

## **Original Sin on the Island Paradise? Qing Taiwan's colonial history in comparative perspective**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper argues that narratives of Taiwan's colonial experience promoted by the DPP regime between 2000 and 2008 and the version endorsed by the communist regime on the mainland both share a reluctance to recognize the status of China itself as a colonizing power, or (as in the case of Taiwan) of Chinese settlers as colonizers. While this article does not elaborate at great length as to how 'Greater China' might be integrated into comparative analyses of colonialism and imperialism, it reviews some of the existing literature (particularly Teng 2004), suggesting points of comparison that may merit further exploration. The discussion then turns to other recent work on Taiwan's history, showing how the typical periodization of Taiwan studies, with its assumption that colonialism arrived on the island in 1895 with the invading Japanese, distorts narratives of the Taiwanese past. Some reference is also made to how exhibitions in Taiwanese historical and anthropological museums have been implicated in attempts over recent years to construct a narrative of multicultural 'Taiwanese-ness'. The article concludes with a discussion both of the reasons for this occlusion of Taiwan's colonial past, and of the wider implications of such a posture of denial for Chinese identities on Taiwan and the mainland.*

### **Introduction**

This indifference to the only non-Western colonial experience in the general critique of imperialism and colonization underscores the West's persisting obsession with its own authority to constitute itself as a body of knowledge and the author of its own criticism. It is as if the very thought of a non-Western, nonwhite perpetrator of an equally reprehensible colonial violence is unfathomable in the Eurocentric consciousness. Ironically, radical anti-Eurocentrism turns out to be the ultimate consolidation of Eurocentrism. (Ching 2001: 30-31)

While the assumption is still widely made that 'colonialism' is a quintessentially Western practice, those – like Ching – who do discuss instances of non-Western

colonialism generally confine their attention to Japan.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese set out in the late nineteenth century to compete with the imperialist West on its own terms, and the colonization of Taiwan in particular served to demonstrate to the Emperor's subjects, and to a wider world, that theirs ranked among the 'advanced' nations of the day. In addition, the spectacular brutality of the wars of aggression that brought about the demise of the Japanese *imperium* has etched in many East Asian minds the memory of an Oriental imperialism that in its violence and barbarity exceeded even its hateful Western precursors. As Mitter has shown (2007), in the contemporary People's Republic of China, both popular and officially-sponsored discourse have conspired to keep fresh the memory of Chinese victimhood, especially at the hands of the Japanese. Taiwan slots neatly into this narrative of victimization, as the first major episode in the saga of Japanese aggression – the first of a clutch of offspring snatched by Japan from the bosom of the Chinese motherland, and the last to be received back into her warm embrace.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, pro-independence groups on the island itself have in recent years sought to qualify accounts of the Japanese colonial experience as uniformly malign, instead portraying the period of Japanese rule, along with preceding periods of rule by the Qing dynasty, the Koxinga clan, and the Dutch, as patches in the quilt of a 'multicultural Taiwan'.<sup>3</sup>

We can see a shared reluctance to recognize the status of China itself as a colonizing power; although, like early American patriots seeking to distance themselves from the 'old country', many in Taiwan's 'Green' camp may acknowledge the 'colonial' character of the Chinese state, Chinese settlement on Taiwan is not itself so characterized. Colonialism is assumed to have arrived on the island in 1895 with the invading Japanese, and exhibitions in Taiwanese historical and anthropological museums have been implicated in recent years in constructing a narrative of multicultural 'Taiwanese-ness' (a phenomenon I have discussed at greater length elsewhere, see Vickers 2007; 2009). While some of these exhibitions have sought to downplay or denigrate the role of the Chinese state in the island's development, acknowledgement of the history of inter-ethnic conflict between Chinese settlers and aborigines has generally been minimal.

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect, a 2007 special issue of the journal *Taiwan Shi Yanjiu* (*Journal of Taiwan History*), published by the Academia Sinica in Taipei, is typical (Academia Sinica 2007). The special issue, on 'colonial history' (*zhimindi shi*), exclusively features articles on the period of Japanese rule in Taiwan and Korea.

<sup>2</sup> The 2003 mainland docu-drama epic, *Zou Xiang Gonghe* (*Towards the Republic*) features a melodramatic portrayal of Li Hongzhang's cession of Taiwan to Japan after the 1894-1895 war – just one illustration of the prevalence of nationalist discourse in contemporary China, and the reinforcement of the memory of Taiwan's loss as an unmitigated tragedy and shameful national humiliation.

<sup>3</sup> In 2005, the National Museum of History in Taipei mounted a special exhibition on quilts as art objects, with the exhibition text making pointed allusions to the quilt as a metaphor for cultural identity.

### Contemporary Narratives of Taiwan's Past – A Brief Summary

As an agrarian nation, China was essentially constructed not on the basis of military force or conquest; rather, [the Chinese state was founded] through trade based on the tribute system, [the spread of] rites and cultural enlightenment, 'softly embracing the four barbarians' (*huairou siyi*), stabilizing the borders and fixing the territory (*wenjiang gutu*), and this system was established and sustained through several thousand years prior to the invasion of China by Western capitalists in the nineteenth century. (Zhu 2007: 156)

In research on the history curriculum for Taiwan's schools, and on the island's museums, various scholars have discussed the portrayal of local history in official discourse, and the changes this has undergone during the transition from Kuomintang (KMT) martial law in the 1980s to multi-party democracy in the twenty-first century (Corcuff 2005; Liu *et al.* 2005; Vickers 2007; 2008). Interpretations of Taiwan's history, and of the island's colonization by various powers, have tended to divide along 'Blue'/'Green' lines – the former indicating orthodox KMT nationalism, the latter the kind of pro-independence stance associated with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Before discussing in more depth the historiography of colonialism on Taiwan, it is necessary to briefly reacquaint ourselves with the dominant 'Blue' and 'Green' perspectives.

The old KMT account, which closely corresponds with that to which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still religiously adheres, holds that Taiwan was harmoniously united with the rest of China according to the process described above by Zhu (2007). This perspective assumes the cultural superiority of mainstream 'Han' China, and ascribes to Han civilization a magnetic power of attraction *vis-à-vis* the peoples and cultures on the periphery of the ancestral Chinese homeland on the Central Plains (*zhongyuan*).<sup>4</sup> This nationalist account contends that it is this superiority that has enabled China gradually to expand over the course of millennia, absorbing and assimilating (*ronghe*) bordering peoples through what is represented as an essentially peaceful process. At the same time, this perspective, in both KMT and CCP versions, hails a fundamental pacificism, and the pursuit of assimilation through a harmonious process of natural cultural attraction, as reflections of essential Chinese values that both illustrate Chinese superiority (over violent and grasping Western imperialists) and explain why China, alone of all the civilizations of antiquity (Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, Ashokan India) has survived down to the present day. Taiwan, though acknowledged as a relative latecomer to this programme of sinification, is nonetheless seen as subject to essentially the same inexorable civilizational logic. However, the KMT (or indeed the CCP) have tended to evince little interest in Taiwan's history prior to the seventeenth century, or in the cultures of the island's indigenous tribes. Rather, accounts of Taiwan's historical development in general, and its relationship with China in particular, have tended to be left studiously vague – and were accorded very little space either in history textbooks or in museums under KMT rule prior to the 1990s. Under the KMT, the immemorial

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<sup>4</sup> Wang Gungwu (1984) offers essentially the same vision of peaceable Chinese expansion, though expressed in sophisticated academic English.

