

Introduction

Those Who Once Were “Japanese”

On the unseasonably warm morning of February 24, 1979, seven Taiwanese aborigines slowly but steadily made their way to the office at the Yasuguni *jinja*, a shrine that consecrates the spirits of Japanese soldiers killed during the Second World War.¹ The members of the entourage, five men and two women, had exhausted their savings and money borrowed from people in their villages to come to Japan. They were representatives from several aboriginal territories. More precisely, they were representing the descendants of the hundreds of aboriginal soldiers who fought and died during the war in the name of the Japanese Emperor. Many nonaboriginal Taiwanese ex-soldiers have made similar pilgrimages.²

After arriving at the office, they were received by a middle-aged man in a white *hakama* skirt. Referring himself as the chief of investigation, the man formally greeted the group: “I am very glad that you have come. The departed spirits must be delighted by your presence.”

The man then went on enthusiastically about the Yasuguni shrine and Shintoism without pausing for a second to inquire about the purpose of the group’s visit. Although the aborigines still spoke some Japanese—now some thirty years after the end of Japanese occupation—they could only grasp fragments of the man’s seemingly endless

monologue. Paying no attention to the aborigines, the man went on fluently, as if conversing with an average Japanese. Overwhelmed by the man's eloquence, the aborigines all dropped their heads in silence.

Seizing upon a break in the man's speech, the leader of the group, Pāyan-taimo (now going by the Chinese name Yün Yo-hui), interrupted and spoke falteringly about their intent. "We Takasago people were Japanese during the war.³ Therefore, we cooperated in Japan's war. Many of our people died. There were even villages where not one person returned. However, Japan has forsaken us for over thirty years. While the Japanese have received military pensions and other forms of reparation, we have gotten nothing. Therefore, we are representing the entire Takasago people to demand compensation from Japan and to have the spirits of the dead returned to us. We want to worship the spirits of our relatives by ourselves in our own homes. Please return the spirits to us."

His words appeared to be an outburst arising from over thirty years of anguish and expectation in a single breath, and round beads of sweat covered the forehead of the elderly Pāyan-taimo.

"I am very sorry. You have endured many hardships," the man in white nodded. But as far as the visitors' wish was concerned, the man continued, "I want to speak to the question of the spirit on a higher level. The spirit is not something that can be taken away or given back. It is hard for me to understand what you mean by asking us to return the spirits."

Seeing that the aborigines were unable to discern what he had just said, the man went on, "Spirit is like fire. Let's say there is a fire burning here. Whoever wants the fire can just take and transfer it to their own place. No matter where or how many, they can take it. Now, how about you all do the same?"

Surprised and dumbfounded by the man's response, the aborigines were hurriedly escorted out to tour the shrine and worship before it. After the aborigines conducted the obligatory rituals of worship, a clerk led the seven to a parlor. When they arrived at a large table, they were

each presented with a white rice-paper bag stamped with the emblem of the Yasuguni shrine. As the aborigines sat upright around the table, the man in the white robe reappeared. He looked around the group and said, "You have paid your respect. The gifts are symbols of your visit. Please take them back to your country for worship."

When the man finished, Chiwas-tari, a widow, asked immediately, "Is it written inside that you have returned my husband's spirit?"

"Well, not exactly . . ." the man mumbled. The man explained that according to Japanese custom, the spirits of those who died for Japan during the war are to be enshrined in the Yasuguni. He then pleaded for the aborigines to understand Japanese custom. The color of Chiwas-tari's complexion changed suddenly.

"We have come from Taiwan to ask you to return the spirits of our husbands. Please return them to us."

The seriousness of Chiwas-tari's words wiped the forced smile off the man's face. "According to Japanese customs, we cannot do that. Please understand our rules."

Sajun-tahos, another widow, countered immediately, "We understand Japanese customs, but please also respect the Takasago people's customs."

"What do you want me to do?" The man was stuck for a reply.

Chiwas-tari then said, "Please write down clearly here whose spirit you have returned and give the paper to us. Furthermore, please take their names off the list of spirits enshrined in the Yasuguni."

"I cannot do that."

"Why can't you return my husband's spirit to me?" Chiwas-tari's voice was now choking with tears.

Sajun-tahos then added, "Japan has ruthlessly used us during the war. But we will not be used again. If you can't return the spirits to us, we will not take this!" She pushed the rice-paper bag away from her.

Chiwas-tari concurred, "I will not take this either. Until you return the spirit to me, I will not move from here. I am willing to die here."

