

## “A highly cultivated country”: Charles Le Gendre’s Mappings of Western Taiwan, 1869-1870\*

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines U.S. Consul Charles Le Gendre’s mappings of “the Chinese division of the island” of Formosa as documented in the geographical, geological, and textual representations he produced in the early 1870s. In late 1869, Charles Le Gendre conducted an investigative journey from the northern port city of Tamsui down along the western coast of Taiwan to the prefectural capital of Taiwanfu. Details of that expedition were recorded in Le Gendre’s unpublished, illustrated travel report, *Notes of Travel in Formosa*, and sketched on a color-coded map, “Formosa Island and the Pescadores,” which was revised by U.S. Coast Survey cartographers and published by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1871. The texts, maps and geological sections produced by Le Gendre, as well as the photographs commissioned to illustrate his manuscript, are the primary materials employed for this historical research.

In general, I analyze the work processes undertaken by Le Gendre as he mapped the topography and terrain of the western plains and bordering foothills, and the geographical, geological, cartographic and textual products of his investigative work. Le Gendre’s cartographic discourse, his experiential encounters with the landscape, and his attempts to systematize and disseminate the knowledge produced on this 1869 trek are all subjects addressed in this article. Major sections are devoted to analyses of Le Gendre’s unique mappings of western Formosan towns and villages, Qing administrative geography, local society and culture, agricultural resources, and geological formations. In addition, a counter-mapping of Le Gendre’s experience on the road is attempted by focusing on the spots where Le Gendre and his party of chair-bearing coolies, European guides (John Dodd and William Pickering), and photographic artist halted. Brief attention is also given to Le Gendre’s comparative historical geography in both textual and cartographic representations. Finally, I have shown how

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Le Gendre's mappings of western Formosa influenced official Euro-American cartographic production for several decades after the publication of his textual and cartographic mappings of Taiwan in the early 1870s.

**Keywords:** Maps, Cartographic Discourse, Historical Geography, Natural History, Geology, Knowledge Production, Formosa, Nineteenth Century, Counter-mapping