'Chineseness' of the island was assumed rather than demonstrated, and only those episodes in Taiwan's history that served to dramatize its role in China's struggles against various foreign powers were highlighted. These included the ejection of Dutch colonialists by the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong in the mid-seventeenth century, the tragic loss of the island to Japanese imperialists following the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895, the recovery of the island by the KMT in 1945 following victory in the war against Japan and Taiwan's subsequent development as an economic powerhouse and 'base for recovery' of the Chinese mainland. Meanwhile, Taiwan's inhabitants were depicted as Chinese patriots who rejoiced at liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945, and who longed for reunification with the Chinese motherland.

By contrast, the 'Green' perspective on Taiwan's past that has increasingly come to the fore since the early 1990s, and enjoyed official sponsorship under the presidency of Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008), has emphasized all those aspects of the island's past that serve to diminish the significance of the Chinese connection. The beginnings of a rediscovery of indigenous and local history, and of official acknowledgement and support for this, can actually be dated to the presidency of Lee Teng-hui in the 1990s, when the historian Tu Cheng-sheng, later to become Education Minister under Chen Shui-bian, played a leading role in the development of the 'Knowing Taiwan' (*Renshi Taiwan*) course for local high schools (Corcuff 2005).<sup>5</sup> This interpretation of the island's past has sought to play up the 'multicultural' nature of Taiwanese history and culture by representing the periods of Qing and KMT rule as just two episodes amongst many that have seen Taiwan influenced by a number of different powers. According to this narrative, prior to the seventeenth century the island remained almost entirely the preserve of its aboriginal inhabitants, who with their 'Polynesian' cultures and languages were perhaps more closely related to the islanders of the Pacific and Indonesian-Malay archipelagos than to Han Chinese. The first significant influx of Han Chinese occurred under Dutch rule in the early seventeenth century, when the Dutch won a contest with the Spanish for dominance over the island before being ousted by Zheng Chenggong, whose regime was in turn overthrown by the Qing. The 'Green' account typically traces the emergence of a 'Taiwanese' identity back at least to the Qing period, ascribing a 'Taiwanese' label to the Han settler population on the island. The Taiwanese are portrayed as having forged an independent life for themselves on the island, in a context of neglect, indifference or hostility on the part of the distant Qing imperial authorities, who eventually handed them over to the Japanese following the 1894-1895 war (an episode that witnessed a short-lived effort to establish an independent 'Republic of Taiwan' – *Taiwan Minzguo*). The theme of betrayal at the hands of the mainland recurs in accounts of Taiwan's experience following the retrocession to China in 1945, which witnessed the bloody suppression of local resistance to the KMT regime. The KMT are depicted as no better, and quite possibly worse, than the Japanese colonialists who preceded them – underlining the message that the Taiwanese neither can nor should trust anyone but themselves to run their own

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<sup>5</sup> Tu's appointment as Education Minister was preceded by a stint as Director of the National Palace Museum from 2000-2004, and both roles have provided him with excellent platforms for the promotion of his (and the DPP's) vision of a 'multicultural' Taiwan.

affairs. This perception informed one of the final acts of the Chen Shui-bian presidency, which was to redesignate the monumental Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in central Taipei (built to commemorate the ruler who had sought to use the island as a base for a KMT recovery of the Chinese mainland) as the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall (*Guoli Taiwan Minzhu Jinian Guan*).<sup>6</sup>

In these very early days (summer 2008) of the KMT's return to power under President Ma Ying-jeou, it is perhaps premature to talk of a 'third way' in Taiwanese official discourse on the island's past. However, Ma's record as Mayor of Taipei,<sup>7</sup> as well as his early statements since his inauguration as president, suggests that his administration will adopt a far more nuanced and ambivalent line on pan-Chinese nationalism and reunification than the old KMT regime ever did prior to the mid-1990s. Ma's stance on Taiwanese identity is nonetheless likely to prove rather more cautious than that articulated by the previous KMT President, Lee Teng-hui, in the late 1990s. Lee's vision of the 'New Taiwanese' (*xin Taiwanren*), and of 'Taiwan-centric consciousness' (*Taiwan zhuti yishi*), acknowledged Taiwan's Chinese cultural and historical legacy, but emphatically did not derive from this any acceptance of the inevitability of reabsorption into a unitary Chinese state, instead promoting a sense of 'Taiwanese' identity and of 'belonging to Taiwan' (leaving vague the question of whether this constituted a full-blown 'national' identity) (Lynch 2008). It remains unclear precisely where the new KMT regime's vision of Taiwan's identity and destiny will be situated on the 'Taiwanese'/'Chinese' spectrum, and how this vision will be articulated through a narrative of the island's history, including the history of its varied colonial experience.

### Chinese Colonialism in Comparative Perspective

Colonialism is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule. (Osterhammel 2005: 16-17)

This definition of colonialism distinguishes it from 'imperialism', defined as the pursuit of worldwide political and economic domination, which may or may not be associated with the pursuit of territorial expansion or the direct subjugation of indigenous populations. Osterhammel acknowledges that while only Britain and America have come close to being 'imperialist' powers according to his definition, others such as France, Germany, Russia (or the USSR) and Japan 'functioned as imperialists at various times in a more limited sense' (Osterhammel 2005: 22).

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<sup>6</sup> The new KMT administration under Ma Ying-jeou looks set to reverse this move and restore the original name of the Hall, along with the 'honorary guard performances' originally held there in honour of Chiang Kai-shek (Wang 2009).

<sup>7</sup> See Vickers (2007) for Ma's comments in his official capacity as Mayor and patron of Taipei's 228 Peace Memorial Museum.

