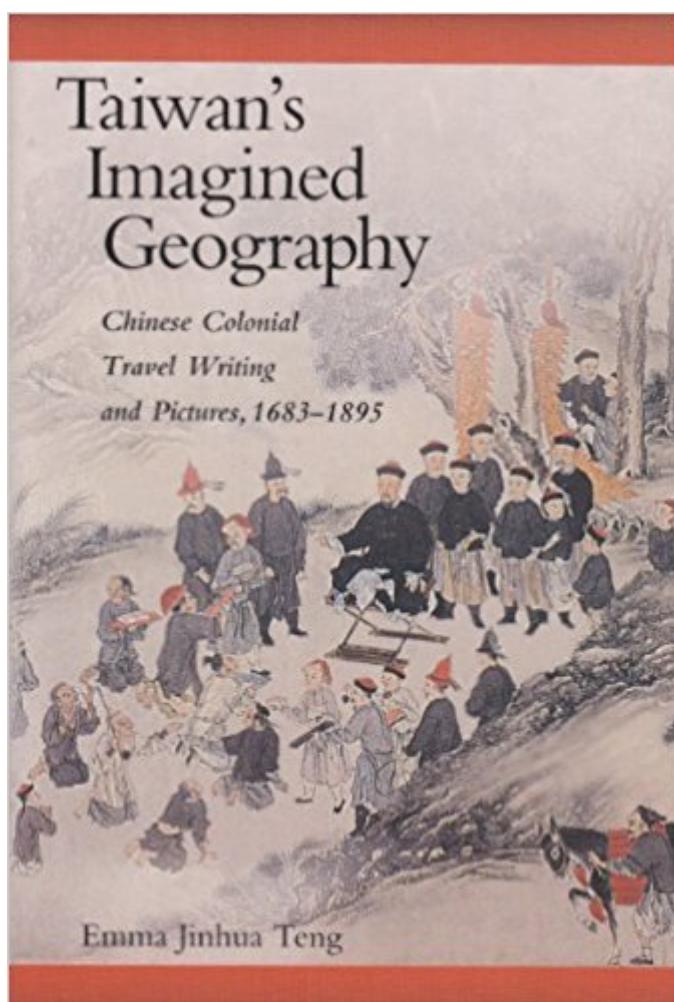


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Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing And Pictures, 1683-1895 (Harvard East Asian Monographs)



Synopsis

Until 300 years ago, the Chinese considered Taiwan a "land beyond the seas," a "ball of mud" inhabited by "naked and tattooed savages." The incorporation of this island into the Qing empire in the seventeenth century and its evolution into a province by the late nineteenth century involved not only a reconsideration of imperial geography but also a reconceptualization of the Chinese domain. The annexation of Taiwan was only one incident in the much larger phenomenon of Qing expansionism into frontier areas that resulted in a doubling of the area controlled from Beijing and the creation of a multi-ethnic polity. The author argues that travelers' accounts and pictures of frontiers such as Taiwan led to a change in the imagined geography of the empire. In representing distant lands and ethnically diverse peoples of the frontiers to audiences in China proper, these works transformed places once considered non-Chinese into familiar parts of the empire and thereby helped to naturalize Qing expansionism. By viewing Taiwan-China relations as a product of the history of Qing expansionism, the author contributes to our understanding of current political events in the region.

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Customer Reviews

Refreshingly, Teng divorces the relationship of the island and the mainland from the now stale arguments over reunification, or whether or not Taiwan is part of China, and grounds it in the tantalizing history of Chinese imperialism. She draws on Qing dynasty (1644-1911) travel writing and paintings to argue that China effectively colonized the island...Teng makes adroit use of a

growing body of literature stigmatizing China as a colonial conqueror--rather than a victim of European colonialism--and incorporates the importance of Taiwan into the debate on Chinese expansionism. (Macabe Keliher Far Eastern Economic Review 2004-10-07) Thoroughly examining Qing dynastic travel accounts and maps of Taiwan, Teng has written a splendid analysis of changing Chinese perceptions of Taiwan and its indigenous peoples from the late 17th century on, culminating in Taiwan's becoming a province of China in 1887... This book should be read by anyone interested in early Taiwanese history or in better understanding the current views about Taiwan held by Chinese in both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China. Those interested in discourses about the nature of imperialism or in how depictions of indigenous native peoples are manipulated to suit colonizers' needs will also find this book worthwhile. (V. J. Symons Choice 2005-02-01) Teng paints an intriguing picture of the debates that emerged concerning the colonization of Taiwan and official Qing policy towards the island's indigenous peoples... Teng is making a significant contribution to the study of imperialism overall, and is suggesting that it is time to move beyond the confines by which colonialism is seen as the exclusive practice of Western men. (Jeremy E. Taylor Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History)

Emma J. Teng is Professor of Chinese Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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