

The Margins of Becoming

Identity and Culture in Taiwan

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Introduction: Methodologies, Epistemologies, and a Taiwan Studies

Carsten Storm and Mark Harrison

In April 2004, the first conference of a new European organisation, the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) was held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. The event, and the association, marked a new moment in the legitimisation of Taiwan as an autonomous cultural, political and social object of study. The island of Taiwan had come to warrant its own institutions of scholarship along with the other regions of North East Asia – Japan, China and Korea – under the rubric of a nascent field called Taiwan Studies.

With the Association, European research on Taiwan has become specifically more than merely an adjunct to research on China. Up until the formation of the Association and its conference, a Taiwan specialist in Europe would have only found a place to speak within Chinese Studies, on the basis of the use of Chinese language in Taiwan.

However, despite the validation of Taiwan Studies which the Association and its conference represented, categories like ethnicity culture, language, literature continue to loom large over the study of Taiwan. These hegemonic categories can all slip between the broader notion of those which might be described as ‘Chinese’ and those which can be labelled as specifically ‘Taiwanese’. This problem in scholarship is of course an expression of the broader geo-political situation in which Taiwan finds itself in the 21st century, threatened by its larger and assertive neighbour for whom the legitimacy of a specifically Taiwanese experience is fundamentally questionable.

For the Taiwanese themselves, these issues structure all aspects of their social, political and cultural lives. The food one eats, the music one listens to, the language one speaks, the clothes one wears, all can and do become sites for the contestation of identity in contemporary Taiwan. Scholars of Taiwan are part of this process, both in reporting the vigorous debates over identity in their scholarship and in marking their own discursive boundaries as practitioners of Taiwan Studies, rather than Chinese or even Japanese Studies. For the inaugural EATS conference, and the subsequent ones, in Bochum (Germany, 2005) and Paris (2006) the problematic of identity, as expressed as the question of the boundaries of Taiwan Studies, has run through almost all the papers on Taiwanese cultural, political and social life.

In Taiwan itself, many Taiwanese appeal vociferously and urgently to the possibility of a Taiwanese subject. Taiwan’s identity fixation is, of course, in significant part a response to and a symptom of its geo-political status – claimed by the People’s Republic

of China and marginalised by an international community keen to maintain good relations with China. Such marginalisation defines Taiwan as strongly as its notable successes in democratisation, economic development, education, high-technology and so on. Indeed, Taiwan's demonstrable achievements stand in tension with its status as a powerless, threatened and marginal 'non-country'. This tension energises the thought and practices of both Taiwan's political and cultural figures and their international academic observers, producing a kind of institutionalised avant-gardism. From 'ordinary' people to government leaders, speaking from the geo-political margins gives the Taiwanese an immanent radicalism as they contest with a dominant China.

As among 'radicals' everywhere, the debates among the Taiwanese over their identity remain wholly and often bitterly contested, as the divergent possible futures for Taiwan are fought over by politicians and opinion makers. This contestation exposes the complexity of the scholarly dilemma of how to produce legitimate knowledge of Taiwan when 'Taiwanese-ness' is, like all identity, a contingent and uneasy compromise across flexible and contested borders.

What is striking in the debate on national identity within Taiwan is that the struggle over the civic image of the Taiwanese citizen has largely been pushed to the margins of debate. These issues were resolved most prominently in the political slogan 'New Taiwanese' (*xin Taiwan ren* 新台灣人), deployed, among others, by LEE TENG-HUI to articulate an inclusive and subjective basis for Taiwanese national identity. Similarly, there has been little struggle over the institutions of nation-building, at least no more than in any nation. The state institutions of the Republic of China were 'Taiwanised' from the 1970s onwards and have transitioned smoothly to the task of building a Taiwanese state without the kind of violence that could be compared with struggles in mainland China, for example.

Officially, however, that state is the Republic of China, founded in 1912 on the mainland, which gave up its claim over mainland China in 1991 – turning Taiwan into a state without a nation. The focus on identity by the Taiwanese can therefore be understood within this context of its ambiguous status as a nationless state, or a stateless nation.

