

## Reconsidering Taiwan's Postcoloniality: The Qing Legacy for Taiwan-China Relations

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The Taiwan-China relationship is one of the most highly fraught in international relations today, a situation that goes back to the Chinese Civil War and the founding of the People's Republic of China. Yet while many are familiar with the historical events that divided Taiwan from China in 1949, they are less familiar with the history of how Taiwan came to be part of China in the first place. Many outside Taiwan are surprised to learn that when the Qing Dynasty first conquered Taiwan in 1683, the imperial court debated the value of colonizing this small and seemingly remote island, which many viewed as utterly beyond the pale of civilization. Yet, two centuries later, in 1895, the cession of Taiwan to Japan was viewed by Chinese intellectuals as a scandalous loss of sacred national territory. Through the analysis of Qing travel writing, ethnographic illustrations, and maps, my work examines Taiwan's trajectory from a worthless "savage island" to a Chinese province, and a symbolically important part of China's "sovereign territory." To what extent can this earlier history of Chinese settlement of the island help us to view the China-Taiwan relation, and Taiwan's relationship to postcoloniality, in a new light?