Becoming Taiwan: From Colonialism to Democracy
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Introduction

Ann Heylen and Scott Sommers

This book is about Taiwan. Or rather, it is about the forces that have transformed Taiwan from a remote island on the frontier of the Chinese empire into its current position as a successful democracy. While Taiwan is not a new topic for scholarship, recent developments have brought new directions. Even into the 1980s, much of the published research had been done largely as a surrogate by those who had difficulty entering China. Today, scholars from all over the world are regularly involved in discussion of the series of historical events that gave birth to this unique society.

Writing about Taiwan was not initially conceived as part of a project of local discovery. Instead, it was written to describe modern Chinese society—a fact indicated in titles from this period (Wolf 1968; Wolf 1978; Meskill 1979). Taiwan has also been the object of study for those interested in its rapid economic development following the end of World War II—the so-called “economic miracle.” This work generally places Taiwan in the context of similar development in Hong Kong and Singapore, as an example of something Asian, but not necessarily linked to its transformation from colonialism and military rule into a modern democracy. The histories of Taiwan in Cold War scholarship became framed within the contours of the “modernization of Chinese history,” while research on the Japanese colonial period appeared in volumes on “Japan’s failed modernity,” suggesting that the colonial period was not part of Taiwan’s “real” modernization.1 Works dealing with Taiwan’s development in the global political economy adopted rhetorical positions that expressed continuity with Taiwan’s Chinese cultural and historical heritage (Goddard 1966, Sih 1973, Fei et al. 1979).

Taiwan Studies as an independent academic discipline has a somewhat different history. Its origin is best situated in a scholarship that begins with its frontier history during the Qing dynasty (Gordon 1970; Knapp 1980; DeGlopper 1995) or even before (Shepherd 1993). Harrison (2006: 36-49) has pointed out the idea of Taiwan was conceived, elaborated and consolidated. He cites the examples of Gold (1986) as the origins of a comprehensive historiographic critique of simple economic explanations for its development and that of Wachman (1994) as work informed by pursuing the meaning of (national) identity rooted in its past. This research in turn drew facts from the emerging counter-narrative to the KMT state-sanctioned narrative found in George Kerr (1965, 1974), Mark Mancall (1964) and Douglas Mendel (1970). The Taiwan Studies intellectual tradition became firmly consolidated through a linking with historical studies of the Japanese colonial period (Lamley 1964; Tsurumi 1977; Myers and Peattie 1984; Duus 1989; Fix 1993). These do not stress the Manchu-Qing origins

1 For further elaboration on this point see Barlow (1997).
of Taiwanese society, but rather focus on the divergences that began with Japan’s 50-year colonial rule. By the 1990s, Taiwan Studies as a distinct field had been born. A Taiwan historiography began to appear that emphasized an emerging importance of the Japanese colonial period (Rubinstein 1991, 1994, 1999). By that time, a large enough body of research had become available to support a growing number of overviews and surveys with Taiwan as their central theme (Ahern and Gates 1981; Winckler and Greenhalgh 1988; Simon and Kau 1992; Murray and Hong 1994, Harrell and Huang 1994; Hsu and Huang 1999).

With the end of martial law in 1987 and the beginning of democratization, the focus was lifted from Taiwan as an exclusively Han Chinese society. Contemporary research now involves a wide range of academic disciplines. A complete list is beyond the scope of this introduction, but important examples would include the linguistic work of Henning Klöter (2005) on Written Taiwanese, studies on the emergence of Taiwan national identity (Corcuff 2002; Makeham and Hsiau 2005; Damm and Schubert 2007, Yu 2007; Yeh 2008; Wei 2008), an increased understanding of the role of religion in contemporary Taiwan politics (Katz and Rubinstein 2003; Laliberté 2004; Madsen 2007), gender issues (Farris et al. 2004; Lan 2007; Chang 2009), archival research on early Taiwan (Blussé 2003; Borao 2001, 2002; Andrade 2008; Chiu 2008) and histories of the colonial period (Ka 1995; Katz 2005; Ts’ai 2009; Heylen 2010), as well as Taiwan-focused ethnographies (Moskovitz 2001; Dell’Orto 2002; Simon 2003, 2005) and studies on the place of indigenous peoples in a contemporary Taiwan (Blundell 2001/2009; Cauquelin 2004).

This book is the result of a conversation that followed the 2008 annual conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) held in Prague. Growing interest in Taiwan is resulting in larger conferences that draw international scholarship from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. And while this is certainly true, reflection on the most recently published research in Taiwan Studies leads in a different direction. The growing number of excellent book volumes available in our field has been countered by their disproportionate concentration in a few centers of excellence and the same group of researchers, primarily from the Anglo-Saxon world. The review of Taiwan Studies that we have provided here is no exception. One of the strengths of the Harrassowitz series Studia Formosiana has always been the way in which it represents the growing diversity of voices in Taiwan Studies (Neder and Schilling 2003; Fell, Chang and Klöter 2006; Storm and Harrison 2007). Keeping in the tradition of this series, contributors to our volume have been drawn from a broad range of nationalities and academic backgrounds. Their work does not focus primarily on  

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2 Leonard Blussé is credited for his longstanding involvement, beginning in the 1980s, with the collection and publication of 17th century Dutch Formosa primary sources.