The biggest symbol of nationhood that is yet to be resolved is Taiwan's 'independence', and therefore its full de jure acceptance by the international community over its current mere de facto sovereignty. The question of 'independence' is at the heart of the Taiwanese dilemma. The Taiwanese nation exists de facto and fully developed in terms of its institutions, legal development, military structures, and the like, including now a democratic system of government. But without international recognition, Taiwan lacks the power to truly consolidate and secure a vision of itself, an identity which fits into the borders of the extant island-state.

However, Taiwan's pursuit of the congruence of state, nation, geography and identity has come at a strange time, just as trust in politics and state structures is being eroded by the phenomena of globalisation, and the multitude of assaults on the nation's integrity from global cultural and capital flows and unprecedented access to information. For Taiwan, it is a case of: state available, identity wanted.

Therefore, despite the *real politik* problems of international recognition which affect Taiwan, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Taiwanese fixation upon the problem of their identity might look anachronistic. For the last one hundred years, the dangers of the extremes of nationalism have been clearly understood and fought against. Academically, after the 'linguistic turn', socio-cultural analysis has deconstructed attempts to essentialise the foundations of identity which can constitute the ideologies of nationhood.

We are, after all, living in a post-modern world, in which, following BAUDRILLARD¹ with due acknowledgment of his hyperbole, our identities are operating at the level of the hyper-real, as simulations of their foundations in class, race, ethnicity, nation, or gender. As such, they are open to re-negotiation and reassembly in accordance with the fluid transformations of post-modern life. Alternatively, identities might be understood as commodities, able to be consumed and cast-off, and replaced with others, producing, in a negative reading, fragmented, debased and disconnected subjectivities, or positively, a unprecedented freedom to make and remake the subject unbounded by social strictures and structures.

In any case, "Who needs identity?" as STUART HALL asked in his 1996 essay. The answer he gave was, of course, a de- and re-construction of the question itself, problematising at the outset the very use of the term 'identity'. He develops a shift from 'identity' to 'identification' and therefore a shift from the 'essential', 'stable' to the 'conditional' or 'processual': "The concept of identity deployed here is therefore not essentialist, but a strategic and positional one."² Identity is made, actively and creatively, as part of one's navigation of the territory of social power.

For political and cultural activists, in Taiwan and elsewhere, there are two ways of dealing with the implications for identity politics of the general post-modern anti-essentialist critique of the construction of that identity. One can simply turn away from the whole essentialist notion of the 'true-untrue' or 'real-unreal' dichotomy of what an identity 'really' is, and take refuge in the textuality of identity. The other way might be to draw upon the inherent political stance of the cultural studies project. The implicit reproach by those marginalised by hegemonic constructions of identity, such as 'Taiwanese' by 'Chinese', is not merely that it is a force of domination, but that hegemonic identities are actually constructed 'wrongly' for the subaltern, or at least that such hegemonic identity formations fail to represent the marginalised group concerned. A political stance can therefore be recovered from the risk of the excessive textualization of identity, opening a field for claiming, assuming, imagining, and re-constructing a politically-meaningful group identity.

This, too, has its risks, however. Claims for counter-hegemonic identities by those on the margins of identity formations appeal to a notion of the authenticity of the marginal. This becomes the main source of legitimacy for what could be labelled as the 'power of the marginalised' as it is manifest in successful attempts to link all politi-

1 BAUDRILLARD, JEAN, *Simulations and Simulacra*, p. 170.

2 HALL, STUART, *Who needs Identity?*, p. 1. The initial question is indeed: "What, then, is the need for a further debate about 'identity'?"

cally relevant issues to a moral basis that a priori justifies claims made by minorities. This tendency become visible in personnel policies, in the application and navigation of minority rights, the administration of special funds etc. The valorisation of notions of power and legitimacy in theorising identity both culturally and politically inescapably implies that in practical terms, essentialism is a necessary political response to the pursuit of a politico-cultural voice, and for the emancipation and empowerment of a marginalised group. In the practice of non-academic political debates 'claiming' authenticity seems to be impossible without 'constructing' essentialism. Yet, the phrase 'constructing essentialism' sounds illogical and contradictory in itself, unless 'essentialism' is shifted in the same way as HALL does with the term 'identity' from an ontological to a strategic level.