Following Sajun-tahos and Chiwas-tari, the rest of the group also

pushed the symbols of their visit away from them and said in unison, "We return this to you!"

The man in white was left stunned and speechless. It was as if silence had befallen the room, and the warmth from the wintry sun had suddenly turned freezing.

This episode describes a telling encounter between the (ex)colonizer and the (ex)colonized in the so-called postcolonial condition. It is a condition marred by the former imperial nation's refusal to come to terms with its colonial past and marked by the former subject's insistence on the persisting legacy of colonialism in the historical present. The intrusion into the Yasuguni shrine by the aborigines exposes and undermines the reverent symbol of Japanese nationalism and patriotism. It also reveals the irrevocable sign of war crimes and colonial violence. The exchange dramatizes an instance where the ambivalence of colonial identity and difference (the aborigines "were Japanese"; the aboriginal custom is opposed to the Japanese custom) can, at least momentarily, reduce colonial speech to silence. The momentary unsettling of colonial authority, however, cannot disguise the inherent inequalities between their respective positions and the prolonged injustice: the guardian of a still-powerful Japanese national polity confronts the delegates of an enervated and betrayed indigenous subalternity. Despite their resolve, the aborigines had to leave the Yasuguni shrine and appeal to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Even at the ministry, Japanese bureaucrats rejected their plea. The spirits of their families never returned, lying idly among the departed souls of the tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers, commemorated for their undying dedication to the Japanese nation.

This brief encounter represents a microcosm of a larger problematic of Japanese colonial discourse. The ideology of equality and fraternity under assimilation (*dōka*) and imperialization (*kōminka*) only serves to conceal the hypocrisy that, in the words of Ozaki Hotsuki, allowed the colonized "not to live as Japanese, but to die as Japanese."⁴ *Kōminka* or "the imperialization of subject peoples" is usually understood as the final stage of Japanese assimilation, or *dōka*, the policy implemented from

1937 until Japan's defeat. Ozaki's criticism was directed at the late-colonial mobilization of the Taiwanese and the aborigines for Japan's war. However, it also accurately describes the shifts and contradictions within the general Japanese colonial attitudes in Taiwan and the various subject positions taken by the colonized that are the primary concern of this book.

The indictment of Japanese colonial practices alerts us to the by now trite evocation of the constructedness or invention of the notions of "Japan," the "Japanese," the "Japanese race," or "Japaneseness." The plight and legacy of those who once were Japanese point to the irreducible contradictions of colonialism that those national and racial categories have attempted to (and still do) mediate, conceal, and displace. They also direct us to the irrepressible traces of colonial practices, in both their sedimentation and permutation, that continue to disrupt the symbolic order of a putatively "post"-colonial, "post"-war Japan. Our attempt at a radical critique of colonial discourse must go beyond merely pointing out the truisms that nations are "imagined communities" and identities are "historically contingent." We need to examine the processes and the procedures by which those categories are produced by colonial modernity, and how they are mobilized in turn as a regime of colonial power. We also need to attend to the contradictory longing and loathing of the once-colonized subjects in their ambivalent relationship to "Japan" well after the formal end of Japanese colonialism. In the present context, the important questions regarding the subjectivity of the (ex)colonized are not, "What does it mean to become Japanese?" or "What have the natives lost or been deprived of in the process of becoming Japanese?" Instead, we need to begin by asking, "Why must Japan's colonial discourse and practice take the form of interpellating its subjects into becoming Japanese?" "How are differences and identities in relation to the idea of what is "Japanese" produced and circulated through the processes of assimilation and imperialization?" and "What other identity formations and political possibilities exist beyond 'Japanization'?"

The dominant Japanese colonial discourse of *dōka* (assimilation) and *kōminka* (imperialization) does not simply signify a shift or a conversion from one category of identity to another, such as from “aborigines” and “Taiwanese” to “Japanese” or from “colonized peoples” to “imperial subjects.” Rather, these are ideological formations that purposely obfuscate and deflect the issue of the legal and economic rights of the colonized to that of some generalized cultural process of becoming “Japanese” and “imperial subjects.” *Dōka* and *kōminka*, by urging and then insisting that the colonized become “Japanese” (*nihon minzoku*), conceal the inequality between the “natural” Japanese, whose political and economic privileges as citizens (*kokumin*) are guaranteed, and those “naturalized” Japanese, whose cultural identities as Japanese (*nihonjin*) are required, but whose political and economic rights as citizens are continuously denied. In short, it was to conceal the fundamental problem of the citizenship of the non-Japanese within the empire that the categories of “Japanese” (in *dōka*) and “imperial subjects” (in *kōminka*) were constructed and mobilized.⁵