Like Horvath (1972), Osterhammel sees the presence of significant numbers of settlers from the colonizing power as a key difference between 'colonialism' and 'imperialism', but he further refines the definition of 'colonialism' by introducing the concept of 'colonies without colonialism'. This practice, characterized by settlement of so-called 'empty land' (*terra nullius*) where settlers rapidly constituted the majority population (as in New England), is, he argues, to be distinguished from 'colonialism without colonies', where relations between a majority and minority population 'within nation states or regionally integrated land empires' come to resemble a form of 'internal colonialism' (as some argue has at some periods been the case in relations between England and areas of the British 'periphery' in Ireland, Scotland or Wales) (Osterhammel 2005: 17).<sup>8</sup>

One difficulty with the model posited by Osterhammel is its identification of the 'minority/majority' relationship between occupier and occupied as central to the definition of colonialism. While colonialism must inevitably begin with the domination of an indigenous majority by an alien minority, it is often a central aim of the colonial project to reverse the terms of this population equation. Such has been the case in the various European 'colonies of settlement' in the Americas, Australasia, and parts of Africa. We may accept that the USA and Australia cannot accurately be described as colonial societies now, but this does not alter the fact that both clearly have colonial origins, and that these origins have influenced, and continue to influence, their development in significant ways. As the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has observed, 'I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships.' (MacIntyre 1985: 205); in the case of colonial history, these relationships include those between the descendants of former colonizing and colonized populations, as well as relationships within and between societies and states more broadly, informed as they are by a collective sense of identity rooted in historical consciousness. Moreover, Osterhammel's claim that colonizers 'reject cultural compromises' with the colonized population does not seem to hold for many of Britain's colonies, where such compromises were central to the tactics deployed by the British to secure the collaboration of indigenous elites (Robinson 1986; Cannadine 2001). In Africa and Asia, the British were seldom interested in the cultural transformation of the 'natives' into British subjects; by contrast, the French did seek to turn their African and Asian colonies into overseas extensions of France, through a combination of settlement and educational and cultural policy (Kelly 1998).

The validity of Osterhammel's model is thus questionable, and his own analysis of colonialism belies his own attempt to posit such an overly-simplified definition

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth pointing out that, if settlement is seen as a defining feature of colonialism, then in many cases the settler presence has been very small indeed as a proportion of the total population (as in most of Britain's 'colonial' possessions outside the so-called 'colonies of settlement' or the 'White Dominions'). Nonetheless, 'colonial' rule must involve the presence of at least a few 'colonizers' (in the form of soldiers and administrators) on the ground in the colony, whereas 'imperial' domination may involve the exercise of dominance in more indirect or informal ways – though with the threat of force always waiting in the wings. Seen in this way, the overlapping natures of 'imperialism' and 'colonialism', and the ease with which one may shade into the other, becomes obvious.

of the phenomenon. However, since this definition is representative of much mainstream scholarship in the West (and the East) on the phenomenon of 'colonialism', the remainder of this essay will discuss whether and, if so, how the case of China in general (and Taiwan in particular) might be accommodated within it. Osterhammel draws a contrast between the 'missionary rhetoric' of European, American, and Japanese colonizers, and 'traditional cultures' such as the Chinese who, he argues, 'proceeded on the assumption of the exemplary status and supremacy of their own civilization as if this were self-evident, without, however, imposing it on neighbouring civilizations. Only in modern colonialism did this kind of ethnocentric arrogance take an aggressive expansionist turn, only here were the many bent by the few under a "spiritual yoke"' (Osterhammel 2005: 16). However, strategies pursued by the current regime in regions such as Tibet, and justifications routinely advanced for Chinese control in terms of benefits bestowed (material progress and 'spiritual civilization'), suggest that any contrast between effortless Chinese civilizational superiority and aggressive Western expansionism, is, at least nowadays, somewhat wide of the mark. But was such a contrast ever valid at all?

When discussing the characteristics of Chinese colonialism, as with any aspect of culture, it is important to be specific as to time and place. Notwithstanding important continuities in governmental practices as in other aspects of the culture, 'traditional China' – all three thousand years and thousands of square miles of it – is often treated as possessing a homogeneity and uniformity that reflects more the wishful thinking of the imperial authorities (and their in-house historians) than actual reality on the ground. Thus regions of 'China proper', such as Guangdong, now generally regarded as unquestionably 'Chinese', at one time formed the restive periphery of an expanding empire. Wright's account of the unification of China under the Sui Dynasty (581-617 CE) depicts Guangdong as a region of fortified Chinese settlements frequently besieged by the indigenous forest-dwelling tribespeople (Wright 1978).<sup>9</sup> Military conquest and less bloody, more cost-effective strategies of assimilation (through commercial and cultural exchange, and the cultivation of local tribal chiefs with gifts and honours) were not regarded as mutually exclusive approaches by Chinese proconsuls; like the Romans in Germania, the Chinese in the lands of the Northern and Southern Yue (i.e. Guangdong and Vietnam) garrisoned and fortified their borders, while also seeking to soothe and civilize the 'savages'. While Vietnam eventually broke

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<sup>9</sup> Wright writes of Guangdong in the early Sui dynasty: 'The scattered inhabitants of this immense area were largely aborigines of varied racial types and equally varied ways of life. In the fertile valleys and along the coast were walled towns and scattered settlements of Chinese colonists who would over the centuries bring the land and most but not all of the aboriginal peoples into the Chinese cultural sphere. Sui forces, moving into the far south, had limited objectives at this time. First, they wished to restore that measure of stability among the native tribes which formal submission to the Chinese dynasties at Nanking had brought. This meant persuading and winning over important chiefs who often dominated, through their own chiefs, a number of lesser tribes. Such important chieftains were the instruments of Chinese "indirect rule" in the southern hinterlands, and they had to be won over if the route to Canton was to be opened, the Chinese occupied towns protected, and the conditions for further colonization assured' (Wright 1978: 150-151).

away to form an independent kingdom, in Guangdong occupation and colonization led over centuries to cultural assimilation – though not to an eradication of Cantonese cultural distinctiveness. The pattern of China's expansion on the frontiers forms the subject of one notable recent work by a Taiwanese historian, but his analysis emphasizes the fluid and plural nature of 'Chinese' identities, rather than addressing the issue of whether dominance over various frontier peoples can accurately be characterized as 'colonial' (Wang 1997).

Guangdong and other southern provinces – Guangxi and Yunnan – thus arguably constitute examples of outright colonization shading, over time, into 'colonialism without colonies', and finally to fuller integration into 'China proper'. However, regions on the Northern and Western frontiers of the Qing Empire (1644-1912) present Chinese colonialism in different guises. Use of the term 'Chinese' with respect to an empire ruled by a conquest dynasty (the Manchus) is perhaps problematic, but Han Chinese officials were intimately involved in the running of the state, and by the second half of the nineteenth century were at the forefront of efforts to bolster Qing control of regions such as Xinjiang, and to justify their continued subjection to Qing rule. Different dynasties had at various times claimed some form of suzerainty over parts of Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet; the Qing, however, embarked on an unprecedentedly ambitious series of campaigns which progressively incorporated these regions within their Empire.

