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Writing Taiwan History: Interpreting the Past in the Global Present

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Introduction

Concurrent with nation building is the construction of a national history to assure national cohesion. Hence, the collective memory is elevated to the standard of national myth and most often expressed in the master narrative. I may refer here to Michael Robinson's observation that "the state constructs and maintains a 'master narrative' of nation which acts as an official 'story of the nation'. This master narrative legitimates the existence of the state and nation internally; it is also projected externally, to legitimate a nations' existence in the world community".¹ But in as much as memory is selective, so also is the state-sanctioned official narrative, and it has become commonplace that changes in the political order enhance and result in ideologically motivated re-writing of that history in spite of its claims at objectivity and truth. The study of the contemporary formation of Taiwan history and its historiography is no exception. In fact, the current activity in rewriting the history is compounded by an additional element, and one which is crucial to understanding the complexity of the issue.

What makes Taiwanese historiography as a separate entity interesting, intriguing and complex is that the master-narrative is treated as a part of and embedded in Chinese history, and at the same time conditioned by the transition from a perceived to a real pressure from a larger nation, China, that lays claim on its territory, ethnicity, and past. However, the conscious engagement with a re-evaluation of the historiographical canon since the 1980s has not produced a full-fledged revisionist history. Rather,

¹ Michael Robinson (41), also cited in Koen De Ceuster's article on Korean historiography (complete)

the reaction to the state-sanctioned narrative and its normative canon has resulted in a substantial rewriting of certain historical episodes, and opened up to an inclusion of non-normative texts, which were excluded or taboo before, and what is usually referred to as the transition from a Sino-centric to a Taiwan-centric interpretation of history. It has not resulted in a denunciation of the Chinese nationalist narrative, or in a deconstruction of the myths deemed essential for the national identity and further identification with Taiwan. This is because the KMT –era historiography is too closely linked with the very process of nation building that allowed for the contesting interpretations of the past in the first place. Based on these premises, the current generation of Taiwanese historians builds on and works within the existing national master-narrative, because they see this as a viable means to continue their profession as essential for the political agenda in Taiwanese nation building.

It is not my intention to provide a detailed discussion of the master narrative *an sich* and *in toto*. Rather, what I would like to illustrate with this paper, is the degree to which the international scholarly community has been interacting with the formation of and legitimization of the national master narrative in Taiwanese historiography. To this end I shall start with an overview of non-Chinese language histories that locate Taiwan as this bounded entity in terms of a fixed territorial space of culture and continuity.

Tracing Taiwan's Past from the Outside

Several language histories locate Taiwan as a bounded entity in terms of a fixed territorial space of culture and continuity. Each of these language histories developed out of conquest contacts at different stages in its history. The first indisputable evidence of such a history traces to the 17th century when Taiwan was a Dutch trading post of the United East India Company (VOC). This ethnographic eye witness account, entitled *Discours ende cort verhael van't eyland Formosa* (Short Account of the island of Formosa) was written by its first ordained minister on the island and pioneer missionary Rev G Candidius in 1624, and made available in print in 1639 by Seyer van Rechteren.² In 1725, a French translation

² Candidius' ethnographic account was published as « Journal Gehouden op de reyse ende

appeared in the *Records des Voyages de la Compagnie des Indes* (pp 209-263) and in 1744 its English translation was included in the 3rd edition of *Collection of Voyages and Travels* by A and J Churchill (vol 1:404-411). At present, extracts of the translated version in English most circulated is contained in William Campbell's *Formosa under the Dutch* (1903).³ Discovered by the Portuguese, it was the Dutch who put Taiwan on the map of the world and its history to come. At the time, the other European presence in Taiwan were the Spanish and Spain's interests in conquering Isla Hermosa produced a Spanish language history of the island.⁴

The Dutch trade factory on Taiwan came to an end in 1662; ousted by Koxinga who ruled the island until 1683, followed by the incorporation of Taiwan as a dependency of Fujian province in the Chinese Empire in 1684. Throughout the 18th century Western accounts on Formosa remained sparse. The most noteworthy ones to date are Du Halde's work, (*General Description of the Empire of China*) from 1739 (second corrected edition) which includes a 19 page description of Formosa and its people and Count de Benyowsky's *Account of his Visit to Formosa* in 1771, published by Oliver Pasfield as *The Memoirs and Travels of Mauritius Augustus Count de Benyowsky* (2 volumes), in 1892 by Fisher Unwin in London. Maps and atlases of China that appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries included references to the island of Taiwan, i.e. *Atlas Chinensis* by John Ogilby from 1671 which contains descriptive and historical details. In the Dutch Republic, descriptions about Formosa continued to feature in the context of the VOC network, i.e. Wouter Schouten's travelogue *Reistogt naar en door Oostindiën* (*Travelogue of the East Indies*) (1676) and *'t Verwaerloosde Formosa* (*Neglected*

wederkomste van Oost-Indien door Seyer van rechteren Vvoor desen kranckbesoecker in de voor-genoemde Landen, ende nu Geweldige Generael vande Landen van Over-Ysel. Den tweeden druck van nieuws verbeteret ende vermeerdert". Zwolle, Gedruckt by Jan Gerritz ende Frans Torrijaensz, Boeck-druckers, Anno 1639, 4 volumes. Joshua Liao, in his article „Formosa under the Dutch“, published in *Far Eastern Economic Review* in 1951, contends that it was published in Germany, Frankfurt-am-Main in 1627, i.e. no 10, pp. 186.