The instrumentality of this Japanese colonial discourse is remarkably demonstrated in the encounter between the Taiwanese aborigines and the guardian of Japanese nationalism. The aborigine soldiers who were “Japanese” (*nihonjin*) during the war are collectively enshrined in the Yasuguni just like other Japanese soldiers. However, the survivors and their families are continuously denied the reparation and redress given to the citizens of Japan, for they are no longer “Japanese.” In both the colonial and postcolonial era, culture (being “Japanese” or non-“Japanese”) continues to arbitrate and deny access to legal procedures and economic benefits. It is in this sense that even Ozaki’s passionate indictment of Japanese colonialism misses the crucial distinction between “ethnos” (*minzoku*) and “citizen” (*kokumin*). He collapses the difference operative within colonial discourse into a singular category of “Japanese” (*nihonjin*), which is further differentiated only by those who are denied “living” and those who are urged to “die” as Japanese.

Understandably, a passionate and powerful charge against Japanese

colonialism has been couched in the discourse of deprivation and violation. It is generally argued that both *dōka* and *kōminka*, by forcing the colonized to become “Japanese” and “imperial subjects,” have deprived the colonized of the otherwise natural and logical development of their identities, cultures, and nationhood. The underlying assumption of this argument is that cultural and ethnic identities, be they “Taiwanese,” “Japanese,” or “aborigine,” simply existed as exclusive, transhistorical, and differentiable categories. Japanese colonialism brought these pre-constituted groups into conflict and felt compelled to convert or transform the indigenous and the non-Japanese into Japanese. As a result, the problem of Japanese colonialism lies not only in political and economic exploitation, but also in its imposition of Japanese culture and customs onto the Taiwanese and the aborigines. The problem here is not so much in the colonized’s assertion of and resort to the kind of essentialism that is crucial for some forms of organized struggle against colonial violence. Instead, the nativist discourse of deprivation is unknowingly in complicity with colonial discourse in equally reifying the category of Japanese, or Japaneseness, and is thereby unable to confront the very historicity and contradiction within the categories themselves. By formulating the problem of Japanese colonialism solely in terms of the violent imposition of Japaneseness onto the colonized, it remains oblivious to the gap between cultural identification and political discrimination, between becoming Japanese and not having the rights of a Japanese citizen.

Another aspect that is crucial to an understanding of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan is the presence and specter of China. As a cultural and political imaginary, China loomed large in the consciousness of Taiwanese intellectuals throughout the colonial period. From the initial reorientation of Taiwan’s economic activities from southern China to Japan to the desinicization of Taiwanese cultural forms in the period of imperialization, Japanese colonialism was instrumental in delineating and delimiting the relationship between mainland China and colonial Taiwan. From the identification with Chinese nationalism as the

necessary impetus for colonial emancipation to the postcolonial disillusion with and antipathy toward Chinese rule, China has played an important role in forming and deforming Taiwanese self-consciousness and its equivocal relations to Japan. Put differently, the triangulation between colonial Taiwan, imperial Japan, and nationalist China formed the terrain where contradictory, conflicting, and complicitous desires and identities were projected, negotiated, and vanquished. Although the current debate over Taiwanese independence and reunification with China is a post-Japanese phenomenon, the Japanese colonial period remains a powerful subtext in which the questions of "Taiwanese consciousness" and "Chinese consciousness" are embedded and contested.

Despite, or precisely because of, the tumultuous relation between colonial Taiwan and mainland China, there is a disconcerting but commonly held impression about Taiwanese reactions to Japanese colonialism. Unlike the Koreans, who vehemently detested and tenaciously opposed the Japanese and their colonial occupation, the Taiwanese are said to have retained a fairly positive image of the Japanese and recollected approvingly the virtues of Japanese rule. If the Koreans speak of oppression and resistance, the Taiwanese speak of modernization and development. This diametrically opposing view of Japan and its colonial rule, despite substantial documentation of resistance and collaboration in *both* colonies, remains the "commonsense" and "plebian" understanding of the difference between Korean national character and the neo-colonial psychology of Taiwanese nativism. The popular postwar, post-colonial Japanese view of the Taiwanese as "pro-Japan" (*shinnichi*) and of the Koreans as "anti-Japanese" reveals the extent to which the Japanese perceive their colonial differences through the lens of this kind of national-racial essentialization.⁶ Although the supposed contrast between colonial Taiwan and colonial Korea has more to do with their respective precolonial and postcolonial histories than Japanese rule per se, it is undeniable that Japanese colonialism has had a profound impact on the subsequent developments of these former colonies.