A number of recent studies have emphasized that the phenomenon of Qing imperialism needs to be understood not only, or even primarily, as the culmination of a millennial tradition of Chinese imperial governance, but more importantly within a context of competitive state formation, technological development, and the exchange of ideas across the early modern world. Thus Hostetler argues that 'the Qing use of both cartography and ethnography to define its territory and its peoples reveals an interconnectedness with the early modern world that has too long been overlooked', and that 'their use in defining Qing China as an emergent world force in the eighteenth century has parallels to the use of these types of visual representation in other parts of the world' (Hostetler 2001: 208). According to Perdue (2005), the Qing imperial enterprise was, at least initially, far from rejecting cultural compromises with the indigenous populations – rather, the Qing emperors drew on Mongolian precedents for the governance of the conquered territories in Central Eurasia, combining the ruthless suppression of opposition with the assiduous cultivation of collaborators amongst existing local elites – khans and tribal chieftans in Mongolia, lamas or local kings in Tibetan areas, and Uighur begs in Altishahr and Ili. In this reliance on local collaborators, the Qing strategy bore similarities with British practice in many of the areas of India that came under their control during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; and the construction of rigidly-demarcated ethnic 'constituencies' under the Qianlong emperor (analysed by Crossley 1999) in some respects foreshadows the kind of 'divide-and-rule' strategy adopted by India's rulers in the Victorian era. Indeed, Perdue emphasizes the importance of seeing the Qing conquest of Central Eurasia in the broader context of imperial expansion and rivalry across the Western half of the Asian continent from the late seventeenth century onwards. While the British were, until the nineteenth century, relatively peripheral



to Qing concerns, the contest with Russia for dominance of Zungharia was crucial to driving the dynasty forward in its career of conquest.

It was in the context of a worldwide intensification of imperialist competition in the nineteenth century that the Qing state experienced multiple crises that threatened its continuing integrity and viability, and faced threats to its control over the border regions of the empire constructed over the preceding two centuries. Han Chinese officials and *literati* were at the forefront of efforts to shore up the Qing state against both internal rebellion and foreign depredation. Wei Yuan and Gong Zizhen proposed large-scale Han settlement of frontier territories such as Xinjiang, partly through encouraging civilian migration, and partly through granting land to soldiers sent to garrison these areas. As Perdue (2005: 501) notes, 'just like imperialists in the New World and elsewhere, [Wei and Gong] promoted the filling up of "virgin lands" with immigrants from the core, and the tighter links to the interior, as "manifest destiny" for this large continental state'. It was in representing the conquest of Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet as the fulfillment of a Heaven-mandated destiny that Wei Yuan helped provide the basis for the standard nationalist narrative that speaks of the 'unification' (*tongyi*) rather than conquest (*zhengfu*) of territories that were somehow rightfully Chinese. However, Wei committed heresy in the eyes of later nationalists by writing that 'much of the territory of China defined by the Nerchinsk treaty [of 1689] was "wasteland" newly entered on the registers', while also noting that Taiwan 'from ancient times was not part of China' (Perdue 2005: 509).<sup>10</sup> For Wei and Gong, the fixing of the borders of the Qing state, the fuller integration of conquered areas, and the elaboration of an ideology to justify all of this, were elements in a strategy consciously designed to consolidate and defend an empire newly threatened by rival imperialisms.

It was the next generation of 'self-strengthening' Han Chinese officials that attempted to put the ideas of Wei and Gong into practice. Millward (2007) argues that the eventual decisions in the 1880s to 'provincialise' both Xinjiang and Taiwan (in 1884 and 1887 respectively) reflected a fundamental shift in the governance structures of the Qing Empire, and of their underlying ideology. Whereas previously the Qing had adopted different models of governance in the 'ecologically and culturally different regions of the periphery', following rebellion and partial Russian occupation in Xinjiang during the 1870s, growing threats from Japan to its control over Taiwan, and the suppression – led by Han Chinese officials such as Zeng Guofan – of the Taiping and Nian revolts of mid-century, by the 1880s the court was more susceptible to arguments that 'a Xinjiang that was demographically and culturally more like China proper would be both easier and cheaper to govern' (Millward 2007: 138). The new programme for governing Xinjiang pursued by Zuo Zongtang saw Sinicization of the local population as central to the strategy for integrating the region and preventing future rebellion;

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<sup>10</sup> However, this heresy was also bravely indulged in by Ge Jian-xiong, director of the Institute of Chinese Historical Geography and the Research Centre for Historical Geographic Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai. In an article for the magazine *China Review*, 'How big really was "Ancient China"?' (*Gudai 'Zhongguo' jiuqing duoda*), 19 February 2007, he argues that it is wrong to say that Tibet was part of China during the Tang dynasty, although this is what school history textbooks assert.

Zuo wrote, 'If we wish to change their peculiar customs and assimilate them to our Chinese ways (*huafeng*), we must found free schools (*yishu*) and make the Muslim children read [Chinese] books, recognize characters and understand spoken language' (quoted in Millward 2007: 142).

By the late nineteenth century, therefore, Qing China was pursuing a strategy for reinforcing its control over Xinjiang that on paper at least appears to conform precisely to Osterhammel's definition of colonialism – domination of an indigenous majority by foreign invaders deriving their authority from a distant metropolis, with the latter convinced of their superiority and mandate to rule, and rejecting cultural compromise with the local population. Moreover, like their European colonialist contemporaries in parts of Eastern and South-Central Africa and elsewhere, the Chinese in late nineteenth-century Xinjiang also saw substantial immigration from the imperial metropolis as key to the consolidation of control, and to integration with the rest of the empire. In the short term, the capacity of Chinese administrators actually to implement this programme was severely limited, but massive Han settlement and a programme of secularization (and more qualified Sinicization) were to be vigorously promoted by their communist successors after 1949.<sup>11</sup>

### Chinese colonialism on Taiwan

In 1662, at the height of their strength as a naval power, even the Dutch were driven from the island of Taiwan, not by the Chinese emperor, but by the regional warlord Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga). Taiwan remained uncolonized by non-Chinese until 1895. (Osterhammel 2005: 42)

There is here at least a tacit acknowledgement by Osterhammel that the fact that Taiwan remained 'uncolonized by non-Chinese' until the end of the nineteenth century did not mean that it remained uncolonized at all (he does not elaborate). However, studies that explicitly address Taiwan's experience under Chinese (or Qing) rule as an instance of colonialism are few and far between – the most notable being Emma Jinhua Teng's 2004 monograph, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures, 1683-1895*.