³ According to Allibone, the fraud Psamanazar who captured history, compiled his 'genuine' *Account of Formosa* for Emanuel Bowen's *Compleat System of Geography* (1747) from the ethnography and another work by Varenius, i.e. Varenius, Dr B. *Descriptio Regni Japoniae et Siam; item de Japoniorum Religione et Siamesium; de Diversis omnium Gentium Religionibus...* Cambridge 1673. Cited in WM Campbell, *Formosa under the Dutch* London: Kegan Paul, Trubner, 1903, reprint Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1987,1992, p.611.

⁴ For a reference source, see Jose Eugenio Borao, *Spaniards in Taiwan (Documents)* SMC, Taipei vol 1: 1582-1641 (2001), vold 2: 1642-1682 (2002)

Formosa) written by Frederick Coyet under the initials C.E.S.⁵ published in 1675. Both works served as an additional sources of inspiration for François Valentyn's *Oud- en Nieuw Oostindiën* (Old and New East Indies) (1724-1726), that in 1921 was noted as an authority on the Dutch Indies studies in *Nieuw Nederlands Biografisch Woordenboek* (New Dutch Biographical Dictionary).⁶ Also in the national literary imagination of the Dutch Republic, Formosa was not neglected. I refer here to the 1775 play *Anthonius Hambroek, of the belegering van Formosa* (*Anthonius Hambroek, or the siege of Formosa*) by J. Nomsz⁷ as well as the couple of popular lampoon genres that appeared after the loss of Formosa to Koxinga. Finally, Japanese interests in Taiwan gave rise to the body of Japanese language histories during the reign of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the late 16th century.

In hindsight, and for the historiographical trajectory, these accounts are significant. They have been included in the normative canon as authentic historical documents and have been and still are instrumental in assuring the 'worthwhile distinctiveness' in the construction of myths for their contribution to the social cohesion of the Taiwanese community.⁸

Of relevance is less their role in the historical but in the territorial continuity of the nationalizing discourses. These early Taiwan histories situate the description of the island, its topography, peoples and religions within the framework of European travels and missions to the tartar Kingdom or China. For instance, Amiot's "Sur le submersion de l'île Formose", published in *Memoires concernant l'Histoire des Chinois* (Paris 1776-1814), Captain Burney's *Chronological History of Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean* (5 volumes, 1803-1817) of which volume 3 narrates the early intercourse of Europeans with China and their settlement on Formosa, and Klaproth's "Description de l'île

⁵ C.E.S. is the abbreviation of Coyet et Socius, or Coyet et Socii, meaning Coyet and companion(s). cited in see Chen Jung-chen, "Een studie van het Nederlandse Toneelstuk *Anthonius Hambroek, of the belegering van Formosa*", unpublished Ph.d. dissertation, Dutch Studies, Leiden University, 2002, p. 56.

⁶ cited in see Chen Jung-chen, "Een studie van het Nederlandse Toneelstuk *Anthonius Hambroek, of the belegering van Formosa*", p. 65

⁷ for a literary study of this play, see Chen Jung-chen, "Een studie van het Nederlandse Toneelstuk *Anthonius Hambroek, of the belegering van Formosa*

⁸ see Geoffrey Hosking and George Schoepflin (ed), *Myths and Nationhood* London: Hurst & Company, 1997.

Formose” in *Memoires relatifs à l’Asie* (1824). But that is not surprising, because by the end of the 18th century the China trade route was closely entrenched in European maritime ventures and its overseas colonial projects. The opening up of China and Japan to the West spurred the establishment of learned societies and their scholarly journals, complementary to the missionary journals. With the opening of the Taiwan treaty ports in the second half of the 19th century, the island was likewise incorporated in the published collections of treaties, consular reports and maritime customs publications. Merchants, missionaries, diplomats, officials and adventurers in service of the European colonial powers in the Far East enlarged the body of Western-language sources on the island and made available to historians in the homeland.