Even if one sets aside the wide range of possible discursive fields HALL describes where concepts of identity can be deployed, the legitimacy of the 'national' as an identity formation has been challenged by new political formations in Europe, new transnationalisms and globalisms. The 20th century excesses of nations have given way to an understanding, and even an embrace, of the porousness of their boundaries. Once, the nation might have been thought of as a truly independent, sovereign, authentic, and self-sufficient entity, as an ontological and (pseudo-) existentialist 'being in the world' that defined its members normatively, reliably, and authoritatively in contrast to citizens of other nations. In an era of globalisation, through the 1990s and 2000s, the boundaries, both literal and discursive, of this geo-political structure called the nation have come under new kinds of challenges. The nation as a discursive boundary is challenged by the flow of people, capital, culture, and information across these boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Nations have been concerned with the remaking of their identities to suit new global configurations of power and new forms of movement. Whereas once the nation was a quintessentially modern form of political and subjective identity, marking the transformation, especially in Europe, of the 'sacred' or 'dynastic' realms to modernity, now nations are rethinking themselves in the era of globalised capital and communications.

Why, then, the nation for the Taiwanese? In a post-modern world, nationhood remains resolutely modern, and imposes a structure over the possibilities of collective and personal identity which have been thoroughly criticised over many decades. HALL's work, like that of many other similarly 'post' thinkers, might suggest that the Taiwanese would abandon or even reject the need for 'nation' as a category for their self-identification. In this trajectory, the Taiwanese could find their subjective realisation as 'Taiwanese' as part of alternative identity formations, such as the 'global', the 'transnational', or even neologisms such as the 'glocal'.

One might even say that Taiwan's ambiguous international situation, and the contested nature of its identity politics is in accordance with the tenor of the era. Identity is pluralistic, 'made-up' and plastic, and celebrated for these socially dynamic qualities. Taiwan's pluralistic identity, self-consciously visible in its articulation in the media, in politics and cultural production, might be something to be embraced and celebrated by the Taiwanese. Similarly, Taiwan's status as a 'miracle economy', a model for managerialist, technocratic, non-ideological governance over a business-minded people,

might suggest that concerns with the elusive matters of identity and ontology are averse to the valorisation of economic success in contemporary Taiwan.

However, THOMAS GOLD argued convincingly twenty years ago that economic growth was not enough for the Taiwanese, and that development theory explanations of Taiwan's success failed to account for the demands for political participation and the elaboration of a specifically Taiwanese cultural expression.³ Since democratisation, the Taiwanese continue to press for their recognition as a nation both politically and culturally, from campaigns to attain a seat at the UN, to the work of Taiwanese writers, filmmakers and artists, and in Taiwan's emphatic refusal of mainland China's attempts at hegemony over the island.

Therefore, for the Taiwanese, despite their knowledge of the latest trends in cultural and political thinking, those political goals have found expression around the idea of nationhood. BENEDICT ANDERSON, in his seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, describes it as a 'modular' concept, translatable and moveable into a multitude of different geographical locations and eras, becoming the generic label under which constellations of political, social and cultural aspirations are pursued, and it is the category of the 'nation' which the Taiwanese have sought to apply to their island.

Therefore, for the Taiwanese, a historical trajectory which might take them toward a 'post-national' political formation has been subverted. In the 19th century, Taiwan was a county, then province of the Qing empire; in 1895 it became a colony of Japan; in 1945, a province of the Republic of China, and then, in 1949, the site of a China-in-exile. Taiwan itself has never been a legitimised, internationally recognised Taiwanese nation, and it is toward this that the Taiwanese have aspired.