Teng draws parallels between the practices and ideology developed by Taiwan's Chinese colonizers, and those of their European contemporaries, particularly in the Americas. Moreover, she notes that a number of Qing-era Chinese colonialists made similar comparisons themselves, quoting for example the nineteenth-century travel writer Ding Shaoyi:

The savagery of the native barbarians of the newly opened frontiers of North America is no different from that of the savages of Taiwan. In the past, they were

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<sup>11</sup> In May 2008, the Dalai Lama claimed that the Chinese government was planning to settle up to a million Han Chinese in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, with the programme to begin only after the conclusion of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. See Julian Borger (2008), 'Tibet Could be Swamped by Mass Chinese Settlement after Olympics', Guardian Online, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/24/tibet.china> (accessed 3 June 2008).

extremely ferocious, yet Europeans have managed to guide them with their senseless, confused religion and have finally changed the native customs. So it is a real injustice to say that the raw savages of Taiwan have absolutely no human morals despite their human appearance and that they cannot be civilized with our Kingly Governance (*wangzheng*)! (Teng 2004: 11)

As this quotation indicates, China's colonial strategy in Taiwan remained a matter of fierce debate amongst *literati* throughout the Qing period. The Qing occupation of Taiwan represented a new departure for the imperial Chinese state; previously, the sea had been regarded as the definitive Eastern boundary of the Chinese realm, and Taiwan as a savage island beyond the pale of civilization. Chinese migration to the island during the period of Dutch rule (1624-1662), and then its occupation by forces of the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong, compelled the Qing court to interest itself in Taiwanese affairs. Nevertheless, the expedition launched to quash Zheng's forces in the 1680s was tasked with pacifying a rebel stronghold, not with adding new territories to the empire. It was only after a heated discussion at court that Shi Lang, the admiral who had headed the invasion fleet, persuaded other officials that Taiwan should be brought within the imperial realm (or 'enter the maps', '*ru bantu*'), on the grounds that it was 'truly a bountifully fertile piece of land and a strategic territory' (quoted in Teng 2004: 35).

As with the Qing conquest of Western Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, the extension of imperial control was thus largely motivated by a desire to eliminate threats along the frontiers of the new empire, if necessary by encompassing and securing new territories that could be defended against foreign competitors (or vagrant rebels). However, Taiwan was a different sort of 'colony' from Xinjiang or Tibet: for one thing, the indigenous inhabitants were, to Chinese eyes, more primitive and savage than the Uighurs or Tibetans; for another, the island had experienced substantial settlement by Han Chinese even before the assumption of control by the Qing. As in colonial North America under the British, administrators tasked with maintaining order and stability on the frontier found themselves engaged in a constant struggle to rein in settlers who threatened to provoke conflict by encroaching on native territories – until the late nineteenth century, when the policy in Taiwan, as in Xinjiang, shifted to the encouragement of unrestrained Han settlement and all-out sinification of the natives.

In reviewing the early reports of this exotic island colony circulated amongst *literati* on the Chinese mainland, Teng shows how these travelogues diverged in their portrayal of the natives. Distinguishing between what she terms a 'rhetoric of privation' and a 'rhetoric of primitivism', she shows how depictions of the Taiwanese aborigines ranged from demonization to idealization. In a famous debate convened in 1550-1551 by King Carlos I at Valladolid, the scholastic theologians Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepúlveda famously debated whether the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas should be accorded the same rights as all Spanish subjects, or regarded as barbarous beings possessing what Aristotle had termed a 'slavish' nature and thus destined by Providence for domination and tutelage by superior, civilized, Christian Europeans. Chinese *literati* similarly struggled to accommodate their observations of the Taiwan indigenes within a traditional cosmology which, despite its fundamental differences from the worldview of Thomistic Catholicism, likewise

encompassed a spectrum of views regarding the fundamental nature of humanity, distinctions between the 'savage' and the 'civilized', and their implications for colonial governance. Chen Di, who visited Taiwan in 1603 (before even the period of Dutch colonization), made the earliest statement of the 'primitivist' view of the indigenes, portraying them as having preserved an earlier, and morally superior, form of society (close to the harmonious, primitive utopia depicted in the classics), unsullied by the decadence and depravity that had overtaken contemporary civilization. For Chen and other early Chinese observers of indigenous society, Taiwan was – as Teng puts it – like a 'living museum', exhibiting social models long since extinct on the Chinese mainland. However, while Chen viewed the natives' 'primitivism' positively, in terms reminiscent of the Enlightenment European discourse of the 'noble savage', others evaluated the Taiwan indigenes' lack of the attributes of civilization more negatively. Thus Lin Qiangang, visiting the island between 1687 and 1691 (shortly after the Qing conquest) opined:

The native savages (*tufan*)...are a stupid people. They have no family names, no ancestral worship, and apart from their own father and mother, they do not recognize [kin such as] paternal or maternal uncles. They are unfamiliar with the calendar. Moreover, they do not know their own ages. By nature they like to kill people. (quoted in Teng 2004: 68)

Besides disagreement over whether the natives should be civilized, there was also disagreement over whether they could be, with some echoing Ding Shaoyi in arguing for their civilizability and others urging that their inherent savagery meant that they should be kept segregated and, when necessary, ruthlessly suppressed. Those, like Ding, who took the former position argued very much in terms of a Chinese civilizing mission *vis-à-vis* the indigenous Taiwanese. However, most recognized a distinction between the more civilizable 'cooked' (*shu*) tribes of the plains, and the more savage and hostile 'raw' (*sheng*) mountain tribes. After a period of aggressive colonization under the Yongzheng Emperor in the early eighteenth century, until the late nineteenth century the policy of the Qing regime in Taiwan was, by and large, to attempt to confine the 'raw' tribes to their mountain fastnesses, also keeping Chinese settlers as far as possible away from these regions while encouraging the cultural assimilation of all aborigines.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, as Teng shows, both written and pictorial portrayals of Taiwan's indigenous tribes – raw and cooked – pandered to a taste amongst Chinese readers for the shocking and exotic. Chinese audiences were presented with images of bloodthirsty headhunters, quaint native farmers, and exotically-attired, alluringly uninhibited native females (though scope for the expression of female

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<sup>12</sup> Teng argues that the continuation of efforts to assimilate the Taiwanese aborigines indicates that their case does not entirely fit the model of multinational governance developed by the Qing during the Qianlong period whereby the regime sought both to codify rigid ethno-cultural boundaries between its various key 'constituencies' (Manchu, Han, Uygur, Mongol, Tibetan) in pursuit of a divide-and-rule strategy, and an ideal of universal emperorship (Crossley 1999). In Teng's view, Taiwan was simply peripheral to this project.

sexuality was regarded, in Victorian style, as inversely proportional to the 'level' of civilization achieved by any society).