Taiwan’s textual entrance in international relations was described in terms of expeditions, trade, colonial policies and the question of territorial settlement. I may refer here to Henri Cordier’s *Le Conflict entre la France et la Chine: étude d’histoire coloniale et de droit international* (Paris, 1883), captain Garnot’s *L’Expédition française de Formose, 1884-1885* (Paris, 1894), US General Le Gendre’s *Is Aboriginal Formosa part of the Chinese Empire ? An Unbiased statement of the question* (Shanghai, 1874), House’s *The Japanese Expedition to Formosa in 1874*, Hervey de Saint-Denys “Sur Formose et sur les îles appelées en chinois Lieou-Kieou” (*Journal Asiatique* 1874 & 1875) and the several correspondences in the British *Parliamentary Papers* between 1869 and 1896, i.e. “Correspondence respecting the settlement of the difficulty between China and Japan in regard to the island of Formosa” (folder *China*, No 2, 1875), “Further correspondence respecting the settlement of the difficulty between China and Japan in regard to the island of Formosa” (folder *China*, No 6, 1875), “Correspondence respecting hostilities between France and China, and the rights of neutrals during the blockade of Formosa. Letters from M. Waddington, Lord Granville, and Admiral Courbet” (folder *France* No 1, 1885).

The Japanese Interlude

Until the beginning of the Japanese colonial period, European literature on Taiwan was mainly compiled by missionaries, diplomats and

academics. Early classics are Davidson's *The Island of Formosa, past and present* (1903), C. Imbault-Huart's *L'île Formose, histoire et description* (1893), Reverend Lesley MacKay's *From Far Formosa: the island, its People, and Missions* (1896) and Dr Albrecht Wirth's *Geschichte Formosa's bis Anfang 1898* (1898).⁹ Furthermore, accounts on Taiwan's geography, its ethnicities and languages featured in scholarly journals like *China Review*, *Journal of the American Geographical Society*, *Zeitschrift für Volkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, *Petermann's Mitteilungen*, *Revue d'Anthropologie*, *Revue d'Ethnographie*, *Folklore Journal*, *Nautical Magazine*, *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Revue Coloniale Internationale* to name a few. These were complemented with several Dutch studies on the discovery of glossaries, dictionaries and bibles in Formosan languages in Indonesian archives, and/or mentioned in J.A. Grothe's *Archief voor de Geschiedenis der Oude Hollandsche Zending*. Meanwhile, the missionary journals continued to contribute their share of information on the Dutch colonial venture, the island's cession to the Chinese, and its aboriginal inhabitants. But as products of the *Zeitgeist*, these narrative histories and academic articles reproduced the popular and scientific assumptions about differential civilizations and hierarchies on the ladder of modernity.

Unlike the Chinese imperial government, the Japanese colonial policies were less favourable to the Western powers stationed in Taiwan. One of the results was that Japanese publications written in English to the international public furthered the Great Game narrative. Some examples are Katsura Taro's "Formosa" in Alfred Stead edited volume *Japan by the Japanese: a Survey by its Highest Authorities* (1904), George Braithwite's translation of Takekoshi Yosaburo's *Japanese Rule in Formosa* (1907); Hishida Seiji's "Formosa: Japan's First Colony" in *Political Science Quarterly* (1907); Goto Shimpei's "The Administration of Formosa" in *Fifty years of New Japan*, edited by Okuma Shigenobu (1909); Den Kenjiro's "Assimilation Keynote of Taiwan Policy", published in the Special Formosa Number of *The Trans-Pacific* (1923), and *Taiwan, a Unique Colonial Record, 1937-1938*, edited by Naito Hideo under auspices of the Government of Formosa (1938). The Japanese imperial

⁹ Another example is Dr Ludwig Riess "Geschichte der Insel Formosa", published in *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft* Tokyo (1897)

rhetoric was likewise reproduced in Western scholarship, i.e. John Keane, “The Japanese in Formosa,” published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (1904); Paul Mueriot, “Les progress de l’île de Formose sous la domination japonaise” in *Société de statistique Paris* (1907), Poultney Bigelow, *Japan and Her Colonies* (1923), Hayden, J Ralyston “Japan’s new policy in Korea and Formosa, in *Foreign Affairs* (1924), Mac Govern’s *Among the head hunters of Formosa* (London, 1922) and the curious travel guide at the hand of Philip Terry *Terry’s Guide to the Japanese Empire, Including Korea and Formosa* (1921).¹⁰ Most of the Western accounts and travelogues were written in the 1920s.¹¹ Few materials seem to be available from the 1930s, i.e. Ch. Haguenuer “Formose depuis les origines jusqu’à son annexion par le Japon” in *Bulletin de la Maison Franco-Japonaise* (1930). Finally, reference be made to the two publications by Andrew Grajdanzev’s *Formosa Today: An analysis of economic development and strategic importance of Japan’s Tropical Colony* (1942), George Kerr’s , “Formosa – Colonial Laboratory,” published in *Far Eastern Survey* (1942).

