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## Taiwan's Postcoloniality and Postwar Memories of Japan

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### ABSTRACT

This article deals with the relationship between Taiwan's postcoloniality and postwar memories of the Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) in Taiwanese fiction, with a special focus on the politics of re-memory in Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy* (2003-2010). I argue that Taiwan's postcoloniality and postwar memories of the Japanese rule are linked partly because of the Kuomintang's refusal until the lifting of martial law (1987) to see a decolonized Taiwan, and that the burgeoning of postcolonial Taiwanese fiction in recent decades, with more positive or complex reimagining of the Japanese period, deepens our rethinking of what constitutes Taiwan's postcoloniality. Using Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy* as my case study, I examine how the rewriting of Taiwan's national history provides a particularly interesting reengagement with Japanese colonialism in Taiwan. In light of Pheng Cheah's rethinking on world literature, I explore further how the trilogy's re-memory renegotiates with Japanese colonial legacy and presents the case of Taiwan's postcoloniality, which in turn may incite new thoughts on postcoloniality around the world and particularly in East and Southeast Asia. The conclusion draws on Ping-hui Liao's notion of alternative modernity to illuminate Taiwan's postcoloniality.

**KEYWORDS** Taiwan's postcoloniality, memories of Japan, re-memory

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The student-led Sunflower Movement and the controversy over textbook revision in spring 2014 brought into focus the issue of Taiwan's postcoloniality.<sup>1</sup> The college students' claim of "saving our own country [from economic and political annexation by China] by ourselves" was juxtaposed with the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) administration's attempt to instill Chinese consciousness through revised high school textbooks, where the records of the Kuomintang rule were to be whitewashed and the oppressiveness and viciousness of Japanese colonialism reemphasized. Amid huge controversy, the textbook revision not only stirred up widespread worries about the Kuomintang's pro-China tilt, but recalled the harsh "De-Japanize and Re-Sinicize" policy the Kuomintang had adopted immediately after it took over Taiwan in 1945 following Japan's surrender. Generally seen as signifying recolonization, the "De-Japanize and Re-Sinicize" policy was partly responsible for the February 28 Incident in 1947 (see Yi-shen Chen 55-56; Mi-cha Wu 37-44; Huang). For decades until the lifting of martial law in 1987, this policy had sought to consolidate Chinese consciousness and had been met with resistance from Taiwanese cultural and political nationalism from the early 1980s on. The end of the martial rule only marked the beginning of the process toward postcoloniality (Liao, "Taiwan" 96), since it was the evolving process of democratization under Presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shuibian, who took office in 1988 and 2000 respectively, that put an end to the Kuomintang's authoritarian Sinocentric rule and gave rise to Taiwanese consciousness. As former Vice President Annette Hsiu-lian Lu observes retrospectively, Taiwan attained *de facto* independence in 1996 by having its first ever direct presidential election (Ong). In the 1990s literary-critical field, postcolonial scholars Chaoyang Liao, Kuei-fen Chiu, and Ping-hui Liao all theorized on Taiwanese cultural and national identity against Chinese consciousness and the rise of China (see Liao "Postcolonial Studies"; Liou). Likewise, in the field of Taiwan history, Leo T. S. Ching and Pei-feng Chen, among others, reassess Taiwan's Japanese colonial period (Ching; P. Chen), while Emma Jinhui Teng criticizes China for failing to

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<sup>1</sup> China has attracted Taiwan's capital since the late 1980s with the lure of cheap labor and large market. As Jieh-min Wu points out, "The US used to be Taiwan's most important 'trade partner' during the Cold War era but, in 2005, China had replaced the US as the number one export market for Taiwan" (282). During his presidency (2008-2016), President Ma Ying-jeou expedited closer ties with China by signing a series of economic agreements with China, only to trap Taiwan into overdependence on China. On March 18, 2014, crowds of college students and civic groups occupied the Legislature Yuan to protest against the passing of the Service Trade Pact with China, which they perceived would damage Taiwan's economy and leave it vulnerable to political pressures from China. The unprecedented occupation of the Legislative Yuan did not end until April 7, 2014, after Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng made concessions to the students. On March 30, 2014, led by the Sunflower Movement, 500,000 people took to the streets of Taipei demanding the retraction of the controversial trade pact.

acknowledge Qing imperialism and the colonial nature of the historical relation between China and Taiwan (250). The problem with Taiwan's postcoloniality is that despite its *de facto* sovereignty, Taiwan remains derecognized by the United Nations mainly due to China's imperialistic claim on it, a claim deemed unacceptable by the great majority of the Taiwanese people. While Taiwan's postcoloniality remains an incomplete project, it is important to investigate how postwar memories of Japanese colonialism have changed and how re-memories in recent decades constitute, against the Kuomintang's martial rule ideology and in support of Taiwan's postcoloniality, what Michel Foucault calls "counter-memory."

This article deals with the relationship between Taiwan's postcoloniality and postwar memories of Japanese colonialism in Taiwanese fiction, with a special focus on the politics of re-memory in Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy* (2003-2010). I argue that Taiwan's postcoloniality and postwar memories of the Japanese period are linked partly because of the Kuomintang's refusal until the end of its martial rule to see a decolonized Taiwan, and that the burgeoning of postcolonial Taiwanese fiction in recent decades, with more positive or complex reimaging of the Japanese period, deepens our rethinking of what constitutes Taiwan's postcoloniality. Using Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy* as my case study, I examine how its rewriting of Taiwan's national history provides a particularly interesting reengagement with Japanese colonialism in Taiwan. In light of Pheng Cheah's rethinking on world literature, I explore further how the trilogy's re-memory renegotiates with Japanese colonial legacy and presents the case of Taiwan's postcoloniality, which in turn may incite new thoughts on postcoloniality around the world and particularly in East and Southeast Asia. I seek to answer the following questions: What complicated the cultural politics of imposing the "De-Japanize and Re-Sinicize" policy on the Han and aboriginal Taiwanese? Why did postwar Taiwan, unlike Korea and other places formerly colonized by Japan, manifest retrospective ambivalence toward the Japanese rule despite or because of the Kuomintang's anti-Japanese and Japan-bashing stance from 1945 to 1987? How and why do memories of Japan become part of the basis for Taiwanese consciousness? How is Japanese colonial legacy deployed in the re-conceptualization of Taiwan's postcoloniality in relation to the transnational flows beginning in the seventeenth century? By delving into the way tension and negotiation with Japanese colonialism are important to Taiwan's postcoloniality in recent Taiwanese postcolonial fiction, particularly Shih's *Trilogy*, I want to show how the case of Taiwan's postcoloniality may shed a different light on global and East and Southeast Asian postcolonial discourse. The first section of the article traces the changing postwar memories of the Japanese period in Taiwanese fiction in relation to postcoloniality.