Nonetheless, Taiwan remained relatively peripheral to official and popular consciousness under the Qing until the late nineteenth century when, as in other frontier regions, foreign threats, internal disorder, and population pressure in 'China proper' led to increased Han immigration and programmes of Sinicization; what Millward (1998) has termed the 'domestication of empire' (quoted in Teng 2004: 246). Ironically, Taiwan's loss to Japan in the 1890s came as the island was only just beginning to be regarded as an integral part of Chinese territory. During the 1870s, an early 'self-strengthening' official, Shen Baozhen, had initiated a campaign to 'Open the Mountains and Pacify the Savages' (*kaishan fufan*) – an initiative prompted by tensions with the Japanese over an incident in which aborigines had massacred Japanese mariners shipwrecked on the southeastern coast of Taiwan. Another self-strengthener, Liu Mingchuan, was sent to Taiwan during the French naval blockade of 1884-1885 in order to bolster the island's defenses (he began a modernization of the infrastructure and the economy, and a sweeping reform of the administrative structure); this crisis led to Taiwan's promotion to provincial status in 1887. The Qing had realized that unless it reinforced its control over Taiwan, and its claim to the entire island (including those areas inhabited by the 'raw' indigenous tribes), then other powers would seek to challenge its jurisdiction.

On the frontiers of their empire, the Qing were thus energetic participants in the late nineteenth-century global scramble for colonies – though in their case this involved a drive to fend off 'scrambling' foreign powers by 'domesticating' previously conquered but not fully assimilated territories. Given the creaking state of the Qing regime by this period, the success of the 'self-strengthening' colonialists is remarkable, though the continuing integrity of the Empire was, as in the case of Ottoman Turkey (before its disastrous alliance with the Central Powers in the Great War), largely due to a stand-off amongst the stronger, primarily European, imperial powers. Taiwan was one of very few Qing territories lost to the post-imperial Chinese state (the other being Outer Mongolia). However, as Teng indicates in the title to her study, perhaps the most significant shift in Taiwan's status occurred in the imaginative rather than the administrative or even demographic realms; the loss of Taiwan in the 1890s assumed a symbolic importance for a generation of modernizing intellectuals who were just beginning to define a 'Chinese' nation. This importance was hugely reinforced after 1949 when the Kuomintang made the island its 'base for the recovery of the mainland' (*fuxing jidi*), since both sides in the Chinese Civil War 'promoted the historically inaccurate contention that Taiwan has been "a part of China" since antiquity and effectively erased the rich history of the Qing colonization of the island' (Teng 2004: 248). Chinese nationalist discourse has effectively 'naturalized the idea that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's sovereign territory', and the success of this discourse, Teng argues, 'can be measured by the disappearance from the Chinese collective memory of the pre-Qing conviction that Taiwan was "beyond the pale"' (2004: 248).

### Japanese Rule and the Definition of Taiwan's Colonial Experience

The weakness of any collective memory of the experience of Qing colonization is evident in much of the scholarship that deals with Taiwan's colonization by the Japanese. It isn't that those who write about Japanese colonialism are unaware of the previous history of Taiwan, or of the fact that Chinese settlers had been gradually displacing the aboriginal population over the three hundred years prior to the arrival of the Japanese. It is that this process is implicitly deemed irrelevant to any account of 'colonialism' in Taiwan, and the idea that it should be incorporated into analyses of the colonial experience on the island simply does not occur to many historians – whether Western, Japanese, Taiwanese, or Chinese.

Why is this? Assumptions that colonialism is a primarily 'Western' phenomenon have undoubtedly helped to blind many to the possibility of a Chinese variant. As noted above, nationalist assertions of Taiwan's immemorial inseparability from the 'motherland' preclude any acknowledgement of Chinese colonialism, and the crucial role of the national struggle against Japan in forging a modern Chinese identity has contributed to a focus on Japanese colonialism. Meanwhile, many who assert a distinct identity for the island and its inhabitants have portrayed 'the Taiwanese' as a people oppressed by a succession of essentially alien regimes (Qing, Japanese, KMT and – so far remotely – the CCP); to them, any suggestion of a historical role for the Taiwanese themselves as practitioners as well as victims of 'colonialism' seems grotesque. Moreover, while there has been considerable discussion of the history of Japanese colonialism, many Japanese scholars engaged in critical research in this field have tended to hail from a somewhat 'leftist' political position, and have been motivated in part by a desire to heighten consciousness of the iniquities of Japan's imperial past. Relativizing Japanese colonialism in Taiwan by pointing to the previous record of Chinese colonialism could potentially undermine this agenda – there may be an element of 'Japanocentric' thinking in operation, whereby, to paraphrase Ching, radical anti-Japanocentrism turns out to be the ultimate consolidation of Japanocentrism. The sort of Western anti-colonial (or post-colonial) discourse criticized by Ching thus ends up being reflected or 'refracted' by Japanese scholars as they come to terms with their nations own colonial legacy.

One fascinating recent contribution to the literature on Taiwan's experience under Japanese colonial rule is *Refracted Modernity*, edited by Yuko Kikuchi (2007), in which a number of Taiwanese and Japanese scholars analyze various aspects of the relationship between 'visual culture' and identity. The contributors to this volume are interested in the ways in which Taiwan's initial encounter with (Western) modernity was 'refracted' through a Japanese prism, as Japan tried to reinvent itself as an 'advanced' nation in an era when a key indicator of 'advancement' was the possession of a colonial empire. The work of Chen Pei-feng (2006) on language policy on Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period likewise explores the role of Japanese colonialism in 'modernizing' Taiwan and the 'Taiwanese', the complex responses (from collaboration through to outright resistance) that this project elicited amongst the Han Chinese population of the island, and the implications for both Taiwanese and Japanese identities. If Japan was the key vector for modernity in early twentieth-century Taiwan, the project of

modernizing the island was itself part of the process of constructing a new Japanese identity. Shao-li Lu's 2005 study of the portrayal of Taiwan and the Taiwanese in Japanese exhibitions during the colonial period, *Exhibiting Taiwan (Zhanshi Taiwan)* reinforces this point, showing how particularly the aborigines, but to some extent also the Han Taiwanese, were exoticised and displayed as beneficiaries of Japan's civilizing mission. A number of propagandists for Japan's colonial mission preferred to overlook or ignore the very presence of the Chinese population, uncomfortably similar as they were to the Japanese in their culture and 'level' of development, finding instead in the aborigines the primitive 'Other' in juxtaposition to which images of Japanese modernity could be constructed (Shimazu 2007)<sup>13</sup> Japanese anthropologists studied and classified the aborigines, and the colonial museum established in Taipei devoted itself almost exclusively to the collection and study of artifacts relating to the indigenous tribes and the Japanese settler community. In addition to assisting in the construction of a discourse of Japanese modernity, the depiction of Taiwan as an island inhabited by a scattering of 'savage' hunter-gatherers implicitly bolstered the legitimacy of Japan's claims to the island, constructing an image of the territory as essentially *terra nullius* prior to the Japanese colonization.