If writing about Taiwan fell under the Japanese imperial banner, scholarship on China in the prewar period furthered the general trend of diplomatic history, mainly relying on Western sources, and with little attention to China’s internal conditions.¹² Of interest were the question of extraterritoriality in view of the unequal treaties in law, issues in finance, political geography and trade.¹³

Taiwan in the Chinese Cultural Unity and Diversity Thesis

In 1943 the unequal treaties were abandoned, ending the Western privilege system, and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 extinguished all but the last vestiges of imperialism.¹⁴ And as Turnbull observed, for the coming 30 years China was virtually closed to all but sympathetic

¹⁰ Other examples are Mac Govern B.L. *Among the head hunters of Formosa* (London, 1922)

¹¹ for a list, see Yuan Tung-li *China in Western Literature* (New Haven, 1958), pp. 664-665.

¹² See Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1970, revised edition 1975, p. 14

¹³ for an overview of the UK example, see C.M. Turnbull, « Formaland Informal Empire in East Asia », in Robin B. Winks (ed) *Historiography* volume five, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 379-402.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 387

leftwing scholars.¹⁵ At this time, the East Asian research centers which had been established at the leading Euro-American universities during the pre-war period initiated a debate over the mission of victorious postwar area studies, anchoring China and the discourse on Asia in a Cold War ideological world order. Main themes of investigation became China's response to the West, the opening of China and the rise of modern China. Brief, the Sinological modernization studies wrote into the "Western agency, Chinese response" paradigm.¹⁶ Marxist scholars interrogated Chinese society and the Chinese revolution against the background of the broader 20th century Afro-Asian anti-capitalist and anti-imperial struggle.¹⁷ But even if the lexical terms colony, colonial and colonialism disappeared from the narrative, it did retain a ghostly presence in East Asian historiography because of Japanese policies in Taiwan, Korea and Manchuria. From this perspective, the histories of Taiwan in Cold War scholarship entered a two-way track. First, the history of Taiwan was framed within the contours of the 'modernization of Chinese history'; second, research on the Japanese colonial period featured in volumes on 'Japan's failed modernity'. As this suggests, the colonial period was not part of Taiwan's 'real' modernization, and works dealing with Taiwan's development in the global political economy served themselves of convenient stylistic devices (tropes) to bridge the Japanese rupture in professing continuity with Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage.

These were the parameters that delineated the tradition of writing the historiographical narrative on Taiwan in Western scholarship, and which was mainly instigated from the United States since the late 1960s. In hindsight, Mark Mancall's edited volume *Formosa Today* (1964), the 1963 special issue *The China Quarterly* with contributions from Maurice Meisner "The Development of Formosan Nationalism" and Ong Joktik's "A 'Formosan's View' of the Formosan Independence Movement", Kerr's *Formosa Betrayed* (1965) and *Licensed Revolution* (1974), and Douglas Mendel's *The Politics of Formosan Nationalism* (1970) were outside the mainstream of the established nationalist narrative, but not Fred Riggs's *Formosa under Chinese Nationalist Rule* (1952).

¹⁵ cited in op.cit., p 387

¹⁶ for a discussion, see Tani Barlow, , Tani E. Barlow, "Colonialism's Career," in Tani E. Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity* Durham: Duke University Press, 1997, pp. 373-412

¹⁷ reference be made to Jean Chesneaux's work.

Forebode of that narrative convention was W. G. Goddard's *Formosa, A Study in Chinese History* (1966), a typical example of political historiography, arranging the chapters according to political change, innovation associated with rulers and important personalities and frequent references to wars, disasters, conflicts and pioneering spirit. Hence, Goddard's main text starts with 'The Beginnings' in which he situates the migration of the Proto Malayan aborigines to South Formosa, the aborigines of the forests of Kweichow (Guizhou) to North Formosa in the prehistoric days, and the arrival of the Hoklos and the Hakkas "in the age of the pioneer, unhampered by authority and free to expand in the 12th and 13th centuries".¹⁸ This is followed by an account of Wan Sanhe (admiral Cheng He) 's landing in southern Taiwan in 1430 and the pirate empire of Li Han, alias Captain China on the island around the time of the Dutch arrival. "The Dutch Interlude" is followed by "The House of Cheng", "The Age of Unrest", "The Literati at Panch'iao" featuring Shen Pao-chen as the architect of modern Formosa, then "Liu Ming-ch'uan the Master Builder", a chapter on "The First Asian Republic", "The Japanese Occupation", "Sun Yat-Sen and Formosa" and arriving at the final chapter describing the KMT government in "Formosa since 1945". His objective for writing the book is contained in the postscript, echoing the postwar political imagery in which Goddard readily interprets and equates Taiwan's 'imagined community' as the custodians of Chinese culture and those values that have made Chinese civilization, and calls for a reappraisal of the "real genius of Chinese civilization throughout the centuries which enabled China to survive above the wreckage of other cultures because of its insistence on certain basic values other than those of politics or economics".¹⁹

Taiwan in Modern Times, edited with an introduction by Paul K.T. Sih, published in 1973 fine tuned the what and the who in the center and the periphery in the service of the nation-state, the ethnic community, the international policy, and the postwar academic agenda.