The second section discusses the politics of re-memory of the Japanese period in Shih's *Trilogy*. The third section suggests that Pheng Cheah's rethinking on world literature may bring out the significance of Taiwanese postcolonial fiction and the case of Taiwan's postcoloniality. The conclusion draws on Ping-hui Liao's notion of alternative modernity to illuminate Taiwan's postcoloniality.

### **The Changing Postwar Memories of the Japanese Period**

Partly because of Japan's invasion of China during World War II, the Kuomintang repressed and negated memories of Japanese colonialism after it took over Taiwan in 1945. The defeat by the Chinese Communists and relocation to Taiwan in 1949 aggravated the Kuomintang's fear of losing its last stronghold and deepened its insecurity about the Kuomintang government's status as an alien regime in Taiwan. The desperate measures to de-Japanize and re-Sinicize, carried out in designating Chinese the official language, banning Japanese, and implementing Sinocentric textbooks in 1946, were meant to cement the legitimacy of the Kuomintang rule. During the martial rule from 1949 to 1987, most recorded memories of the Japanese period had to comply with the Kuomintang's Chinese nationalist ideology and its anti-Japan or Japan-bashing discourse in order to get published. The Kuomintang sought to inculcate Chinese consciousness through disparaging and negating the Japanese period. Harping on the negative aspects of Japanese colonialism enabled the Kuomintang to glorify its Taiwan takeover in anti-colonial terms. Likewise, speaking in the voice of a decolonization advocate allowed the Kuomintang to describe the Taiwanese as enslaved by "poisonous colonial legacy" and badly in need of re-Sinicization. The cultural purity policy not only denigrated all the Taiwanese—Hoklo, Hakka, and aboriginal—who had received Japanese education but ignored the fact that the aboriginal Taiwanese, who were Austronesians, had their own cultures and languages.<sup>2</sup> Even the Han Taiwanese, whose ancestors had come from China, felt their languages and cultures disdained by the Kuomintang. Through banning Japanese, de-Japanizing, and the authoritarian rule known as the White Terror, the Kuomintang's repression of the memories about the Japanese period became the basis for the Chinese consciousness it sought to instill.

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<sup>2</sup> There are sixteen officially recognized aboriginal tribes: Ami, Atayal, Bunun, Hla'alua, Kanakanavu, Kavalan, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Saisiyat, Tao, Thao, Tsou, Truku, Sakizaya, and Seediq. Most of these tribes have mutually unintelligible languages and very different cultures and social structures. See "Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples."

Following the sudden breakup of the Japanese Empire and the subsequent takeover of Taiwan by the Kuomintang, the Taiwanese experienced in the early postwar decades a lack of “genuine process of decolonization” and “an enhanced ‘ethnic division’ between those who were recolonized and their new colonizers, the GMD [Kuomintang] and its armed forces from the mainland” (Makeham 8). Unlike Korea, Taiwan did not become independent after Japan surrendered. The island-wide native uprising in 1947, known as the 228 Incident, nearly escalated into a struggle for independence, only to be brutally clamped down by the Kuomintang. The 228 Incident quickly became a taboo subject until the lifting of martial law in 1987. The old Taiwanese nostalgia for Japanese colonialism had increased over the years, strengthened by the people’s yearning for decolonization from the Kuomintang.

Amid serious diplomatic repercussions following the People’s Republic of China’s succession to the seat of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the United Nations in 1971, young intellectuals calling for social and political reforms as well as cultural innovation spurned the Kuomintang’s exilic mentality and turned to memories of the Japanese colonial rule. Nevertheless, the memories were no sooner re-discovered than co-opted by the historical narrative of the Republic of China in the mainstream culture (Hsiao, *Huigui xianshi* 3, 195). These young intellectuals, having unwittingly internalized Chinese nationalism, aligned their own anti-imperialism with that of the first-generation writers of the Taiwanese New Literature. They sought to gather the collective memories found in Japanese-period Taiwanese literature under “the historical narrative of Chinese nationalism,” so as to “re-identify and reaffirm their own Chineseness” through “re-Sinicizing” those memories (Hsiao, *Huigui xianshi* 172). As anti-colonialism became the key note of the re-memory of the Japanese period, historical novels written in the 1970s such as Chung Chao-cheng’s *The Trilogy of the Taiwanese* (1968-1976) and Li Qiao’s *Wintry Night Trilogy* (1979-1981) were read as *loci classici* of anti-colonialism. It should be noted, however, that some memories of the Japanese period rediscovered in the 1970s, such as Wu Zhuoliu’s *Orphan of Asia* (1956) and Chung Li-ho’s “Oleander” (1945) and “The Sadness of Sweet Potato” (1946), which depict the identity crisis of the Taiwanese people, who identified neither completely as Chinese nor as Japanese, triggered intense anxiety in critics who endorsed Chinese consciousness (Chiu, “Fanyi quli” 250-54; see also Ying 12). As Kuei-fen Chiu contends, Wu Zhuoliu’s and Chung Li-ho’s “memory-writing has imploded Chinese nationalist narrative and ‘Chineseness,’ and their identity vacillation and ambiguity has stirred up anxiety” (“Fanyi quli” 254). Chiu observes that the second novel of Chung Chao-cheng’s *The Trilogy of the Taiwanese* also portrays

“Taiwanese identity conflict under colonial educational system” (“Fanyi quli” 253).

Following the setbacks of the opposition movement in the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979 and the subsequent trials and imprisonment of opposition leaders, the early 1980s witnessed the rise of Taiwanese political and cultural nationalism. While A-chin Hsiao maintains that it was the radicalization of the opposition movement in advocating Taiwanese self-determination that contributed to the development of Taiwanese cultural nationalism (*Contemporary* 89-100), I contend that Yeh Shih-tao, a veteran writer from the Japanese period, anticipated the radical opposition politics by positing, in a 1977 debate with Chen Yingzhen on nativist literature, the idea of Taiwanese literature as distinct from, rather than part of, Chinese literature (Yeh, “Taiwan” 72). To counter Chinese consciousness, Taiwanese cultural nationalists not only attempted to de-Sinicize Taiwanese literature during the first half of the 1980s, but “have been ‘nationalizing’ Taiwanese literature” since the second half of the decade, treating Japanese colonialism as “more of an asset than a liability” (Hsiao, *Contemporary* 102, 101). Nevertheless, in a controversy concerning the stigmatized “*kōminka* literature”<sup>3</sup> in the 1980s, Yeh Shi-tao had to underscore the anti-colonialism of wartime Taiwanese literature to get his defense accepted: “There was no ‘*kōminka* literature’; it was all ‘protest literature’” (“Kangyi” 112). Although his emphasis on anti-Japanese colonialism might well be a figure for anti-Kuomintang, a typical tactic used by Taiwanese cultural nationalists in the 1980s, Yeh obviously found it necessary to dissemble his position sometimes in confronting Chinese consciousness.