Along this trajectory, Taiwanese national identity has struggled from the margins since at least 1947 to achieve legitimacy. The Nationalist refugee regime claimed sovereignty over all of China, but controlled only the island of Taiwan and a cluster of small outlying islands, yet the KMT worked to delegitimise Taiwan's Japanese identity and marginalise a specifically Taiwanese one with an ideological construction of Chinese civilisation remade in the form of a modern Chinese nation. Vigorous and effective challenges to KMT cultural policy accelerated from the 1970s with the nativist literature movement, until in 2000, with the election of the Democratic Progressive Party government, the elaboration of a specifically Taiwanese national experience achieved a powerful political validation. Taiwan's identity has become a self-conscious project of construction and contention with the multiplicity of possible identity formations which exist within the island: Chinese, Taiwanese, Hakka, or aboriginal, as well as a multiplicity of possible political and cultural identities. In this way, the Taiwanese are not tasked with the transformation of their post-imperial identities into modern and then post-modern nationalisms as markers of modernisation, like the European nations, but are undertaking something rather more post-colonial, recovering localisms and multiple regionalities and consolidating them into a contemporary nationalism as a marker of Taiwan's emergence as a legitimate, autonomous polity.

3 GOLD, THOMAS, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, public debate could deploy excluding dichotomies such as *Zhongguo yishi* 中國意識 (Chinese consciousness) and *Taiwan yishi* 台灣意識 (Taiwanese consciousness) that explicitly cultivated social differences in the politics of nation-building. In the last decade, however, these attempts to sharply define social boundaries both within and outside of Taiwan have been challenged to a certain extent by more pluralistic and fluid identity formations. It might be more appropriate to speak of ambiguous categories like *Zhong-Tai yishi* 中台意識 or *Tai-Zhong yishi* 台中意識 and perhaps forms of consciousnesses that may be described as *Ke-Tai yishi* 客台意識 (expressing a Taiwanised Hakka consciousness) and the like.

Therefore, in Taiwan's trajectory of nation-building, Taiwanese identity is operating as a contested array of appeals to its own potential and possibilities, fighting over the hegemonic structure of notions of the 'real' Taiwan even as the Taiwanese themselves reflect self-consciously upon the constructed and political nature of their own identity debates.

In this way, identity in Taiwan operates with a certain contingency, both reflecting its integration into the political contestation of Taiwan's vociferous democracy and also Taiwan's aspiration to international legitimacy. The impossibility of identity, with its basis in "ontologically empty", yet politically-charged, categories⁴, constantly intervenes in the rhetoric of Taiwan's identity politics, as it does in all attempts to imagine identity as essential, bounded, definable and coherent. But in the case of Taiwan, its historical novelty, its radical political project as a part of democratisation, and the presence of China threatening its legitimacy, all give Taiwan's identity project a unique drama and politico-cultural energy. Add to this Taiwan's media-saturated cultural scene and it becomes a field for one of the world's most interesting examples of a people self-consciously constructing an identity.⁵

WOLFGANG SACHS argues that "perception, myths, and fantasies [...] rise and fall independent of empirical results and rational conclusions; they appear and vanish, not because they have proven right or wrong, but rather because they are pregnant with promise or become irrelevant."⁶ In this sense, any accepted identity has to demonstrate its legitimacy in terms of its promise of fulfilment, a tempting notion of the realised subject which expects a positive or desirable coherent Taiwanese selfhood. Identities as novel national norms are constructed out of appeals to fully formulated concepts of identity creating the idea of a new majority – the people of Taiwan who are able to call themselves 'Taiwanese'. Any form of identity has to prove its adequateness as a representative image in a multitude of realms: politically, culturally, socially, and ontologically. To be chosen, accepted, and valorised individually and collectively it has to show that it deploys and constructs meaning and legitimacy in a better way than

4 A phrase made by TERRY EAGLETON in *Nationalism: Irony and Commitment*, p. 24.

5 One might think of other regions and/or countries in which the problematic of the identity is felt equally urgently. There are however only few that face the problem of having established de facto sovereign control over a geographic region but are not recognised by the international community or are at the danger of extinction. A meaningful comparison to the Taiwanese identity debate and its contestation might be to Palestine and Israeli-Jewish identity.