The opening sentence of the introduction was clear: "In all considerations – ethnical, cultural, geographical and historical – Taiwan is an integral and inalienable part of China. Anyone who claims that Taiwan can be separated from and independent of China is denying historical

¹⁸ W. G. Goddard's *Formosa, A Study in Chinese History* London: MacMillan, 1966, p.29

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 220

facts as well as present-day realities.... Various approaches to the general theme are undertaken in different chapters, but they are synthesized to achieve the unified and total effect, that Taiwan is inseparable from the Chinese land, state and nation.”²⁰ The first chapter provided the physical setting (Hsieh Chiao-min), followed by, albeit very short, the Sinicization of Taiwan which its author Kuo Ting-ye traced to the year 230. The Dutch and Spanish Rule were brief episodes and Koxinga stood symbol for Chinese nationalism in Taiwan (1662-1683).²¹ Lian Chan’s chapter specified Taiwan in China’s external relations (1683-1874) and Kuo Ting-ye continued with the modernization of Taiwan which took off when the island was incorporated in the Chinese empire in 1684, but preceded by a maturation of the sinicization until 1874. Two chapters were included on the Japanese period: Harry Lamley’s “A Short-Lived Republic and War, 1895: Taiwan’s Resistance Against Japan” and Hyman Kublin’s “Taiwan’s Japanese Interlude, 1895-1945”. The final three chapters focused on “Taiwan’s Movement into Political Modernity; 1945-1972”, “Economic Development” and “Taiwan: A Modernizing Chinese Society”.²² The publication was intended for an American readership, which had to be warned about the bias, highly critical, emotive and inaccurate research accounts on ‘Formosa today’ purported by Mancall, Mendel and Kerr’s publications and in the writings of the “Taiwan Independence” movement, exiled from Taiwan but alive and kicking in the United States and Japan.²³

Between Local China and Imperial Japan

In 1970, Leonard H.D. Gordon published the edited volume *Taiwan, Studies in Chinese Local History*, featuring the tropoi ‘frontier’ and ‘province’. The very complexity of understanding Taiwan was done away with in one paragraph: “Taiwan is small in size and has had a comparatively brief recorded history. It was apparently unknown to China before the eight century, was not extensively settled by Chinese before

²⁰ Paul K.T. Sih (ed) *Taiwan in Modern Times*, St John’s University, 1973, p. vii

²¹ chapters by George M Beckmann and Paris H Chang respectively

²² chapters by Richard L Walker, Anthony Y.C. Koo, and Yung Wei

²³ introduction xviii. “There are Western writers who choose to say that certain differences do exist between Taiwanese and Chinese. They imply that fifty years of Japanese rule necessarily made the Taiwanese different”. When reading the work, one notices that the work by Kerr, Mendel and Mancall and even Gradzjanov is not very appreciated. In particular see the chapter by Richard L. Walker, pp. 359-396.

the seventeenth, and was not closely governed before the nineteenth. Hence, Taiwan is relatively confined in both space and time, making it easier to study in its entirety.”²⁴ The ingredients for the historical narrative were readily served: an introductory chapter on the location of Taiwan’s place in Chinese history (Gordon), a chapter on the Lins of Wufeng as an example of a local Chinese gentry family in Taiwan (Meskill), a chapter on the 1895 Resistance War against the Japanese, which was exemplar of local Chinese efforts against a foreign power (Lamley), a chapter on Taiwan’s late 19th century economic development (Wickberg) and a concluding chapter on Taiwan’s fate in international power politics between 1840 and 1895 (Gordon).

This particular volume was concerned with 19th century Taiwan, and as noted in introduction, the papers were revised versions of conference presentations from 1966 and 1968.²⁵ Within the ongoing evaluation with China’s economic history in modernization theory, examples like Ramon Myers’s unpublished paper “Some Reflections on Taiwan Economic History” (1972) set the stage for a further interrogation and consolidation of Taiwan’s modernization narrative in East Asian studies. In 1974, a committee for Taiwan Historical Studies was founded within the Association for Asian Studies, which published a periodic newsletter and began publishing a source material series for scholars interested in research topics related to Taiwan. One of these early examples is Wang Shih-ching and William M. Speidel’s “An Introduction to Resources for Taiwan Historical Studies”, published in *Ch’ing-shih wen-ti* (1976).