The Taiwanese counter-discourse on Japanese colonial memories recalls Michel Foucault’s theory of counter-memory and counter-history, which deconstructs the truth claim of official history, unraveling the latter’s implicit knowledge/power in excluding and repressing the other’s memories (Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”). Given that official history is the history of the victors, counter-history enables the vanquished to present their heterogeneous history (Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*” 69-70).<sup>4</sup> Precisely because the Kuomintang government repressed and negated Japanese colonialism, the Taiwanese born and raised under the Japanese rule were forced to live in silence and darkness under the martial rule. The re-memory of Japanese colonialism by them or their children is counter-

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<sup>3</sup> *Kōminka* refers to the imperialization movement during wartime mobilization. The Taiwanese were encouraged to become the “imperial subjects” of the Japanese Empire by adopting Japanese names, becoming a Japanese-speaking family, and converting to Shintoism, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Given that official history manifests the effect of power that “illuminates one side of the social body but leaves the other side in shadow or casts it into the darkness” (Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*” 70), counter-history reflects or produces the moments of ruptures, gaps, and interstices of a nation or community that have been ignored in the past.

memory which unveils the constitutive omissions and silences of official history and resists “epistemic and socio-political subjugation” (Medina 16-17). Moreover, in renegotiating with Japanese colonial legacy, re-memory is often modulated by a forward-looking rethinking on the future of Taiwan. Although such re-memories in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly anti-Japanese or Japan-bashing in tone, they could not be wholly contained by the Republic of China narrative because firstly, China was remote, strange, or totally absent in them, and secondly, the Taiwanese experience of World War II as portrayed in them was entirely different from that of the Chinese. The deliberate kowtowing to the official ideology by camouflaging as Chinese nationalists was a subtle compromise, which could nevertheless cause anxiety about their lack of “Chineseness” or dubious loyalty to Chinese nationalism. On the other hand, since the official ideology still delimited the range of expression in public discourse, counter-memory about the Japanese period was largely marginalized, with its potential influence greatly undermined.

Japanese colonial memories gradually became part of the foundation for Taiwanese consciousness after the lifting of martial law in 1987, especially after Taiwan started the process toward postcoloniality, with Taiwanese nationalists obtaining political clout. Fiction about the February 28 Incident, such as Li Ang’s novel *The Lost Garden* (1990), Li Qiao’s novel *Burying Injustice 1947, Burying Injustice* (1995), Chung Chao-cheng’s novel *Angry Waves* (1993), and Yeh Shih-tao’s short-story collection *Jian A-tao the Taiwanese Man* (1996) all implicitly contrast the Japanese rule with the Kuomintang rule, connecting Taiwanese consciousness to Japanese colonial memories. The year 1994 saw nostalgia for Japanese colonialism in Yeh Shih-tao’s novel *Interracial Marriages* and Wu Nien- jen’s feature film *Dosan*.<sup>5</sup> Alongside such nostalgia, *kōminka* literature received growing public and academic attention in the early and mid-1990s, a clear signal of the mainstreaming of its revaluation, which prompted Yvonne Sung-sheng Chang to call for careful contextualization and caution against identity trap and tendentious scholarship (83-99).

Since the late 1990s, invigorated by democratization, postcoloniality, and multiculturalism, and confronted with the rise of China, there have been a surge of fiction and films with more positive or complex re-memory of Japanese colonialism. This new re-remembering does not merely tend to emphasize the modernity

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<sup>5</sup> *Interracial Marriages* is imbued with the spirit of multiculturalism in its portrayal of interracial friendships and marriages toward the end of World War II between the Taiwanese and the Japanese, between the Ryukyuan and the Taiwanese Siraya, between the Han Taiwanese and the Siraya, while in *Dosan*, the Japanophilic wartime-generation father, who is attacked by his postwar-born daughter as a “traitor to the Chinese,” is simultaneously a failure and a romantic hero in the narrator-son’s eyes.

brought by Japanese rule, and to resituate Taiwan in the hub of transnational cultural flow *vis-à-vis* the rise of China and global Sino-mania.<sup>6</sup> It also explores or figures erased collective histories and subjectivities. Shih Shu-ching's 1999 novel *Tipsy* touches on the Kuomintang government's tobacco and alcohol monopoly, the popularity of baseball, and old European style buildings, all dating from the Japanese period. Wu He's 1999 novel *Remains of Life* unravels the internal schism between pro-Japanese and anti-Japanese Seediq tribesmen during the Musha Incident in 1930, a schism perpetuated by the descendants' divided interpretation of the event. *Remains of Life* foreshadows Wei Te-sheng's 2011 feature film *Seediq Bale*, which presents the diverse views of the Seediq tribesmen, among which is the Japanized Hanaoka Ichiro's heart-rending struggle between his Seediq identity and Japanese identity. Li Ang's 2000 novel *Autobiography: A Novel* portrays Taiwanese Communist and 228 uprising leader Hsieh Shuihong's struggle between Japanese and Chinese identities, and how her image as a dissolute woman in patriarchal folk culture—so ingrained in the minds of Taiwanese women weaned on her stories from the 1940s to the 1970s—prompts the female listeners of her stories to renegotiate with that image when they grow up.

The prevalent use of family saga in Chen Yu-hui's novel *Mazu's Bodyguards* (2004), Li Ang's short-story collection *Passion Foods* (2007), Wu Ming-yi's *Routes in the Dream* (2007), and Shih Shu-ching's novels *Dust before the Wind* (2008) and *Living through Three Eras* (2010) is noteworthy. Recovering family memories often serves as a figure for historical re-membering, remedying the historical rupture or discontinuity from the Japanese rule to the Kuomintang rule. In *Mazu's Bodyguards*, *Passion Foods*, and *Routes in the Dream*, it is the granddaughter or child who discovers his/her (grand) parents' repressed lived experience in the Japanese period through piecing together family stories and/or collecting information elsewhere. The female narrator in *Mazu's Bodyguards* comes to realize that her childhood antagonism toward her Japanized Ryukyuan grandma stems from her having a Mainlander father and growing up in an anti-Japanese Mainlander veterans' village. The postwar-born narrator in *Passion Foods*, who was unaware as a child that her anti-Japan, pro-China father became a Taiwanese nationalist after suffering the 228 Incident and White Terror, recalls his ambivalence about the modernity brought on by Japanese colonialism. The postwar-born narrator in *Routes in the Dream*, who is reconciled with his estranged, quiet, missing father through an empathetic reconstruction of the father's war experience as a juvenile armory

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<sup>6</sup> Here I borrow Kuei-fen Chiu's and Yi-chun Lin's observations on Taiwanese films and documentaries since the late 1990s (Chiu, "Ribben jiyi" 82-84; Lin 109).



worker in Yokohama for the Japanese Empire, concludes that his father is neither guilty nor innocent in the war. *Mazu's Bodyguards*, *Dust before the Wind*, and *Living through Three Eras* all have anti-Japanese characters and Japanized characters who aspire to modernity or Japanese culture, struggling between their Taiwanese identity and Japanese identity. The interracial love and marriage they depict<sup>7</sup> is a trope for cultural cross-fertilization and hybridity.