However, as we have seen, the arrival of 'modern' Japanese colonialism on Taiwan was in fact preceded by what looks very like a Chinese form of 'early modern' colonialism, and it was on the foundations left by the Qing that the edifice of Japan's 'model colony' was constructed. In the 1890s, the father of Japanese anthropology in Taiwan, Inō Kanori, 'compared the conquest of the Japanese northeast by the Yamato people [a term used to represent the ethnic Japanese] with the conquest of Taiwan by the Han Chinese' (Wu 2001: 48). In Taiwan, the Japanese took up where the Qing had left off; Inō, for example, applied the Qing distinction between the 'raw' and the 'cooked' aborigines in his analysis of the indigenous tribes. The sort of stereotypical depictions of Taiwan's inhabitants highlighted by Lu in his examination of Japan's exhibitionary practices had clear precursors in the exoticization of the aborigines by Qing travel writers. As Ching notes (2001), the Japanese even adapted a classic parable of the Qing civilizing mission for the purposes of their own colonial propaganda: 'The Story of Gohō' (or of 'Wu Fang'), which tells how an upright Qing official persuaded an aboriginal tribe to abandon headhunting (in some versions of the tale, he does so by adopting a disguise and allowing himself to be martyred at the hands of the aborigines, who then abandon their savage practice in shame upon discovering the identity of their victim). For Ching, though, it is the Japanese retelling of this story, rather than the Qing original, that is significant as an instance of colonial political socialization. The 'colonial' nature of Qing rule is acknowledged in

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<sup>13</sup> Shimazu notes how the journalist Tokutomi Sohō focused on the Japanese settlers (*naichijin*) in Taiwan as well as the aborigines (*banjin*), but practically ignored the existence of the Hoklo population (*hontojin*). Like a number of contemporary Japanese writers and artists, Tokutomi saw the colonial enterprise as both symbolic of, and tonic for, the national virility – but (partly for this very reason) he was ambivalent about efforts to 'civilize' the *banjin*, depicting them as noble savages whose way of life ought to be respected and preserved (whereas, one presumes, he attached little value to the effete lifestyle of the *hontojin*).

passing, but Taiwan's early modern history of 'becoming Chinese' is otherwise almost entirely ignored as the spotlight is turned on its modern history of 'Becoming Japanese'.

### **Remembering Colonialism and Oppression in Contemporary Taiwan**

As noted above, the period since the mid-1990s, and especially since the DPP victory in the presidential election of 2000, has witnessed a huge increase in the curricular and exhibitionary space accorded to Taiwanese history and culture. The history of both Japanese and – particularly – Dutch colonial rule has been appropriated by the 'Green' camp as part of their efforts to distinguish Taiwan from China (see Vickers 2007; 2008). In DPP rhetoric, the KMT have also been ranked alongside other oppressors of the 'native' Taiwanese (meaning the Hoklo majority) through the memorialization of the 28 February Incident of 1947 and the White Terror of the following years.<sup>14</sup> Great emphasis has been placed on Taiwan's aboriginal heritage, and on anthropological research that suggests strong links between the indigenous tribes and the 'Malay-Polynesian' indigenes of the South Pacific and parts of South-east Asia. However, the history of tension and conflict between Taiwan's aborigines and the Hoklo majority, let alone any depiction of the latter as colonizers, has been as absent from officially-sponsored 'Green' discourse on the Taiwanese past as it was from KMT narratives that represented Taiwan as an inseparable part of China from time immemorial.

The shift in official discourse from portraying Taiwan as a peripheral segment of a unified Chinese polity (as under the KMT) to constructing a Taiwanese identity distinct from China (as the DPP regime sought to do) has contributed to, and reflected, changes in society and culture at the popular level.<sup>15</sup> However, while a political gulf separates the Chinese nationalist and Taiwanese nationalist visions of the island's history and identity, the 'Blue' (or deep Blue) and 'Green' conceptions of history and identity underlying these visions are in some respects rather similar.<sup>16</sup> Both view history as a moralizing narrative reflecting the essential characteristics of the nation; characteristics that can be traced back into the mists of time. The histories of both China and Taiwan have been depicted in official school textbooks as manifesting the morally superior 'essences' of these nations (e.g. China has always been peace-loving in its relations with its neighbours;

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<sup>14</sup> The 28 February Incident of 1947 refers to a brutal crackdown on the part of KMT authorities on the island, following riots against the oppressive and corrupt nature of KMT rule sparked by the beating of a female cigarette seller in Taipei by KMT officials.

<sup>15</sup> These include demographic changes, such as the evolution of mainlander identities that has accompanied the dying off of the post-war generation of immigrants from the mainland, and the rise of two generations of mainlanders who acknowledge both 'Taiwanese' and 'Chinese' roots (see Corcuiff 2004). In the late 1990s, Lee Teng-hui argued for an inclusive 'New Taiwanese' identity based on a sense of belonging to the island – though such an approach arguably seeks to raze the historical foundations of Taiwanese identity – rather than actually engaging with the rival historical narratives.

<sup>16</sup> 'Blue' here refers to the Kuomintang or Chinese nationalist camp, and 'Green' refers to the Democratic Progressive Party and other pro-independence political forces.



Taiwan has always been an open and tolerant society).<sup>17</sup> Having staked a historical claim to the moral high ground, both the old Chinese and the new Taiwanese nationalist narratives go on to portray the nation as an innocent outrageously violated by, in the former case, Western and Japanese imperialists (or, further back, by 'barbarians' of other descriptions) and, in the latter case, by various alien rulers, from the Dutch and the Qing to the Japanese and the KMT. One historian sympathetic to the Green camp, commenting on the way in which some pro-independence figures distort history to serve their cause, has remarked that 'They take the word *Zhongguo* and replace it with the word *Taiwan*' (quoted in Vickers 2009: 96).

The protagonists – or the violated innocents – of the 'Green' narrative of Taiwan history are, first and foremost, the Hoklo settlers and their descendants; this is the group generally referenced by the phrase 'native Taiwanese' (*benturen*, or the old Japanese *hontojin*). The aborigines and their culture and symbols, largely ignored under the KMT up to the 1990s, have been given particular prominence in DPP representations of Taiwan, as produced both for domestic and overseas consumption. For Taiwanese nationalists, as for Japanese colonialists, emphasis on the island's aboriginal heritage serves the purpose of distancing Taiwan historically, culturally, and racially from 'China'; moreover, the persistence of a fundamentally biological conception of nationhood has been reflected in some attempts to emphasize or exaggerate the degree of miscegenation between the aboriginal and *bentu* communities (Vickers 2009). Depictions of the aborigines in Taiwanese museums, school textbooks and official publications have focused on culture and ethnography rather than history, thus almost entirely omitting any account of past conflict between Chinese settlers and indigenous tribespeople. Some museum curators have explained this on the grounds that aboriginal records (particularly written records) from which such a history could be reconstructed simply do not exist (Vickers 2009) – a line of argument that echoes Margery Perham's assertion in 1951 that Africa was 'without writing and so without history' (Youe 2007). As Teng's work demonstrates, however, the Chinese records do supply ample material with which to reconstruct the history of Qing colonization.