Bruce Cumings has written cogently on the effects of Japanese co-

lonialism on the postwar economic development of South Korea and Taiwan.⁷ One of Cumings' main arguments is that these emerging economies have "deep historical roots and cannot be understood merely as an outcome of salutary policy packages that encouraged 'export-led development' (or what is known in the American imaginary as the Rostovian 'take-off')" since the 1960s.⁸ Although there are critical differences between the postwar economic developments in South Korea and Taiwan, Cumings shows convincingly how their respective political and economic structures are deeply inscribed in, and owe their organizational synergy to, the logic and models of Japanese colonial development. It is this Japanese "difference" (together with U.S. Cold War policies), Cumings argues, that is ultimately responsible for the emergence of a discernable East Asian development model, or what he has called the "bureaucratic-authoritarian industrializing regime" (BAIR).

The argument that colonialism has stimulated development is nothing new. Marx's writing on British colonialism in India has underscored the contradictory nature of colonialism. In writing on the effects of colonialism on Indian society, Marx shows on the one hand how the forcible destruction of the textile industry and the neglect of state-organized public works undermined the indigenous economy.⁹ Yet on the other hand, he argues that colonial rule is beneficial in that it imports an economic system that can revolutionize production, introducing technological changes that will benefit the indigenous population in the long run. Cumings's analysis, however, as he insists, is not to argue that Japan developed its colonies or that postwar South Korea and Taiwan owe their economic growth to Japan. Instead, he is interested in the historical specificity of Japanese colonialism and its legacy as distinguished from the so-called Western form of colonialism; hence he compares colonial experiences in Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and distinguishes between Japanese and French imperialism.

The French, Cumings reminds us, already seasoned players in the great game of colonialism, spent relatively little money in Indochina, just enough to keep the colonial settlers content. Japan, however, as a

late comer and the only non-Western (read nonwhite) colonizer, had to insist on tying colonial development to metropolitan industrialization efforts. As a late-developing nation, or what Jon Halliday has called "imperialism without capital," Japan's expansionism in its earliest stage ran contrary to what Lenin has defined for the intensification of Western imperialism as the "highest stage of capitalism."¹⁰ Herein lies the undeniable legacy and irony of Japanese colonialism in relation to the development of its colonies. Cumings writes, "[The Japanese] were imperialists but also capitalists, colonizers but also modernizers. They were every bit as interested as a Frederick Taylor in establishing an industrial grid and disciplining, training, and surveilling the workforce. Threatened by the modern project in the form of Western imperialism, after 1868 the Japanese internalized it, made it their own, and imposed it on their neighbors."¹¹

What Cumings does not pursue in analyzing the effects of Japanese colonialism is the *cultural* dimension of Japanese colonialism and its legacy, which constitutes the main concern of this book. Cumings defines *colony* and *legacy* in a rather narrow and constricted manner: colony is "one way of organizing territorial space in the modern world system, one that obliterated political sovereignty and oriented the colonial economy toward monopoly controls and monopoly profits." Legacy is "something that appears to be a follow-on to the different historical experiences of colonialism. *Legacy* is a term that can be good, bad, or neutral."¹² Colonialism, however, is never only about the external processes and pressures of economic development or political annexation. It is always also about the ways in which the colonized internally col-luded with or resisted the objectification of the self produced by the colonizer, as Frantz Fanon has remarkably documented in *Black Skin, White Masks*.¹³

The shift from colonial legacy to the cultural legacy of colonialism is not just another effort to assert the significance of culture as a regime in which colonialism achieves its apotheosis together with military and economic conquests. Nor is it an attempt to trace the various manifes-

tations and continuities of metropolitan culture within the symbolic order of the postcolonial states. Rather, the inquiry into the cultural legacy of colonialism is intended to examine the workings of colonialism not in the logic of its development, but as an irreducible predicament. What concerns me here is not that colonialism has produced modernization, but that colonialism is part and parcel of modernity itself. What I outline in the following, therefore, is not a narrative of oppression and emancipation, but the practice of what Homi Bhabha calls “an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices,” or the “cultures of survival” of the colonized.¹⁴