3 We have limited our literature survey to English-language publications. However, we recognize the importance in Taiwan Studies of the growing literature in French, German and Slavic languages, as well as the existing literatures in Chinese and Japanese languages.
Introduction

theoretical issues, but instead is informed by historical facts. The result represents a mixture of well-known scholars as well as young researchers from outside the English-speaking world. Each chapter in this volume has received peer-review by an outstanding panel of internationally renowned scholars whose cooperation has made this work truly representative of the range in our field.

The first section of our book addresses the issue of *How Chinese is Taiwan?* While Japanese institutions affected the entire island and every person on it, we focus on the particular way in which they touched the non-Chinese indigenous peoples and the widespread effects these changes were to have, even among the Chinese. P. Kerim Friedman introduces the questions that came to be central when discussing the place of Aborigines in Taiwan and how the Japanese solutions to these were significant, long-lasting and positioned the Aborigines in a particular way. Following the incorporation of Taiwan into the KMT’s version of a China-state narrative, Aborigines were forced to decide about their cultural heritage, their Japanese past, and the future that the KMT was promising them. Alexander Tsung-ming Chen highlights the omnipresence of the aboriginal reality of early postwar Taiwanese society. He points out that, while numerically small in number, the place for Aborigines in the KMT solution was particularly important. As seemingly distant from all of this as Jesuit missionaries among the Aborigines may seem, in fact, they emerge significant to an understanding of Taiwanese society in such directions as non-policy language practices and Christianity among the Han Chinese population. The issues of the role that Aborigines would come to play in the KMT’s China-state were not minor and great resources were expended to manage this. Darryl Sterk’s chapter examines the way in which this effort appeared in the popular culture of the time. Addressing the cinematic depiction of the ‘aboriginal maiden,’ Sterk discusses in detail how Aborigines, no longer permitted to be peripheral savages, were now expected to take part in Taiwan’s economic growth and join Chinese society as producers. It is left to Pei-Yin Lin to skilfully contrast the choices faced by ethnic Taiwanese after the 2.28 Incident of 1947. While literary in nature, her depiction makes clear that Taiwanese society was not homogeneous and not everyone’s life was shaped by their perception of Han Chinese identity. If Taiwan was no longer just Chinese, then what was it? And what was it becoming? During the 1990s, with the growing distance from China, these issues of identity became particularly salient.

A second issue addressed in this book is the growing understanding of Taiwanese identity and ethnicity that draws heavily from theoretical considerations. This would include the recent volumes by Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson and Paul-François Tremlett (2009), Yuko Kikuchi (2007), Mark Harrison (2006), as well as Emma Teng (2004), Melissa Brown (2004) and Myriam Ming-cheng Lo (2002). Our book has taken an historical approach to issues of identity and ethnicity. Section Two *Organizing a Taiwanese Society* does not present history as an alternative to properly structured theoretical understanding, but rather as complementary, intended to act as a compan-
ion to these well-thought out works. Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai looks at the origins of modern society and the role of the baojia in Taiwanese colonial modernity. She presents the case that the roots of Taiwan’s social organization lie in the compromise that Japanese colonial rule was forced to make with the interests of Taiwanese. The remaining three chapters of this section discuss the ethnic dynamic in Taiwan as it has appeared in the postwar period. Fang-Mei Lin’s chapter explores the complex interaction of ethnicity and gender that unfolded in the discourse of the commercial sex trade in Taipei. She is able to powerfully demonstrate that the conflict over sex work licensing reflects cultural disputes rather than issues among groups historically involved with women’s issues. Min-Chin Chiang’s chapter engages most directly with theoretical work, grounded by an empirical study of the Gold Ecological Park, it shows the way in which ethnicity has come to be represented as a part of the Taiwan heritage industry. The chapter details how bureaucratic decisions were made about culture and ethnicity, and how perceptions of this cannot be separated from these decisions. The final chapter by Shi-chi Mike Lan asks some very deep questions about the Taiwanese handling of ethnicity as it increasingly disappears from the realm of official policy and is personalized in individual choice. Lan illustrates this by comparing Taiwanese former KMT soldiers trapped in China following the KMT’s flight to Taiwan with Albert Camus’ existential fictions L’Étranger and Le Malentendu.