Another example I would like to briefly allude to is Ronald G. Knapp’s edited volume *China’s Island Frontier. Studies in the Historical Geography of Taiwan*, published in 1980, and drawing from research papers presented at the 1977 meeting of the Association of American Geographers, completed with papers from two historians and an anthropologist. As the title suggests, Knapp’s edited volume was a work of historical geography interrogating processes and patterns in frontier history, taking Taiwan as a case study in the expanding southern frontier of China. The edited volume consists of two parts: ‘Migration and Rural

²⁴ Leonard H.D. Gordon, “Introduction: Taiwan and its Place in Chinese History” in Leonard H.D. Gordon (ed) *Taiwan, Studies in Chinese Local History* New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970, p. 3.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.5

Settlement’ and ‘Urbanization and Economic Integration’. The authors write into the historical narrative, follow the official rhetoric of Chinese migration to the frontier and subsequent economic integration of the island, nonetheless, their approach opens up space for corrections and extensions of the contemporaneous political narratives on the one hand and the Chinese cultural unity and diversity thesis in Taiwan historical studies on the other hand. Criteria used are the social science notions of objective and disinterested inquiry, carefully phrased using the ‘insufficiently understood’ and ‘required further study’ wording. Hence, initial justice is done to the aboriginals communities, in that attention is drawn to the reality that their settlements and culture were uprooted by successive waves of alien influence.²⁶ Not only the Dutch and the Spanish, but also the Cheng reign was part of the ‘interludes’, and ‘as a British merchant witnessed ‘The Cheng rule on Taiwan was ‘very severe’’.²⁷ The inquiry on Ilan settlement concluded that these pioneering activities were guided by local entrepreneurial leadership, rather than foreign in initiatives, military colonization, and patent-derived efforts. To the question whether the described patterns were unique to Yilan, the author notes that “the answer awaits detailed studies of other local areas in Taiwan as well as pockets of Han settlement on the southern mainland of China”.²⁸

Throughout the second part, ‘Urbanization and Economic Integration’ the ‘Japanese interlude’ constitutes an integral part of the discussion. Instead of interrogating the political how and why of the colonial government policies, the chapters on regional trade, transportation networks and the sugar industry assess the impact of Japanese colonial development policies in Taiwan’s economic development since the Dutch period up to the present. For instance, the decline of Lugang port as a result of Japanese development is linked to the emergence of the Lugang émigrés and accounted for their commercial success and interconnectedness with the economic network elsewhere throughout Taiwan in the colonial and postcolonial days. Similarly, Williams’ chapter argued that the basic characteristics of the sugar industry were established during the Japanese period, and offered a comparative analysis with the KMT policies of the sugar industry.

²⁶ see the second chapter by I-shou Wang

²⁷ noted by Hsu Wen-hsiung, p. 22

²⁸ cited on, p. 86.

Of interest are the bibliographical sources to the chapters that deal with the assessment of the Japanese colonial development policies. The consulted sources reveal the expanding rate of scholarship that discussed the Taiwanese colony within the broader perspective of Japanese imperialism. In so doing, Japan's specific colonial ventures in Asia is gradually written into the narrative of modern Japanese history, and helped enlarging the base for East Asian scholarship that substantiated the Japanese "late comer" into the mainstream of 19th and 20th century global economic history. Not until the mid 1980s did the first comprehensive studies on the Japanese empire, formal and informal appear, and subsequently allowed for an academic niche of Taiwan's colonial experience beyond the perspective of Japanese intrusion and Taiwanese resistance paradigm. Exemplar is the edited volume by Ramon Myers, economic historian of China and one of the first to draw attention to Taiwanese economic history in the early 1970s, in collaboration with Mark Peattie and Peter Duus, two historians of Japan. Another example is P. Tsurumi's *Colonial Education in Taiwan* (1977).

But as this suggests, international scholarship on Taiwan's history remained incomplete in between two distinct domains: local China and imperial Japan, each making use of a different lexicon and arguing from the perspective of either Chinese or Japanese historiographies. It may well be argued that the very battlefield was the interpretation of the Japanese colonial period, developing into two contrary frames of reference: a positive perspective highlighting the achievements brought about under a colonial regime, and an anti-imperialist orientation featuring harsh Japanese rule and the hardships suffered by the island's subject population.²⁹

Towards a Taiwan Studies

The need for an independent Taiwanese Studies forum came from within Taiwanese society, but was enacted abroad. Again, I focus on the United States. In particular, it was the generation of Taiwanese academics who had been trained and employed in the States, and essentially displeased

²⁹ cited in Harry J. Lamley, , "Taiwan under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicissitudes of Colonialism", in Murray A. Rubinstein (ed) *Taiwan, a new history* N.J.: Sharpe, 1999, p. 202

with the degree of state interference in Taiwanese academic life. Their call was one against the severe restrictions on the freedom of academic research in both Taiwanese and Chinese academia, because in as much as the KMT state had its own agenda of taboo research topics and ideological conventions, so did the mainland Chinese CCP for its scholars. In November 1985 the First Annual International Symposium of Taiwan Studies was held at the East Asia Center at the University of Chicago, and ran annually until 1989.³⁰ The conferences were novel on the following accounts:

- a) the first all-Taiwan studies, bringing together panels on anthropology, literature, culture, history and with topics that were for the larger part out of the mainstream
- b) it was not an all-Taiwanese crowd, but also incorporated Chinese academics either working in the States or affiliated with Chinese universities and research institutes
- c) in addition to academics, the conference also included presentations from professionals and artists, blacklisted and non-controversial ones.