The re-memories of the Japanese period in these recent fictions are ambivalent and complicated, mixing pro-Japanese perspectives with anti-Japanese views. Counter-memory and complex identity politics entail cultural hybridity, which comes in these works as a result of Japanese colonialism, figured as an asset for postcolonial Taiwan. In the next section, I will focus on how the re-memory of the Japanese period in the second and third novels in Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy* (*Dust before the Wind* and *Living through Three Eras*) renegotiates with Japanese colonial legacy and deepens our rethinking of what constitutes Taiwan's postcoloniality.

### **The Politics of Re-memory in Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy***

Both *Dust before the Wind* and *Living through Three Eras* re-envision the Japanese period by delving into issues that had rarely been dealt with before in Taiwanese literature. The former probes into the motives and effects of the Japanese colonial government's "enterprise of governing the savages," the aborigine issue, and gendered ethnic relations in eastern Taiwan. The latter explores the social, political, and cultural movements in the 1920s and 1930s, together with the transformation of Taipei as the capital of colonial modernity project. Both novels delineate anti-colonialism, cravings for modernity, and identity problems, with the emphasis on multiculturalism in *Dust before the Wind* complementing the stress on Taiwanese psychic changes under modernity in *Living through Three Eras*.

#### *Dust before the Wind*

*Dust before the Wind* unravels erased collective histories and subjectivities by exploring issues such as the "enterprise of governing the savages," the Truku War, the gendered ethnic relations in Hualien during the Japanese period, Japanese

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<sup>7</sup> For instance, the narrator of *Mazu's Bodyguards* has a Ryukyuan grandma and a Taiwanese grandpa, and the main plot of *Dust before the Wind* is about the love relation between a Taiwan-born Japanese woman and a Truku man. One also recalls the wartime love affair between a Taiwanese woman and her Japanese teacher in Wei Te-sheng's 2008 feature film *Cape No. 7*, and the interracial friendship between the Japanese coach and his Taiwanese baseball team players in Umin Boya's 2014 feature film *Kano*.

immigrant villages, and postwar Japanese legacy. The novel presents an intricate reimagining of Japanese colonialism and Taiwan's postcoloniality by contrapuntally portraying three ethnic groups in eastern Taiwan—Japanese, Hakka, and aboriginal—under Japanese colonial rule and postwar Japanese legacy, probing the problems of identity caused by assimilation, imperialization, decolonization, and indigenization. Its ambitious interweaving of transnational history and local histories unveils multi-layered, overlapping memories, which are further fragmented by the non-linear, jumpy narration. The disjointed narration is a trope for the complex, ambiguous, and disrupted Taiwan history, which calls for re-membering. As Nan Fang Shuo notes, the piling up of memory shards in the novel is like what Walter Benjamin calls the history of the oppressed witnessed by the Angel of History, with historical topics such as the conquering and the conquered, identification and self-division, the victim and the victimizer, and persecution and barbarism embedded in a more complex and sophisticated framework (10).

The Truku War was part of the Japanese colonial government's "enterprise of governing the savages," whose real motive was to seize mountain lands from the Taiwanese aboriginal peoples and subject the forest, mining, and agricultural resources to exploitation by Japanese capitalists. The novel portrays the fifth Governor-General of Taiwan Sakuma Samata as being laid up with illness after brutally overpowering the Truku tribe in 1914. Hearing the termites eating his official mansion in Taipei, he doubts if he has ever conquered the Truku tribe. The narrator subtly subverts the civilized/savage divide by depicting how, in waging the war in the name of civilizing the barbarians, Sakuma nevertheless admires the Truku tribesmen's unbending pride. He discovers his own barbarism and feels guilty of his war crime. Coming from a low-ranking Samurai family, Sakuma has experienced the Meiji Restoration and witnessed how Japan has transformed from being nearly colonized to a colonizer due to the success of modernization. The haunting, tragic scene of the Truku tribesmen hanging themselves on the trees *en masse* rather than surrendering makes him think of the Japanese warrior spirit. In a trance, the aging guilt-ridden Sakuma finds himself surrounded by the spiteful ghosts of the Truku warriors he has killed, and feels all victories reduced by the fickleness of life to "dust before the wind."

Yokoyama Tsukihime, daughter of a colonial sheriff in the aboriginal mountain area, suffers from inner split owing to the patriarchal nature of Japanese colonialism, although the split may also be derived from the tug between imperialization and indigenization. Born in Taiwan and raised in a Japanese immigrant village in Hualien, Tsukihime—in love with Haruka Bayan, a Truku man—defies the miscegenation taboo and is severely punished by her father, who eventually

executes her lover. Homesick for Taiwan for the rest of her life after repatriation, she is not only discriminated against in Japan as a Taiwan-born Japanese, but despised as a disgraced daughter within the family due to her cross-racial love. She can only confide in her daughter Kotoko broken, self-contradictory accounts of the forbidden love by pretending to tell the story of her best friend. Ironically, Tsukihime's father has also taken a Truku woman as his second wife in Taiwan, a personal gratification that coincides with the Japanese colonial policies to "civilize" Taiwan's aboriginal peoples, as a result of which his Japanese wife returns to Japan. Kotoko visits Taiwan for the first time in 1973, the year after Japan terminated diplomatic relations with Taiwan, in search of the truths about her mother's and her grandparents' love stories. For her, the truths are difficult to retrieve due to the lacunae in the memories. As a leftist feminist who was an activist in the University Student Movement in 1968 Tokyo, Kotoko is more than surprised to find the Taiwanese nostalgic for the Japanese rule, a nostalgia which stems from dissatisfaction with the Kuomintang rule.