A third trend that heavily influences contemporary Taiwan Studies is linked with the critical analysis of literature, such as Yvonne Sung-sheng Chang (1993), A-chin Hsiau (2000) and Margaret Hillenbrand (2007) that discuss the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism and resistance in literature. Others focus on individual events or œuvres such as Leo T.S. Ching (2001), Faye Yuan Kleeman (2003), and the more eclectic compilations edited by Liao Ping-hui (2006) and David Der-wei Wang (2006). This scholarship has recently expanded from dealing strictly with literature to other venues of expression like cinema (Yip 2004; Lin 2007). Literature is one of few areas of work that continues to be dominated by Taiwanese writers, perhaps because of the level of cultural sophistication this type of scholarship implies. Our third section Speaking about Taiwan examines literature as an historical event. While presented in our volume in chronological order, this section is best illustrated by first pointing to the works of Táňa Dlhušová and Sandrine Marchand. These chapters are discussions of the historical events and political decisions, both in government and among the writers themselves, that contributed to the construction of a Taiwanese literature. Marchand approaches this problem from a Chinese literature viewpoint in contrast with Dlhušová’s innovative take on cultural integration of Taiwanese literature during the early postwar period. In addition to the statement about literature provided by these two chapters, we also explore language use. Ann Heylen and Scott Sommers draw from a wide range of sources to discuss the past and future of language use in Taiwan. Heylen uses ego-documents from Taiwanese studying in Japan to illustrate the discourse that informed a Taiwanese consciousness and attempts to modernize the
Chinese language in a colonial setting. It is here where Marchand’s history of Taiwanese literature takes on a dual role. Her chapter provides historical description but also discusses the complex choices of language use made by writers of this period, and why the Taiwanese language became increasingly irrelevant to the writing of a Taiwanese literature. Scott Sommers ends the book with speculation on the increased distancing of Taiwanese consciousness from the possibility of a modern Taiwanese language. He points to the way in which Mandarin Chinese and English have come to dominate in education and professional workplace practices. His chapter positions English in a linguistic ecology that includes Chinese languages affected by official policy and non-policy educational practices.

To this point, it would seem we are defining a Taiwan Studies that does not include scholarly work on politics, law and international relations. In fact, there are many works of this type that are indispensable to a proper understanding of contemporary Taiwan culture and society, although they fall outside the scope of this book. Any complete literature of Taiwan Studies would have to represent the growing research on electoral and domestic politics (Rigger 1999; Fell 2005; Jacobs 2008; Goldstein and Chang 2008), cross-strait and international relations (Hughes 1997; Tubilewicz 2007; Chow 2008; Tunsjo 2008; Tsang 2008), as well as a growing comparative literature (Wu 1995; Hsiao and Binh 2008). However, every volume must be limited to the expertise of its editors and contributors.

It is customary in volumes of this sort to comment on the use of characters and Romanization. While some of the more recent works in Taiwan Studies have veered away from highly standardized text, we have embraced it. With the increasing role of theory and literary discourse in Taiwan Studies and less emphasis on historical description, the problems that standardization was created to address may seem less obvious. Readers of this volume should take note of the very large numbers of names, people, places and events that are described. The variety of sounds in these names cannot accurately be represented with the idiosyncratic use of characters and transliteration systems. Even before the compilation of this volume began, we realized that a highly systematic presentation of these words would be necessary to provide readers with a consistent understanding of content. To deal with this problem we had writers use hanyu pinyin. We recognize that this raises political questions in a volume entitled *Becoming Taiwan*, and in fact this point was raised by some of our reviewers. But the reality of a multidisciplinary volume such as this is that contributors come from a wide range of backgrounds and are not necessarily familiar with any other modern system of transliteration. It was thus for pragmatic reasons, rather than political ideology, that we have been forced to settle for the use of hanyu pinyin. It should be noted though that we have also followed the scholarly tradition of providing widely understood

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4 Special mention is deserved by the volumes in French by Jean-Pierre Cabestan and also work in German by Gunter Schubert.
transliterations of names that come from other systems, such as Chiang Kai-shek and Taipei. Names and terminology that also have widely used Japanese pronunciation are indicated with the letter J., accompanied by the Chinese translation indicated by Ch., or T. for Taiwanese (Southern Min).

The writing of any book involves a large number of people. This book could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of an amazing group of scholars. While many of them have been thanked personally, a volume of this nature does not always reflect the contribution and inspiration of all those people who really should be acknowledged. Their full contribution to this book, as well as to the field of Taiwan Studies, is sometimes not immediately apparent and only clearly seen through time and reflection. For example our overview has missed the valuable contributions of Fiorella Allio and Frank Muyard as editors of the journal *China Perspectives/Perspectives chinoises*, Tak-Wing Ngo as editor of *China Information* and the various editors, contributors and anonymous reviewers who worked on the many thematic issues in journals like *China Quarterly, Journal of Asian Studies, Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* among others.

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Introduction