It would be an exaggeration that these research papers presented revisionist scholarship. At the time, the aim was to discuss Taiwan research within a broader frame of temporal and spatial reference, calling for an open discussion that enabled to generate inroads into the historical mainstream, drawing attention that some points were in need of re-evaluation and for the need that former taboo subjects to be studied. And this was concurrent with a sharper focus on the Taiwanese people.

A look at the presentations in the panels on history illustrates this:

“Ch’ing Policies Towards Taiwan: 1683-1895” (Hsu Wen-hsiung, Northwestern University 1985)

“Chronicle of the Liu’s: An Early Taiwanese Christian Family” (John Yung-hsiang Lai, Harvard University, 1985)

“The Ideal and Ideas of Japanese Assimilation in Taiwan” (Ching-chih Chen, Southern Illinois University, 1985)

“Nationalism and Communism in Taiwan During the 1920s” (Chiung-jen Chien, The University of Chicago, 1985)

“A Critique of Chen Bisheng’s *Taiwan Local History*” (Chiu-kun Chen, Stanford University, 1985)

³⁰ see Marshall Johnson and Fred Y.L. Chiu (eds) *Unbound Taiwan: Closeups from a Distance* The Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Chicago, Selected papers Vol 8, 1994.

“The Spread and Growth of the Heaven and Earth Society in Taiwan in the Qianlong and Jiaqing period” (Qin Baoqi, Chinese People’s University, 1985)

“Taiwan Provincial Assembly, 1951-1985” (Hung-ting Ku, Tunghai University, 1985)

“Some Problems Concerning the Violent Confrontation Between People of Different Origin in Taiwan” (Cheng Kongli, Taiwan Research Institute, Xiamen University, 1986)

“The Creation of Imperial censors in Taiwan and Their Functions” (Liu Ruzhong, Chinese History Museum, 1986)

“The Political Thought of Chiang Wei-shui” (Chiung-jen Chien, The University of Chicago, 1986)

“A New Evaluation of Taiwan’s Position: The Qing Government’s Discussion on the Problem of Coast Defence in the 1870’s and the 1880s” (Cheng Zaizheng, Taiwan research Institute, Xiamen University, 1286)

“Taiwanese in Mainland China, 1895-1945” (Ching-chih Chen, Southern Illinois University, 1986)

“Taiwan Social Groups in Mainland China and Politics” (Wakabayashi Masahiro, University of Tokyo, 1986)

“Major Historical Conditions for the Spreading of Ma-chu Belief after Ching” (Zhu Tian-shun, Xiamen University, 1987)

“Creating a New Society: Activism in Postwar Taiwan” (Douglas Fix, University of California, Berkeley, 1987)

“Impact of Japanese Colonial Rule on Taiwanese Elites” (Ching-chih Chen, Southern Illinois University, 1987)

“The Hoko System and Social Elites in Taiwan During the Japanese Period (1895-1945)” (Caroline Hui-yu Tsai, University of Columbia, 1987)

“The Historical Formation of Characteristics of Resistant Personality in Taiwan” (Tsai Jen-chien, Hsin-chu Environment Protection Center, 1987)

But if these papers in the history panels mainly focused on Qing and Japanese Taiwan confines, it were the panels on ethnicity that set the direction of the ‘nationalizing discourse’ in the years to come. Some examples are “Some Observations on Social Discourse Regarding Taiwan’s ‘Primordial Inhabitants’” (Fred Chiu Yen-liang, 1985), “Migration Paths of the Goashan Ethnic Groups on Taiwan” (Chen, Kuang-ho, 1985), “The Terms of Incorporation: Ethnicity among the

Han” (Marshall Johnson, 1985), “Ethnic Contacts, Stigmatized Identity and Pan-Aboriginalism” (Shih-Chung Hsieh, 1986), “Taiwan Aborigines and the Three Regimes” (Ichiro Numazaki, James Lewis and David Wu, 1986).

Conclusion

Since the 1990s, more Western-language histories on Taiwan have been appearing. It may be argued that they present an integrated history that put most of Taiwan’s international political actors and national agendas in a fair perspective. The notion of ‘identity’ surfaces as the commonly deployed running theme in these histories, and has opened up to the inclusion of the identification of the significant other in Taiwan’s historical trajectory, being first and foremost the aboriginal communities. Examples can be found in Murray Rubinstein’s *Taiwan, a new history* (1999) and *Taiwan, enquête sur une identité*, edited volume by Christine Chaigne, Catherine Paix and Chantal Zheng (2000). Another characteristic of these synthetic and collaborative histories is the branching out into socio-cultural topics, in addition to the mainstream political and socioeconomic ones.

