

Mapping a Marine Frontier: Taiwan Map of Qianlong Era Stored at British Library

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ABSTRACT

The British Library collection contains a spectacular map of Qing Taiwan during the Qianlong era. It is in color and spans approximately 490 cm in length. From a cultural and historical perspective, the feature that warrants the most attention in this cartographic depiction of Taiwan is the changing administrative borderlines (番界, *fanjie*). Moreover, this map sketches also both imperial and unofficial infrastructure, including traffic routes, governmental offices, military posts (汛塘, *xuntang*), frontier inspection stations (關隘, *guanai*), local watchtowers (望樓, *wanglou*), aboriginal villages (番社, *fanshe*), as well as Han towns and settlements.

This map of Qianlong era has neither captions nor textual descriptions, thus requiring a more thorough reconstruction of its historical background, important themes, the main initiator and his chief intentions. This paper seeks to answer these questions according to the relevant literature and documentation. In view of the specific watchtower depictions, which reflect changes taking place between 1778 and 1780, the map was drawn around or after 1780. Furthermore, this map is probably also related to General Dong Guo (董果), who at that time was in charge of the Taiwan garrison.

Taiwan subsequently emerged as a crucial part of Qing empire's southern frontier and central channel to the outside world in the imagination of Qing officials in the second half of the eighteenth century. This Taiwan map of Qianlong era stored at the British Library Collection sheds light on the attitudes of Qing dynasty officials regarding the marine frontier.

Keywords: Map of Taiwan, Green Standard Army, Fengshan County, *Tu-niu* Ditch, Frontier Inspection Station