6 SACHS, WOLFGANG, *The Development Dictionary*, p. 2.

competing identity concepts. At the same time, identity formations must be flexible enough to encompass possible minorities, and ultimately to become legitimate among the international community of nations. In this sense, time, or history, is a crucial category in positively achieving not only a Taiwanese, but any identity. It needs to be 'lived' rather than 'only' to be claimed or discussed.

The analytic critique of Taiwanese identity as a response to Taiwan's political and cultural circumstances in the region is not only a result of deconstruction and post-modernity within the academy. The strategic deployment of identity by activists and cultural practitioners has also developed self-reflexively during the course of its elucidation in academic discourses themselves. However, knowledge of the mechanisms of deconstruction of mainstream power in order to pursue rights of and by marginalised groups has long faced the problem of how to deploy the fixed categories of identity - in gender, race, ethnicity or culture - through which claims of emancipation could be made.

These perennial features of identity debates are present on Taiwan, especially in its strident party politics, in which appeals to an essential Taiwanese identity are a part of political rhetoric. (The chapter by STÉPHANE CORCUFF sheds much light on this.) Nevertheless, the meticulous academic theorising about identity finds only contingent correspondence in the production of discourses of identity in politics, culture and everyday life on Taiwan itself. Most of the material that is analyzed in the different chapters - films, novels, art, and policies of language, memory, education, or religion - is drawn from a discursive field of Taiwan's social and cultural life and is not subject to academic terminological discipline. As such, this material is open to scholarly critique for the limits of its self-understanding of the fundamental nature of identity and 'identification'. Of course, cultural production is necessarily open-ended and multi-layered, deploying assumptions about the operation of identity for rhetorical, artistic, or political purposes without the obligation to systematise those assumptions. Cultural production in Taiwan offers essentialist notions of identity in, for example, nativist literature, as an artistic strategy to refute Chinese cultural hegemony in Taiwan, and yet can do so self-consciously, claiming authority over a specifically Taiwanese experience as an act of cultural politics. Theoretically or otherwise, Taiwanese artists, writers, and filmmakers are happy to deploy notions of identity as political and artistic strategies as part of the task of producing a specifically, and proudly, Taiwanese culture.

The papers in this volume present a range of responses to the problematic of identity at the heart of Taiwan's social and cultural life. They both report and critique the attempts by Taiwanese people to think, produce, and understand what it means to be Taiwanese. At one level, the chapters identify the appeal by Taiwanese to an essential, definable Taiwanese identity, reading backwards into history to 'uncover', 'recover' or 'discover' the basis of their identity. Regardless of the deconstruction of such essential, originary categories of identity, they maintain a political power, energising Taiwanese nationalists through fixedness of meaning and the possibilities they offer for convictions, beliefs and the emphatic definitions of boundaries in their refutation of mainland Chinese hegemony. The writing of history is crucial to this political act, proscribing the limits of a Taiwanese identity by drawing a coherent Taiwanese subjectiv-

ity out of a historical teleology. It excludes and effaces, again HALL's notion of 'identification', rather than 'identity', capturing the sense of a process, repeated and rehearsed. Imagining a future is the other end of a teleology of identification, the appeal to the possibility of an ideal, realised subjectivity, and the claim of legitimacy over such a possibility. Such appeals are functional, made in the field of politics, and 'strategic', again in HALL's terms.

The preoccupation of the Taiwanese with their own identity, and the corresponding emphasis on the identity problematic by Taiwan Studies scholars can be understood on the basis of these complex political, cultural and epistemological attempts to articulate Taiwanese identity. Any scholarship on Taiwan needs to navigate this fraught discursive terrain by determining the conditions and circumstances under which the experience of being Taiwanese is elaborated and deployed.