Kotoko imagines Haruka Bayan to be a Japanized Truku man who feels inferior to her beautiful mother and ashamed of the Truku facial tattoo. Since her Tokyo-metropolitan perspective may have biased her, it is unclear whether her reconstruction is truthful—if truthful, we have to take into account Haruka's divided self. While Kotoko's leftist feminist attack on Japan's fascist militarism does not prevent her from romanticizing and exoticizing her mother's love relationship with Haruka, the omniscient narrator presents an unyielding Haruka, who has secretly resisted the Japanese by poaching and working as a hunting guide. Serving as the hunting guide for Tsukihime's father and his subordinates, Haruka revisits his traumatic childhood memories of displacement and loss of cultural tradition after the defeat in the Truku War. Aware that he is under surveillance and that his secret love for Tsukihime may put his own life at peril, rendering him game to her father, he nevertheless does not run away. As Haruka sits on a rock beside a cliff looking across the Liwu Creek at the site of the battlefield where the revered Chief of the Truku tribe fought to his death, Tsukihime's father covertly gazes through a telescope at his stubborn chiseled face. Their ongoing hunter-and-game-like struggle is also a trope for the relations between the colonizer and the colonized after the Truku War.

The Hakka photographer Fanjiang Yiming is also self-divided. Despite his worship of Japanese culture, coming from the colony of Taiwan, he can never be accepted or treated as Japanese. Proficient in Japanese and well-versed in Japanese culture and literature, he is dismayed to discover, when courting a Japanese saloon waitress in Japan, that as Taiwanese he is discriminated against. When he returns

to Taiwan, he is nostalgic for everything about Japan. Aware of his self-division, he names his photography studio “Two Selves.” Feeling completely Japanized internally and enamored of Tsukihime, whose name he does not even know, he is humiliated by a Japanese spy (disguised as a botanist), who accuses him of seeking to become Japanese by marrying a Japanese girl, and who asserts that even with that he will not be authentically Japanese. The narrator implicitly satirizes Yiming’s one-sided love for Tsukihime as narcissistic projection, while hinting at Yiming’s vague Taiwanese consciousness by depicting his suffering under the discriminatory practices of the Japanese government and his disgruntlement with the Japanese spy who abandons an Ami woman after falling out of love with her.

To sum up, the novel tackles the issue of Taiwan’s postcoloniality with its contrapuntal reimagining of the colonial relationship between Japan and Taiwan, renegotiating with Japanese colonial memories in both Taiwan and Japan. Unlike the majority of postwar Taiwanese memories about the Japanese period, the novel presents eastern Taiwan, populated predominantly by diverse aboriginal tribes, as having been virtually autonomous until the Japanese came. By portraying the aboriginal peoples’ fierce resistance and the inner split of the Japanized Han Taiwanese with a vague Taiwanese consciousness, the novel presents a complex re-vision of Taiwan’s relationship with its former colonizer, suggesting that the search for subjectivity on the part of both the Han and aboriginal Taiwanese persists in postwar decades. On the other hand, with the erasure in Kotoko’s family memories and the discrimination Tsukihime suffers in Japan, the novel points to the void in postwar Japan concerning its colonial relationship with Taiwan. Through Kotoko’s metropolitan perspective, it also suggests the need for self-critique on the part of Japanese intellectuals. The novel implies that Taiwan’s post-coloniality is not complete without decolonization processes in both Taiwan and Japan.

### *Living through Three Eras*

Like *Dust before the Wind*, *Living through Three Eras* is formally sophisticated, with multi-layered narration and a fusion of the past and the present. Unlike *Dust before the Wind*, *Living through Three Eras* is mainly set in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan under Japanese rule, and portrays the impact of colonial modernity on the Han Taiwanese and the latter’s anticolonial social, political, and cultural movements in the 1920s. The movements are the reactions to and the products of colonial modernity. Spanning about sixty years from 1895, the novel presents Taiwanese identity vacillating and fluctuating not only during the Japanese period but also during the period between the end of World War II and the 228 Incident in 1947.

The title may refer to the Shih family, with its Qing loyalist grandfather and Japanese-educated father and son, who have adopted Japanese names during wartime military mobilization and witnessed Japan's surrender. But it may also refer to the experience of the son Shih Chaozong, who feels that he is like "a man who has lived through three eras," with his identity changing from a volunteer soldier of the Japanese Empire to Taiwanese to Chinese, not knowing who he really is. Two other plotlines are interwoven: one tracking intellectuals and professionals such as Anarchist Ruan Chengyi, Medical Doctor Huang Zanyun, and Lawyer Xiao Juzheng; the other following the woman Wang Zhangzhu. Centering around the Shih family, the plotlines intertwine in delineating the transformation occasioned by colonial modernity. The yearning for or ambivalence toward the modernity brought about by Japanese colonialism is contrasted with the disappointment and bitterness with the Kuomintang, whose arrival in Taiwan the people at first welcome.

The novel's cyclical structure, beginning with the Kuomintang's crackdown on the 228 native uprising and shifting to the Japanese period before returning to the crackdown again, recalls similar structures in novels such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Whereas the present in *Heart of Darkness* is a time of peace, meditation, and regret for the European colonizers, the present in *Living through Three Eras* is a time of chaos, terror, and hopelessness for the recolonized Taiwanese. Instead of entering postcoloniality after Japan surrendered, the Taiwanese find themselves recolonized by a harsher and more violent ruler, the Kuomintang. The cyclical structure not only amplifies the tragic foreboding surrounding the Kuomintang rule, but also reinforces the comparison between the Japanese and the Kuomintang rules, implying that one cannot understand the outbreak of Taiwanese consciousness in the 228 Incident without realizing how the transformation brought about by modernity during the Japanese period had widened the gap between Taiwan and China.

The novel starts with Shih Chaozong running for his life because of his participation in the 228 uprising. Terrified of the Kuomintang takeover government's rigid Sinocentric policy, he discards his Japanese ID card and burns his grandfather's wartime articles, which eulogize Japan's colonial vision of co-prosperity. These acts of erasure epitomize, at a personal level, the Kuomintang's coercive erasure of colonial memories. The success of Japanese colonialism the Kuomintang is so eager to negate is best shown in the fact that Shih's Qing loyalist grandfather, who participated in a battle against the Japanese in 1896 and has resisted colonialism for three decades, seemingly shifts his allegiance during World War II. While his grandfather may naively believe he can revive traditional Chinese culture via

Japanese colonialism, the delusion is created by the latter, not only in its wartime Greater-Asia propaganda but also since the beginning of its rule in the late 1890s. The subtle manipulation of the Japanese, together with their gradualism, contrasts sharply with the Kuomintang's brutal and drastic measures. One example is Japan banning the Chinese language forty years after its rule, as opposed to the Kuomintang banning Japanese the year after its takeover. Wang Zhangzhu, a self-taught, thoughtful woman who has taken to Chinese movies during the war but who does not speak Chinese, feels suddenly tongue-less on her own land in 1946. Shih Chaozong's fears as an ex-Japanese soldier and the grandson of a "collaborator" reveal Taiwanese estrangement from the Kuomintang government.

