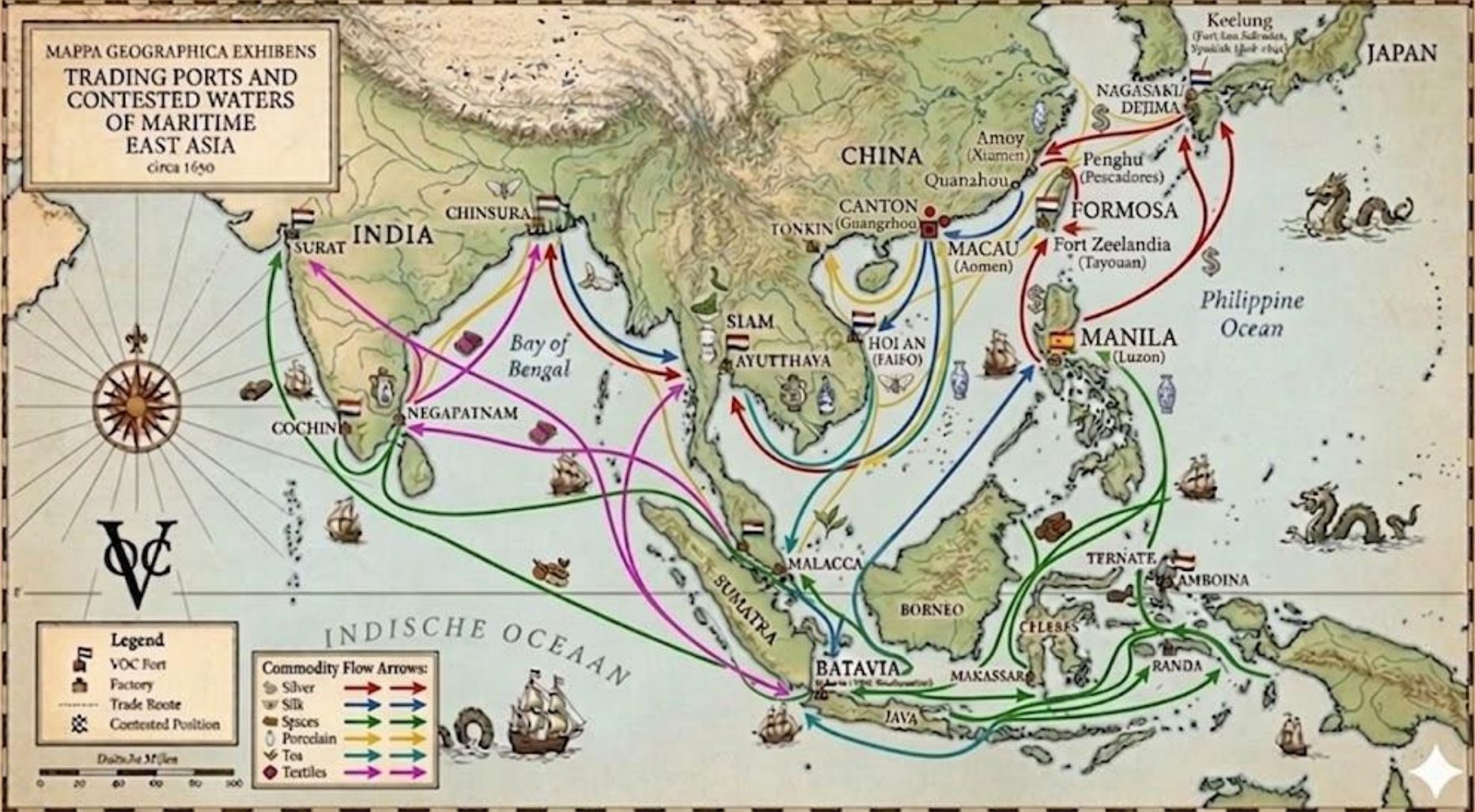
MAPPA GEOGRAPHICA EXHIBENS
CHINESE TRADING NETWORKS
 IN EAST ASIA
 circa 1650



- Legend**
- Chinese Merchant Community
 - Chinese Trading Junk
 - Trade Route
 - Major Chinese Ports

COMMODITY FLOWS: Silk/Porcelain Silver Spices Copper Deer Hides

MAPPA GEOGRAPHICA EXHIBENS
 TRADING PORTS AND
 CONTESTED WATERS
 OF MARITIME
 EAST ASIA
 circa 1650



- Legend**
- VOC Fort
 - Factory
 - Trade Route
 - Contested Position

- Commodity Flow Arrows:**
- Silver
 - Silk
 - Spices
 - Porcelain
 - Tea
 - Textiles

Dutch Miles
 0 20 40 60 80 100



Trade, *not* Territory

Fort Zeelandia and the Dutch East India Company's China Strategy

Johannes Vingboons, c. 1650s. Austrian National Library.