In the field of scholarship, such as the examples included here, these aspects of 'who are the Taiwanese', and where the boundaries of its identification should be drawn intrude upon all the work being undertaken. It is in the very processes of scholarship that the boundaries of knowledge, of what counts as specifically 'Taiwanese' and what does not, are defined. Therefore, the contestability of Taiwanese identity is expressed in the complex and often seemingly contingent array of different kinds of scholarly work on Taiwan, with different methodologies and subject matter. As the field consolidates, it clarifies the limits of what can be legitimately called a 'Taiwanese' experience.

In this volume, STÉPHANE CORCUFF examines how the Taiwanisation of Taiwanese politics after the establishment of the KMT refugee government in Taipei in 1949 influenced the presidential election campaign in 2004. By focussing on the opponents of Taiwanisation, the so called Pan-Blues around the KMT, the People's First Party, and the New Party, he elucidates the extent to which the tensions over identity overshadowed most of the other aspects of the election campaign. The question of unification with the People's Republic of China or independence has become so predominant that it threatens to overwhelm the democratic system itself, with commitment to Taiwan's democracy becoming a marker of identity politics. The Taiwanese identity debate is no longer linked to marginalised groups claiming independence, but has become a mainstream political position, offering a field of political rhetoric to be deployed in campaign politics.

The discursive boundaries of Taiwan as a society in transition are described in the chapter by CHRISTINE KÄMMER on changes of values in literary educational texts. Global culture and the interdependence of Taiwan, especially with the western world, are seen as a threat to the moral education of children, in a possibly conservative governmental reaction of isolation to prevent children from 'bad' influences and provide them with positive role models. Yet, what is at the very heart of education is not only the traditional attempt to educate each new generation against the threat posed by 'modern' culture, but also the Taiwanese identity project itself. If, as noted above, time is a crucial category in achieving Taiwaneseeness, schooling is a key legitimising institution to effect a new national identity.

Religion as another source of moral values and a spiritually legitimated identity is dealt with in the chapter by STEFANIA TRAVAGNIN. The specific form of the Buddhist practice of *renjian fojiao* is a force that both legitimises and challenges the discourse of national identity. Religion as category shifts the borders of the local and global, offering a positive notion of global identity formation that in modernity and especially within post-modernity, can seem anachronistic. Nonetheless it fills a gap that is produced by an increasingly material orientation in everyday life, and as such influences the identity discourse in Taiwan and elsewhere. In some respects the production of knowledge in religious practices seems to be esoteric and at best parallel but unconnected to the academic or political, let alone the economic and commercial realm, yet on the other hand the practices prove to be deeply intertwined.

ANN HEYLEN refers to a fundamental aspect of nationhood – language – and details the historical debates in the 1920s and 1930s over the codification of the spoken Taiwanese dialect (*taiyu* 台語) into a standardised written form which could form the institutionalised basis for a coherent Taiwanese identity. As PIERRE BOURDIEU described in great detail in the context of post-revolutionary France, the foundation of modern nationhood is the codification of a standardised national language. Those who can use the standardised form are those who are able to fully participate in the nation-state. For Taiwan, of course, the process was truncated both by the imposition of Japanese and then by the establishment of the R.O.C. on Taiwan and the institutionalised hegemony of Mandarin over Taiwanese.

For BI-YU CHANG and SATOSHI OTA, two different dimensions of Taiwanese culture can be found in elite and pop, both stretching the boundaries of what kind of culture constitutes Taiwanese culture. OTA's work explores the very nature of the porousness of those boundaries, in the popularity of certain kinds of Japanese television. Culture becomes a consumer commodity and refuses any attempt by the nationalist or ideologue to proscribe cultural limits. Popular culture in Taiwan becomes unregulated and transgressive, even as it enjoins young Taiwanese to participate in regional and global cultural markets. CHANG, on the other hand, describes the deep integration of the state and culture, with the largely traditional cultural form of Taiwanese opera being appropriated, promoted and regulated for the changing purposes of the Taiwanese state. Taiwanese culture in this context becomes a site of ideological conflict between artists, audiences and state agents. They compete with shifting alternative claims over a 'true' Chinese or Taiwanese culture on Taiwan, and in so doing presume to sustain the cultural foundations of the nation. Of course, such claims are redolent with ideology and processes of inclusion and exclusion, drawing and redrawing the boundaries of Taiwan's cultural identity.