Ironically, when Japan surrenders, Shih Chaozong's father immediately puts away the Japanese Shinto god and restores the traditional Taiwanese customs of ancestral worship. Likewise, Shih Chaozong sets out eagerly to learn the national anthem of the ROC and the political thought of Sun Yat-sen. It is as if they cannot wait to discard the Japanese identity with which they had camouflaged themselves, only to experience the Kuomintang takeover as waves of shocks: first the raggedness of the Kuomintang army; then the Kuomintang soldiers' ignorance and lack of discipline; then the corruption and arrogance of the Kuomintang. They are particularly outraged when, with a distinct us-them mentality, the Kuomintang soldiers treat the Taiwanese as the downtrodden, asserting that they have saved the latter from the Japanese. In retrospect, Shih Chaozong feels that only in the interim between Japan's surrender and the arrival of the Kuomintang do the Taiwanese feel autonomous and joyful, as many exiled intellectuals return to help the students maintain social order. Eager to out-perform their former colonizer, the Taiwanese prove their discipline and self-governing ability.

The male intellectuals all benefit from modern education but respond to Japanese colonialism differently. While both Anarchist Ruan Chengyi and Lawyer Xiao Juzheng are involved in anticolonial movements, Doctor Huang Zanyun shies away from them and chooses to ignore the racial discrimination he experiences until he sees a picture of hundreds of fearless people in the Peasant Movement. Huang feels grateful to the Japanese for having provided him, a poor rural boy, with a medical education and, with it, upward mobility. Lawyer Xiao Juzheng joins the movement to establish a Taiwanese Parliament when studying in Japan, and participates in the activities of Taiwan Cultural Association after returning to Taiwan. Whereas both organizations call for self-rule, Xiao is eventually disillusioned with them because of their inefficacy. In despair, he turns to the Peasant Movement's call for a proletarian revolution. Anarchist Ruan Chengyi, on the other hand, suspects that a proletarian revolution will only lead to a proletarian

dictatorship. Ruan is Huang's classmate in medical school but drops out to participate in social and political movements. A cosmopolitan and a romantic from a wealthy family in Taipei, he sympathizes with the exploited peasants, dreams of an anarchist utopia, and disappears after his failed attempts to assassinate "The Great Citizen," or the arch-collaborator and traitor to Taiwan.

As both the left-wing and right-wing political movements come to nothing after the Japanese colonial government's crackdown on the former in the early 1930s, Lawyer Xiao, escaping imprisonment by virtue of his Japanese wife, finds refuge in drinking, binge-eating, and recording traditional or popular Taiwanese songs sung by Taiwanese female performers. At the 1935 Fair in Commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of Japanese Rule, while Doctor Huang admires the robots and the electrical appliances on display, enthralled by the superb achievement of Japan's technology, Lawyer Xiao criticizes Taiwan Cultural Association for putting modernity above "backward" traditional Taiwanese folk culture such as ancestral worship, Taiwanese opera, and folk tales, thereby alienating the people from Taiwanese folk culture. Doctor Huang, however, doubts that traditional Taiwanese folk culture alone can yield the ethno-consciousness needed to realize Taiwanese self-determination. He sees the Taiwanese of his generation as confined to their traditional mindsets, by no means Japanized or modernized. Lawyer Xiao, on the other hand, is not really against modernization, as can be seen in his criticism of littering in the night market. Rather, he espouses Taiwanese folk culture in order to emphasize Taiwanese identity, thereby covertly continuing his nationalist cause.

The woman Wang Zhangzhu undergoes the greatest inner changes in the novel. An orphan sold into indentured servitude in a rural county, she comes into contact with Japanese culture in Taichung City. Enlightened by the speeches held by the Taiwan Cultural Association, she runs away and is finally legally released from her indenture. She teaches herself to speak and read Japanese, takes to reading Japanese women's writing and Taiwanese popular fiction in newspapers and magazines, and delights in watching Japanese and Chinese movies. She names herself Wang Zhangzhu,<sup>8</sup> and aspires at different stages to become a worker in Japan, an overseas Taiwanese student in Japan, the first Taiwanese-speaking female *benshi*<sup>9</sup> for silent movies, and a writer. After the 228 Incident, she endeavors but fails to use a hybrid language of classical Chinese, Japanese, vernacular Chinese,

<sup>8</sup> "Zhangzhu" literally means "a pearl in the palm," a traditional phrase used by a doting father to describe his daughter. Given that she is actually sold by her own father, the self-naming is an ironic self-compensation.

<sup>9</sup> *Benshi* were Japanese performers who provided live narration for silent films. See "Benshi in other cultures" in "Benshi."

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and Taiwanese to write an autobiography documenting her evolution from wearing traditional Taiwanese woman's clothes to Japanese kimonos, western-style dresses, Chinese chipaos, and back to traditional Taiwanese woman's clothes. Her interest in non-Taiwanese dresses indicates her susceptibility to all kinds of cultural influences. At some point in her life, she probably wears Japanese kimonos, western-style dresses, and Chinese chipaos alternately, reads both Japanese and Han-language newspapers, and takes to Japanese women's writing and Chinese movies at the same time. Her split cultural identity suggests that female identity is more important to her than national identity. Her humble origin and humiliation at failing to pass for Japanese drive her to identify with the Chinese movie star Ruan Lingyu, who often impersonates idealistic, persevering lower-class women. An insider of Taiwanese social and political movements, Wang faults each movement for failing to address the concerns of lower-class women. Out of disappointment with the patriarchal society, she never marries. Her failure to write may stem partly from patriarchal pressures and partly from her being a self-taught woman in a multilingual society which has experienced two colonial rules, each with its own national language.

Perhaps more than any other fiction, the novel portrays the tremendous impact of colonial modernity on the Taiwanese and the complex reality the Taiwanese experience both during the Japanese period and in the early postwar years. The Japanese modernity project introduces a new worldview, new body politics, a new cultural vision, and a new system of knowledge, triggering nationalist aspirations and feminist dreams but also self-alienation and split identity. Anticolonial movements contribute to the emergence of the Taiwanese identity; even pro-Japanese characters have vague Taiwanese consciousness. The characters' identity formation is inflected by class and gender positions on the one hand and is indeterminate on the other.<sup>10</sup> To help continue Taiwanese nationalist cause in the 1930s, Lawyer Xiao finds it necessary to reassert the importance of Taiwanese folk culture as the locus of Taiwanese identity, while Wang in her struggle for female subjectivity disputes the priority of the anticolonial cause over the woman's issue: she neither believes women's liberation will happen as a corollary to the proletarian revolution advocated by the Peasant Movement, nor does she see Lin Xiantang address the needs of lower-class women.