To insist on the predicament of Japanese colonialism, this book puts forward a series of arguments on Japanese colonialism in Taiwan coalescing around the problematic of identity formations *and* the positions and politics of such analyses in the so-called postcolonial condition. Its premise rests on the assumption that cultural and political identities, be they metropolitan or colonial, do not exist prior to the processes of colonialism. Rather, colonialism constructs and constricts, structures and deconstructs, the ways contradictory and contestatory colonial identities are imagined and represented. In other words, it is not the essentialized differences and similarities between the Taiwanese and the Japanese (or between the Koreans and the Japanese) that substantiated Japanese colonialism. Instead, the historical conditions of Japanese colonialism have enabled and produced various discourses of cultural difference and sameness in the socially transformative projects of the colonizer and the colonized. Simply put, I argue that Japanese or Japaneseness, Taiwanese or Taiwanese, aborigines or aboriginality, and Chinese or Chineseness—as embodied in compartmentalized national, racial, or cultural categories—do not exist outside the temporality and spatiality of colonial modernity, but are instead enabled by it.

While this book is driven by an interest in cultural and political identities and the historicity of Japanese colonialism, it does not analyze all the different identity formations throughout the colonial history of

Taiwan. For example, I have left out the important and little-studied intra-ethnic divisions within the Taiwanese identity formation, and I have not given much attention to the diverse groupings among the Taiwanese aborigines. My purpose is not to produce a comprehensive history of colonial identities, but to historicize their conditions of possibility—the overdetermined instances and competing sites where the questions of cultural and political identities emerge as the dominant expression and constitution of colonial relationships. I have thus intentionally and strategically selected (and excluded) texts and events that best present and represent the overlapping and dispersed nature of identity formations in colonial Taiwan. These identity positions, I argue, in their fractured and disjointed traces, continue to mark and remark the cultural politics of postwar Japan, mainland China, and postcolonial Taiwan.

Chapter 1 argues that decolonization, as opposed to postcolonialism, as both a descriptive and an analytical category, offers a better understanding of Japan's continuous disavowal of its war crimes and coloniality. With its defeat in the Second World War, Japan's empire disappeared almost instantaneously, and the Japanese themselves subsequently avoided the agonizing procedures of decolonization, both politically and culturally. The reconfiguration of Japan's former colonies was relegated to the Allied forces, shaped most notably by American policies and later by Cold War geopolitics. Post-1945 Japan is thus able to narrate a history of transitions from defeat to demilitarization, recovery to economic miracle, that circumvents the colonial question. Chapter 2 analyzes the formation of and debate over Taiwanese consciousness and Chinese consciousness, their respective political movements since the 1920s, and their reverberation and repercussion today. I argue at the end that the ethnocentric analyses of these articulations must open up to a class-based interrogation of their conditions of possibility.

Chapter 3 attempts a theoretical analysis of the Japanese colonial discourse of *dōka* and *kōminka*. My main purpose in differentiating *kōminka* from *dōka* is to elucidate the concern over the question of iden-

tities (more specifically *conflict* over identities) that has emerged as the fundamental trope in the articulation of agency in colonial and post-colonial discourse analysis today. I argue that the historical significance of *kōminka* (and its differentiation from *dōka*) is that for the first time in Taiwanese colonial history, the struggle over identity emerges as the dominant discourse for the colonized. Cultural representation under *kōminka* therefore displaced the concrete problematic of the social and replaced it with the ontology of the personal. Chapter 4 extends the analysis of *kōminka* to the Taiwanese aborigines in relation to the Musha Rebellion of 1930. The purpose is first to delineate a shift in colonial governmentality—its accommodation and repression—regarding one of the most vicious uprisings by the aborigines against the colonial government. Second, it is to understand the difficult contestation and complicated negotiation between colonial ideology and the resistance (and complicity) of those who occupy the lowest realm in the colonial hierarchy.

Chapter 5 returns to the triangulation between colonial Taiwan, imperialist Japan, and nationalist China. Through a reading of *The Orphan of Asia*, I argue that the work is an allegory of Taiwan's gradual "coming into being" with the intensification of colonial rule and its disillusion with Chinese nationalism. *The Orphan of Asia* marks a historical moment when the intensifying Pacific War has precluded any revolutionary or reformist corrective to Japanese colonialism, and when China and Chinese nationalism no longer provide a clear and viable alternative to Taiwan's emancipation. However, I argue that this "emergent" Taiwan does not have a static or fully constituted "identity." Rather, it must be apprehended and articulated at the same time in relation to the "residual" Chinese culturalism and the "dominant" Japanese colonialism—a contradictory and irreducible triple consciousness that is the embodiment of colonial Taiwanese identity formation.