For ELSA CHEN, LEE WEI-I and TZENG SHI-JUNG, and also CHANG, the issue is memory and how Taiwanese history is memorialised both in public acts of remembrance and in private records. Remembrance is an act which shapes both the immediate and distant past, structuring experience through a discursive process of a mediated, self-conscious reflection upon the multiplicities of a lived experience. Through the selective process of selection of remembering and forgetting the past is given a form as a narrative and a moral judgement. In this way, like Taiwan Studies scholarship

itself, remembrance produces knowledge, not necessarily in the form and style of scholarly knowledge, constructed as disinterested and objective, and yet not merely personal, subjective and immediate, but something in between, a kind of improvised theorisation of the past so as to make it meaningful. As CHEN, TZENG, and LEE show, remembrance can itself be read to elucidate a more generalised socio-political understanding in Taiwan's past and present. The way individual or artistic acts of memory work against history constructed by the larger institutional forces of nation-states offer implicit critiques of those state-sponsored ideologies, even the emergent hegemonic ideologies of Taiwanese identity, which had for so long offered a critique of the KMT's Chinese nationalism.

A different aspect of memory formation is the issue for CARSTEN STORM, FAN MING-JU, and PERRY JOHANSSON, as well as SATOSHI OTA. Internationally and in Taiwan in particular, fiction has proven to be a promising tool for expressing identity issues in times during which public opinion is restricted for various reasons and in various degrees. Fiction, both written and as a movie, can open options of possible other realities. Nonetheless, it should not be overseen that an analytic reduction of fictionality to a political reading is inadequate. However, the authors LI QIAO and HUANG CHUNMING (HWANG CHUN-MING) and the directors LIN CHENG-SHENG and CHANG TSO-CHI are explicitly dealing with contesting questions of memory and identity in their works. Indeed, fictional works, no matter whether as books or as movies, have a key influence on the formation of public self-knowledge and on national subjectivities. The version of the self as fictionally constructed is highly subjective, yet becomes an inter-subjectivity when received by a reading public and it can even transform into a form of pseudo-objective national knowledge.

The contestation of nationhood and a corresponding identity as described in most of the articles is under scrutiny not only by the international position of Taiwan and the struggle between the constructed dichotomy of 'Taiwanese' and 'Chinese', but by marginalised minorities from within Taiwan. As noted in ANN HEYLEN's paper, language is one of the necessary agents that are employed in the formation of nationhood. However, language is connected not so much to 'nation' as such, but to the specific aspect of national identity. It gains importance within the process of identity contestation of groups defined by other categories than nation as well. ALEXANDER ADELAAR's article refers to the now extinct language *Siraya* that has become the object of a language revival movement as part of a broader movement of aboriginal political and social self-consciousness. Another aspect of strengthening aboriginal culture and rights is explored by SCOTT SIMON. The formation of a legal statehood and a democratic political system allows minorities to shift the question of identity from a culturally based consciousness of tradition, heritage, and self-awareness to a legal framework of guaranteed rights as a group and as individuals. Nowadays, the democratised, liberalised, and legalised statehood in Taiwan can be and is increasingly used by 'original settlers' (*yuanzhu min* 原住民) to implement protective structures for themselves.