Corrections and extensions to the national history narrative that ascribe to the transition from a Sino-centric to a Taiwan-centric approach since the 1980s in Taiwanese historiography not only pertain to the inclusion of the aboriginal communities, but also feature the ‘deep wounds’ in the Taiwanese collective memory. The taboo subject of the 2.28 Incident in 1947 is articulated (i.e. Steven Philips article in *Taiwan, a new history*). The interrogation with the colonial experience no longer regards Taiwan as a secluded island colony linked to metropolitan Japan, but perceives Taiwan within a larger Asian-Pacific context, as argued by Harry J. Lamley.³¹ Accordingly, there is no longer the need to frame the achievements of the Japanese colonial period as: “During their fifty-year tenure, the Japanese completed the transformation of a fragmented subsistence-oriented economy and a fluid society into a colony that must have been the envy of other colonial powers”, as observed by Knapp in

³¹ Harry J. Lamley, , “Taiwan under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: The Vicitudes of Colonialism”, p. 202.

the 1980 introduction.³² The Japanese colonial period is viewed as an integral part of Taiwan's modern age and has legitimized its self-representation, i.e. "La colonisation japonaise avait cependant créé des différences durables avec la Chine et jeté les bases d'une conscience insulaire, indépendamment du nationalisme chinois, que les tragiques événements de 1947 ont pleinement révélés et qui ont constitué un des ressorts du dynamisme de la société taïwanaise dans la période qui a suivi."³³

In Taiwan, historiography plays an important patriotic role and has a political functionality because it serves the legitimacy of the new government. However, a note of caution is required. Despite the ranging controversies over an historiographical re-evaluation of the Japanese colonial period, the rehabilitation of those who suffered early KMT exoneration, and the inclusion of the painful memories of 1947 in the national pantheon, these are not the acts of major revisionist history within Taiwan. In fact, it is quite difficult to say if revisionism will become a new paradigm. It is not because the opposition party comes to power and evokes political changes, that the rewriting and reinterpretation, even on an ideological level, of certain past events can be labeled as revisionism. In that respect, all postcolonial nations by definition would be writing revisionist history. Also, the transition from a Sino-centric to a Taiwan-centric interpretation of history since the 1980s, as the notion 'Taiwan-centric' implies and the degree to which it consolidated itself on the island, developed in tune with trends in international historical scholarship. This was further enabled by the internal developments in Taiwan, examples of which are the increasing opening up and access to archives, a breakdown in and end of state-sanctioned censorship, the emergence of a new generation of historians who unbottled taboo subjects, and generated a series of wider-ranging and well-established re-articulations and revisions of the KMT established historical scholarship.

³² Ronald G. Knapp (ed) *China's Island Frontier. Studies in the Historical Geography of Taiwan*, "Introduction, xii

³³ Catherine Paix, « Entre Chine et monde Taïwan: la construction d'une identité » in Christine Chaigne, Catherine Paix and Chantal Zheng (éds) *Taïwan, enquête sur une identité*, Paris : Karthala, 2000, p. 20

However, these efforts have not endorsed significant revisions of the national master narrative, and which to date is still mirrored in the Western language histories of Taiwan. The ethno-genesis of the Taiwanese people still stresses the tradition of Chinese statehood, established and handed down, and the significance of the aboriginal communities is secondary, irrespective of the reality that they were the 'primordial inhabitants'. Taiwan to date has no 'founding date', histories on Taiwan deal with this in starting with the 'geographical beginnings and the physical location' of the island at the Chinese frontier. Historians do not disagree on a national level that Taiwan's modernization was not instigated by the Japanese in 1895, but still centralize the role of Liu Mingchuan. What I mean to say by this, is that the master narrative is essentially Chinese in structure, and Taiwan's self-identification has succeeded to impose Taiwanese modalities on this skeleton. I may argue that this results from two interrelated developments. First, Taiwan is a late nation and in their recent identity formation, threats have not only come from within but also from without. For the PRC, the bone of contention is the very fact that Taiwanese modalities have been imposed on the Chinese skeleton. Taking the example of the Japanese colonial period, the Taiwanese historiographical reevaluation is incompatible with the postulated 'modernity' of the Chinese history narrative whose interpretation of Sino-Japanese relations depicts a lexicon of 'aggression', 'war' and 'territorial loss', and to date still constitutes a cultural and political trauma from which the PRC has not yet recovered. Second and related is that Taiwanese historiography is fairly new. It was construed essentially within the confines of the provincial nationalist local history pigeonhole since 1948 under the auspices of the KMT provincial government. As a result of Taiwan's democratization local history came to assume the position of national history, and in this capacity the profession of the historian has remained closely linked to the state apparatus. Said otherwise, traditionally linked to politics, the generations of historians have internalized this role and its predispositions to act as nation-builders.

On a concluding note, the national history narrative of Taiwan is as yet not inclusive. In as much as there has been a historiographical reevaluation of the Japanese colonial experience which aided in centralizing the Taiwanese as subjects, future attempts in the history writing will have to increasingly draw the attention to the historical

relations with the mainland, for instance through a reassessment of the heterogeneity and diverging historical experiences of those who stood emblem for the Chinese cultural unity and diversity thesis in postcolonial Taiwan.