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<sup>10</sup> The nationalist Lawyer Xiao blames the failure of the movement to establish a Taiwanese Parliament on its leader Lin Xiantang's being a wealthy landowner, while both Wang Zhangzhu and Doctor Huang appreciate Japanization and modernization for helping them attain upward mobility. Shih Jisheng changes from being a Qing loyalist to a Japanese supporter, while both Wang and Doctor Huang harbor vague Taiwanese consciousness after experiencing racial discrimination.



The novel is as much about failed aspirations and deferred dreams as about the problem of identity, exacerbated in the postwar years when Taiwan is recolonized by the corrupt Kuomintang. By presenting Taiwanese nationalist aspirations as well as feminist and egalitarian dreams in the Japanese period, the novel implicitly evokes a comparison with post-martial law Taiwan and reconnects the past and the present. Moreover, the great gap between the Taiwanese and the Mainlanders after the Kuomintang's takeover mirrors that between the Taiwanese and the Chinese at present.

### **World Literature and the Case of Taiwan's Postcoloniality**

For Taiwanese cultural nationalists, Japanese colonial memories became an important contested area, offering resources for challenging the grand narratives of the Chinese nationalists. As Leo Ching astutely notes, "the Japanese colonial period remains a powerful subtext in which the questions of 'Taiwanese consciousness' and 'Chinese consciousness' are embedded and contested" because "Japanese colonialism was instrumental in delineating and delimiting the relationship between mainland China and colonial Taiwan" (8, 7). Many recent fictions set in or flashing back to the Japanese period, including Shih Shu-ching's *Taiwan Trilogy*, are postcolonial fictions which envision Taiwan's postcoloniality by renegotiating with Japanese colonial legacy. In this section I engage with Pheng Cheah's rethinking on world literature, which I find particularly enlightening in bringing out the significance not only of Taiwanese postcolonial fiction as world literature but also of the case of Taiwan's postcoloniality.

Cheah's radical rethinking of what "world literature" signifies carries postcolonial implications, reconceiving world literature as an "active power of world making that contests the world made by capitalist globalization" (303). Cheah remarks that the recent revival of world literature is influenced by the intensification of globalization in the past two decades, so that, despite its sensitivity to cultural differences and geopolitical complexities, it is premised on an understanding of the world "in terms of spatial circulation, the paradigmatic case of which is global capitalist market exchange" (303). Cheah finds such an understanding questionable because it obscures the fact that the world "is originally a temporal category." He goes on to argue: "A world's unity and permanence is premised on the persistence of time. We are only in a world, we are only worldly beings, if there is already time. Because it opens a world, temporalization is a force of worlding" (303). Re-conceptualizing world literature "as a site of processes of worlding and as an agent that participates and intervenes in these processes" (303), he implicitly

offers a postcolonial critique on global capitalism which has gone hand in hand with colonialisms in the past and neo-colonialisms today. World literature as he reconceives it suggests the Kantian idea of universal rights and hospitality, of justice and ethics, which not only subscribes to the founding postcolonial theories of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, but seeks to “remake the world as a hospitable place, that is, a place *open* to the emergence of peoples that globalization deprives of world” (Cheah 326). In other words, Cheah’s alternative notion of world literature brings all the colonized, oppressed, and marginalized subjectivities in the world on a par with the colonizers and world powers. The emphasis on temporalization as a force of worlding is particularly enlightening because there remain so many erased temporalities of the colonized that need to be addressed.

How does Cheah’s radical rethinking of world literature bring out the significance of Taiwanese postcolonial fiction in recent decades, particularly *Taiwan Trilogy*, and the case of Taiwan’s postcoloniality? I maintain that Taiwanese postcolonial fiction, which endeavors to recover Taiwan’s historical memory by delving into colonial trauma, colonial mimicry, identity conflict, decolonization struggle, hybridized culture, and Taiwanese quest for subjectivity, echoes Cheah’s radical notion of world literature. In revolt against the placeless abstractions produced by the spatial circulation of global capitalism, resulting in Taiwan’s invisibility in the international arena, Taiwanese postcolonial fiction emphasizes the temporal dimension of Taiwan as a place. By critically reengaging with the historical memory of Taiwan, Taiwanese postcolonial fiction reworks the past with present-day nationalist concerns while simultaneously attending to inequalities of gender, class, and ethnicity. Taiwan’s geopolitical marginality and incomplete postcolonial project bring into relief the issue of subjectivity in Taiwanese postcolonial fiction, allowing fiction to intervene in the worlding processes by renegotiating with the country’s colonial past. Re-membering is indispensable because historically Taiwan was under six different colonial rules from the Dutch, the Spanish, Koxinga, Qing, the Japanese, to the Kuomintang, with each change of power erasing the previous rule without due process of decolonization.<sup>11</sup> As Shih Shu-ching comments in her interview with Ping-hui Liao, historical and cultural discontinuity results in the Taiwanese identity problem (Liao, “Houzhimin lishi” 161).

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<sup>11</sup> Decolonization may entail the colonizer’s recognition of the sovereignty and subjectivity of the colonized, the smooth transition of power from the colonizer to the colonized, the colonizer’s apology for colonization and discriminatory practices and compensation for those who have served them without receiving the promised pay, and the evaluation on the part of both the colonizer and colonized of the merits and demerits of colonial legacy, etc.

Re-memory of the Japanese period in Taiwanese postcolonial fiction is vital not only to the reconstruction of Taiwan's national history but also to countering the Kuomintang's Chinese consciousness and China's neo-imperialism. Whereas Japan is more of an ally now, China with its military threat and claim on Taiwan remains the greatest hurdle to Taiwan's postcoloniality. Given the major role China now plays in the global capitalist market, it has become a neo-imperial power despite its guise as a victim of Western (particularly the US) imperialism.