THE GAMBIT

Built Fort Zeelandia on a sandbar the Ming did not claim. Control the strait without provoking an empire.

THE PAYOFF

70,000 deer hides a year to Japan. Prime sugarcane, camphor. More profitable than the silk trade they came for.

THE TRANSFORMATION

Recruited Fujian settlers to farm Siraya land. The beginning of Taiwan's demographic displacement.

The Pirate's Son

THE FATHER — Zheng Zhilong

Pirate turned Ming admiral.
He surrendered to the Qing. His son refused.

THE SON — Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong)

April 1661: 25,000 troops to Taiwan.
Besieged Fort Zeelandia for nine months.
1 February 1662: Dutch Governor Coyett surrendered.

THE SHORT-LIVED PIRATE KING

Thirty-seven at victory. Dead within five months.
He never saw China again.



The pirate-merchant continuum from Lecture 1 — writ large.

Koxinga

1661–62

Koxinga held a chain of positions across 180 kilometres of sea

PENGHU

90 islands controlling the strait's shipping lanes.

TAYOUAN

The sandbar where Fort Zeelandia went up.

KINMEN

So close to the mainland, you can see China from the beach.



Same Fields, Different Flag

The flag changed. The crop, not so much.

**DUTCH
FORMOSA**

1624–1662

**Sugar +
Deer Hides**

Exported to Japan
via VOC

**KINGDOM OF
DONGNING**

1662–1683

**Sugar
Monopoly**

Exported to Japan
for copper and lead

QING DYNASTY

1683–1895

**Sugar +
Camphor**

Minimal governance.
Province only in 1887.

**JAPANESE
EMPIRE**

1895–1945

**Sugar &
Rice**

Taiwan as the empire's
sugar and rice supplier

Every power arrived for the strait. Every power stayed for the sugar.

Meanwhile in the Islands

The Ryukyu Kingdom



Nakagusuku Castle, Lew Chew, Perry Expedition, c. 1856. Library of Congress

THE KINGDOM

Shō dynasty unifies the Ryukyu chain, 15th century. Shuri Castle as diplomatic centre between China and Japan.

THE SHADOW

Satsuma invasion, 1609. The kingdom survives — but as a dual tributary, paying tribute to both China and Satsuma.

THE EXTRACTION

Amami sugar plantations fund Satsuma's modernisation. Yaeyama poll tax grinds island communities for two centuries.

THE ANNEXATION

1879: Japan abolishes the kingdom. The Ryukyu king is taken to Tokyo. Okinawa Prefecture is born.

The Peoples of Taiwan

The conqueror who expelled the Europeans was not a liberator.

SIRAYA

Land taken for Fort Zeelandia and sugar fields. In 1661, some defected to Koxinga — not from loyalty, but to escape Dutch tribute.

KETAGALAN

The people whose territory you walked through yesterday — displaced by successive waves of Fujian settlers.

DONGNING KINGDOM, 1662–1683

25,000 soldiers needed land. The military colony system took it from the people already there.



Olfert Dapper, *Formosan inhabitants*, 1670



The Peoples of the Ryukyu Chain

Six languages. Three distinct island worlds. One kingdom imposed from the centre.

OKINAWA

Court culture at Shuri. Noro priestesses guarded sacred groves.

MIYAKO & YAEYAMA

Own languages, own chiefs, own calendars. Taxed by Shuri, closer to Taiwan than to Naha. The islands you sailed through this morning.

AMAMI

Handed to Satsuma after 1609. Sugar plantations, forced labour. The silk traditions you will see the day after tomorrow survived despite it all.



Perry Expedition, Lew Chew, c. 1856. Library of Congress

The Shipwreck That Changed Everything

Miyako → Taiwan → Empire

December 1871. The island next door
to where you were this morning.

THE WRECK

54 Miyako islanders shipwrecked on
Taiwan's southeast coast. Paiwan
villagers killed 54 of the 66 crew.

THE PRETEXT

Japan launched a punitive expedition in
1874 — its first overseas military
operation. The Qing said Taiwan's
indigenous peoples were 'beyond
civilisation.'

THE OPENING

Twenty years later: Shimonoseki. One
shipwreck connected Japan to Taiwan
— and gave Tokyo a reason to absorb
the Ryukyu Kingdom.

What Comes Next

THE PATTERN

Every power arrived for the strait and stayed for the sugar. The flag changed; the plantation didn't. The Siraya, the Ketagalan, the Paiwan, the Atayal paid the highest price.

TOMORROW IN NAHA

The Mudan Incident didn't just give Japan a claim on Taiwan — it gave them a reason to absorb the Ryukyu Kingdom. A bell at Shuri Castle proclaimed Ryukyu 'a bridge between nations.' What happens when one nation decides the bridge belongs to them? That's Talk Three.

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