Through all the work in this book, the mirror to the issue of identity is the question of knowledge. All of the papers here expand the limits and further the depths of knowledge of Taiwan, both historically and of its contemporary social and political

life. In doing so, they also expand the limits of Taiwanese identity, of what 'we', as scholars in Western and Taiwanese academies, know about Taiwan, and, as shown by the range of contributors to this volume, what the Taiwanese know about themselves. The very process of this production of knowledge about Taiwan, the establishment of its structures and the definition of its borders is the issue of MARK HARRISON's chapter. Post-structuralist arguments hold that the discourse of identity – in Taiwan as much as everywhere else – is produced by all of those who engage themselves in its debate, whether they are Taiwanese or European scholars, as much as Taiwanese activists. Academic production of the discourse of Taiwanese identity may employ a specific rhetorical style and particular legitimising epistemological methodologies, but these do not intrinsically distinguish themselves from the subjective knowledge of Taiwan by Taiwanese nationals.

Therefore, the processes by which knowledge of Taiwan is produced are varied. As noted above, the work of CHEN and CHANG takes in individualistic and subjective knowledge personal points of view on events in Taiwan's past, and systematises this personal knowledge with the analytical tools of contemporary cultural studies and social theory. For writers such as CORCUFF and HEYLEN, the knowledge they produce is rooted in the principles of contemporary social science, working from a commitment to empiricism and the possibility of objectivity as the foundation of legitimised knowledge. They operate with models and schema which deliver systematic analyses of the plurality of Taiwanese history and social life. For CORCUFF, dealing directly with the identity problematic, his approach deploys the full array of data gathering and statistical analysis to arbitrate in the complex and contested patterns of Taiwan's identity discourses. Within the conventions of the disciplines of history and the social sciences, this work allows scholars to say, legitimately, that they 'know' Taiwan.

Other work, such as CHANG's, STORM's, OTA's, is critical and descriptive, taking in examples of cultural production and both locating them within narratives of Taiwanese history and politics, and drawing out their themes and subject matter. Their work introduces new literatures and artistic forms into the cannon of Taiwanese culture.

In this way, scholarship such as the work featured in this volume produces a multi-layered and multipolar approach to Taiwan. Writing begins from different subject positions and targets different objects. It can write about a broadly-imagined Taiwanese society and claim to produce comprehensive knowledge about a category of analysis. Alternatively, the subject might be small or narrowly defined – a genre or individual, or specific works of literature, or even just singular moments in Taiwan's social and political life. Each piece in itself offers a glimpse of a different aspect of contemporary and historical Taiwan; each is 'complete' and self-contained, offering the promise of closure on a particular subject in the definitiveness with which it speaks. Yet all scholars understand that such closure is illusory. However definitively an academic might hope to pronounce on a particular subject, there are inevitably counter-examples and counterpoints which slip beyond the self-imposed boundaries of a single scholarly work. Instead, each chapter can better be understood as a bricolage, offering frag-

ments of a whole, disconnected from others but each shedding light on the ultimate subject, which is the meaning of Taiwan itself.

In this way, analysis of the work of a particular writer or artist becomes a moment in the expression of a broadly-imagined Taiwanese identity, both in terms of scholarly work, but also in terms of the self-conscious expression of a Taiwanese experience by Taiwanese artists. Similarly, social science work on the Taiwanese condition produces the notion of a coherent, bounded subjectivity called 'Taiwanese' and a social category called 'the Taiwanese'.

In sum, then, this volume offers work on an array of cultural moments which express the liminal nature of Taiwan's cultural life on the fault-lines of Asia and the West. The chapters offer a snapshot of the limits of what counts as 'Taiwan' and what is becoming Taiwan Studies.

Notes and acknowledgements

As mentioned before, the Taiwan Studies had been incorporated into Chinese Studies most of the time while simultaneously striving to express its own concerns and its distinctness from Chinese Studies as a whole. Among others, one result of this – as much as of political and ideological issues in the past – is the rejection of the Pinyin transcription system, which is identified with the mainland. By now, the use of transcription systems in the Taiwan Studies business has become highly heterogeneous, yet it still also serves as a means of expressing identity concerns. This is true for Chinese terms, and much more for names. Therefore, this volume follows no strictly standardised approach and some transcriptions may partly change from article to article. However, most names have been standardised and the index refers to alternative transcription styles throughout the text as well.

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