Shih's *Taiwan Trilogy* ambitiously reconstructs Taiwan's national history from a post-imperial perspective. By contrapuntally presenting the "overlapping community between metropolitan and formerly colonized societies" (Said 18), it critiques imperial mentality, emphasizes Taiwanese anticolonial resistance, and unravels colonial legacy. Shih re-memembers Taiwan's history by reimagining the Japanese period and portraying a much Japanized eastern Taiwan with its predominantly aboriginal as well as Japanese and Han population in *Dust before the Wind* and a much Japanized Taipei complete with modern institutions in *Living through Three Eras*. Despite the fact that both novels are written in Chinese, the characters speak either Japanese or one of several Austronesian languages in *Dust before the Wind*, while the characters speak either Hoklo Taiwanese or Japanese in *Living through Three Eras*. Such a multilingual, multiracial, and creolized culture cannot be contained by Chineseness or Cultural China, not even the Sinophone. The implicit decolonization from Japan through anticolonial activities and appropriation of colonial legacy in *Dust before the Wind* therefore also constitutes subtle decolonization from China. This is so because, on the one hand, the diverse aboriginal peoples in eastern Taiwan had been autonomous and kept their languages and cultures intact until the Japanese came, which debunks the Qing imperialist and assimilative myth of having the whole Taiwan under its control. On the other hand, Japanese legacy remains omnipresent in Taiwan despite the Kuomintang's negation and repression. The depiction of the 228 uprising in *Living through Three Eras*, an uprising caused mainly by the great gap between the Taiwanese and the Kuomintang government and army, further belies China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan with its portrayal of Taiwanese anticolonial struggle against the Kuomintang implicitly mirroring the present-day Taiwanese refusal to be incorporated by China. Both the nationalist dreams of the Han Taiwanese in *Living through Three Eras* and the aspirations for autonomy on the part of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples in *Dust before the Wind* suggest their insistence on subjectivity. Even in *Walking through Luojin*, the first novel of Shih's *Taiwan Trilogy*, decolonization from the Qing rule is implied in the portrayal of the gap between the Qing officials and the Taiwanese people, with the former's disparagement of the latter

stemming from cultural difference, language barrier, and colonial mentality, even though both to some extent share the Chinese cultural heritage. Shih delineates how, confronted with frequent uprisings caused by the Qing Empire's negligence and incompetence as the ruler of Taiwan, the Han Taiwanese are left with no choice but to maintain social order through inter-ethnic fights and the wealthy locals' political and social power.

Shih presents in *Walking through Luojin* historical memories of the Dutch and Koxinga periods, even though their legacies are not as important and pervasive as those of the Qing, Japanese, and Kuomintang periods. The delineation in her *Trilogy* of Taiwan's continued colonization since the seventeenth century is to emphasize the tensions and negotiations involved in Taiwan's repeated engagement with different colonial powers and their diverse legacies. It is this overdetermined past, together with the aboriginal cultures, that distinguishes Taiwan from China. Japanese colonial legacy stands out because of its immense influence and distinct contrast with that of Qing's and the Kuomintang's. It is remarkable for Shih to cross lines of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in her historical reconstruction of racialized and gendered subjects and to carry gender and class critique in her nationalist re-memory. As a Hoklo, she presents in *Dust before the Wind* a multiculturalist vision of Japanese, aborigines, and Hakka, thereby implicitly critiquing Hoklo-chauvinism, with which Taiwanese nationalism is sometimes charged. Likewise, she implicitly criticizes the Han's oppression of aboriginal peoples in the Qing period in *Walking through Luojin*. Moreover, each novel of Shih's *Taiwan Trilogy* shows her concerns with inequalities of class and gender: the exploitation and abuse of the male transvestite opera performer in *Walking through Luojin*, the subjugation of aboriginal peoples in *Dust before the Wind*, and the exploitation of peasants and female indentured servants in *Living through Three Eras*.

## Conclusion

Whereas Taiwan, on account of its miraculous economic development, became one of the four Asian Tigers as early as the 1970s, it was not until after the end of the martial rule in 1987 that the belatedness of Taiwan's postcoloniality became pronounced, piqued by the rise of China in the 1990s. In *Alternative Modernity*, Ping-hui Liao emphasizes that the Asia-Pacific area had a unique colonial experience, distinct from those in Africa and India, in that although invaded by early and late Western imperialism and capitalism, the Asia-Pacific countries now have more resources in modern technology, cultural and natural scenes, and tourism, and

have made more contributions to natural and social sciences. Liao suggests that postcolonial theory from the perspective of the Asia-Pacific area, especially Taiwan, may shed a new light on global postcoloniality (*Linglei xiandai qing* 274-79). Taiwan's colonial experience has a lot in common with that of the Asia-Pacific area in general, but is also unique in that it was colonized by its neighbors, China and Japan, as well as by European imperial powers. In the seventeenth century, Taiwan served as a base for the Netherlands' trade in Asia, especially with China and Japan, acting as a buffer between China and the European powers from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century. In the first half of the twentieth century, it was a base for the Japanese Empire's south-bound expansion project. Taiwan's important geopolitical location has enabled it to be open to transnational flows and to thrive economically even in the cold war era, hence its hybridized culture.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, constrained by historical circumstances, the people in Taiwan had repeatedly failed in anticolonial struggle until the last two decades, which saw the rise of a full-blown Taiwanese nationalism alongside a vibrant democracy and civil society.

Taiwanese postcolonial fiction in recent decades, as the product and agent of Taiwanese nationalism, at once challenges Sino-centrism, Japan-centrism, and Euro-centrism, and cherishes colonial legacies. More importantly, as Taiwanese postcolonial fiction, particularly Shih's *Trilogy*, reconstructs Taiwanese history and subjectivity by restoring erased collective memories and subjectivities, it contests and debunks not only Kuomintang's Sinocentric ideology but also Chinese neo-imperialism.

When the Sunflower Movement upheld Taiwanese nationalism against Chinese neo-imperial forces on the grounds of defending the Taiwanese way of life, they were in effect defending Taiwanese democracy, sovereignty, and cultural identity against China—the values and identity that Taiwanese anticolonial intellectuals in the Japanese period also cherished and for which the Taiwanese people stood up against the Kuomintang in the 228 uprising.<sup>13</sup> Taiwan's postcoloniality is a significant intervention in the worlding processes when China, as the second

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<sup>12</sup> Ma Ying-jeou's pro-China policy has generally been seen as hurting Taiwan's economy. See also footnote 1. As China stopped being the "world's factory" in 2011, it has gradually reduced benefits to Taiwanese companies, while the business competition between Taiwan and China has been growing. Especially since the United States-China trade war began in 2018, a good number of Taiwanese companies have been pulling out of China.

<sup>13</sup> In a similar light, one may see the Hong Kong people's increasing dissatisfaction with "One Country, Two Systems" and continued struggle for real democracy and self-rule since the Umbrella Movement in 2014. The protests against a controversial extradition bill in 2019 have evolved into a series of huge demonstrations calling for more political freedom.

greatest economy in the world, seeks not only to realize its claim on Taiwan, but to become a new empire, virtually controlling the politics of many areas and countries, especially East and Southeast Asia. Postcoloniality in the world, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, is jeopardized by Chinese imperialistic expansionism manifested by its recent military aggression in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. On the other hand, postcoloniality in the world and particularly East and Southeast Asia cannot be realized unless Taiwan attains *de jure* postcoloniality, which it deserves. Support from the international community for Taiwanese nationalism and postcoloniality is needed to thwart China's imperialistic aggression and promote justice and world peace.

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