## Conclusion

However much the use – or abuse – of history in contemporary Taiwanese politics may be criticized, it should be borne in mind that in Taiwan, in contrast to mainland China, debate over history and identity can be conducted in relative freedom, and views critical of official discourse can be openly expressed. This very freedom means that there exists an opportunity for Taiwan to contribute to an important rebalancing of perceptions of the Chinese past, and of the role of colonialism in the formation of the modern Chinese polity (or polities). In

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<sup>17</sup> Both narratives – though most obviously the Taiwanese one – involve an anachronistic projection backwards of present identities. Thus the term 'Taiwanese' is often used in accounts of society or culture on the island relating to times when any consciousness of a distinctively 'Taiwanese' identity was weak or absent. One example of this is the chapter by Chao-ching Fu on 'Taiwanese' architecture under Japanese colonial rule (Fu 2007).

reassessing this legacy, it may be worth bearing in mind Osterhammel's (2005: 28) contention that 'the history of colonialisms is...not only – perhaps not even chiefly – a history of conquest, acquisition and flag-hoisting. It is a history of the gradual emergence of state structures and societal forms and their geographic expansion or contraction within nominally claimed regions'.

Taiwan sits on the eastern boundary of a Chinese state that, in the early twenty-first century, occupies a larger proportion of those regions to which it asserts a 'nominal claim' than almost any of its predecessors. Taiwanese politicians keen to demonstrate their determination to preserve the island's autonomy from China's communist regime have been quick to draw comparisons between their situation and that of other regions on the Chinese periphery. The March 2008 presidential election in Taiwan coincided with mass protests by Tibetans across Western China, prompting the KMT candidate, Ma Ying-jeou, to declare, 'Taiwan is not Tibet...we are an independent country' (CNN.com 2008). Ma's comment aimed to reassure voters that he and the KMT could be trusted to protect Taiwan's autonomy from Beijing. However, looked at historically, Taiwan and Tibet do have this in common: their links with China are products of the unprecedented expansion of the Qing era, and both can be represented as instances of Chinese colonialism, albeit in rather different forms. Whereas Tibet resembles a classic colony of conquest, Taiwan appears much more similar to a colony of settlement of the kind established by the British in North America or Australia. Meanwhile, the sorts of assimilationist policies pursued by the Chinese authorities in Taiwan and elsewhere on China's Qing-bequeathed periphery, through education and cultural policy, are reminiscent more of the very self-conscious French and Soviet *missions civilatrices*.

Pointing to this record of colonialism in Taiwan or Tibet does not imply a demand that China simply drop all claims to sovereignty over either region. Nor, though, is recognition of China's colonial record of purely academic significance – as one more example of colonialism to file in the historical catalogue, thus helping to further our understanding of this phenomenon. This academic contribution is undoubtedly important, but, as Teng argues, more so is the way in which the study of Qing imperialism/colonialism 'destabilizes the dichotomy between the West/colonizers and the non-West/colonized, a dichotomy that has largely continued to structure our commonsense perception of global power configurations and cultural differences well past the end of formal imperial rule' (Teng 2004: 258). Ching's analysis of Japanese efforts to 'Japanize' Taiwan espouses a similar objective, but in studies of colonialism Japan has widely been treated as the exception that proves the rule regarding the 'Western' nature of colonialism. Teng's study, and those of Perdue and Millward, undermine this assumption far more radically and fundamentally, and remind us that in the case of Taiwan, colonization has been a drama in which the 'native Taiwanese' of Hoklo and Hakka descent have played the role of 'oppressor' as well as that of 'oppressed'.

This undermining is important in its turn not simply because it may make guilt-ridden Western (ex-) colonialists feel a bit better about themselves. Its greatest contribution would be if it were to prompt a move in Chinese – and to a lesser extent Taiwanese – nationalist discourse away from a relentless dwelling upon victimhood that tends to feed a chauvinist and sometimes hysterically xenophobic

worldview (as witnessed most recently in the popular reaction amongst many Chinese to demonstrations in several Western countries against the global torch relay for the Beijing Olympics). The depiction of Han Chinese in general, or Taiwan's Chinese settlers in particular, as a 'subaltern' category in studies of East Asian colonialism has fed a mythology of victimhood that distorts identities and relationships in the present.<sup>18</sup> It is perhaps salutary to remind ourselves that this critique of the construction of such mythologies around idealized ethnic groups, defined in a totalizing and homogenous manner, could be extended – as Sautman (2008) suggests – even to groups such as Tibetan independence campaigners.<sup>19</sup> However, Sautman's derision of the latter, along with advocates of Kosovan or Taiwanese independence, simply as 'ethnic political entrepreneurs', appears somewhat excessive. Chauvinism tends to breed chauvinism; when dominant majorities in diverse states seek to define the nation in terms of their particular community's unique civilizational attributes, then minorities that do not choose to identify with such definitions of 'civilization' may seek to challenge the majority on its own terms, by asserting or inventing identities of their own.<sup>20</sup> There is much talk in the contemporary People's Republic of 'multiculturalism', and a longstanding discourse that attempts to depict China as an egalitarian community of ethnic groups. However, a sense of Han identity premised on assumptions of superiority (moral and cultural), a deeply-ingrained sense of 'manifest destiny' and civilizing mission in relation to non-Han regions, along with a conviction of colonial victimhood on the part of the Han that blinds them to the very colonial nature of their own civilizing mission, continue to poison relations between key communities within the modern Chinese state. As Perdue (2005: 565) suggests, a more balanced and clear-eyed view of the Qing record of conquest and colonization 'may offer some guidance to Chinese interested in negotiating a new identity for their nation in the twenty-first century'.

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<sup>18</sup> The broader point could be made that distinctions between a colonial elite and the 'subaltern' colonized, while valid up to a point, are almost always overly simplistic – even within colonial societies, hegemonic or exploitative relationships almost always exist not only between an 'alien' elite and the 'indigenous' population, but across and within both the 'colonizing' and 'colonized' communities.

<sup>19</sup> However, to argue, as Sautman does, that China's rule of Tibet is not an instance of colonialism, because it has produced winners as well as losers amongst the indigenous community, is patently absurd. As Ronald Robinson has argued, colonial rule is essentially a collaborative enterprise that relies for its sustainability on precisely on its capacity to provide indigenous elites with reasons for working with the colonial regime, rather than against it.

<sup>20</sup> As Harrison (2001, 51) points out, the 'colonized' aboriginal population in Taiwan, like colonial peoples elsewhere, were not simply passive victims of the colonization process, but were also 'protagonists in the drama of their own identity', just as the Taiwanese '*benturen*' have so emphatically shown themselves to be in recent years.

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