IMPERIAL JAPAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN ASIA, 1895–1945

edited by Li Narangoa and Robert Cribb

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IMPERIAL JAPAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN ASIA, 1895–1945

Nationalism was a powerful force in Asia during the era of Japanese imperial expansion (1895–1945). Asia's peoples sought freedom from the Western and Chinese empires which dominated the continent, while challenging each other over borders and systems of government.

From the earliest Japanese intrusions on the mainland in 1895 until final defeat in 1945, Japanese authorities had to grapple with the national identities of the people they sought to dominate. This book traces Japan's impact on these national identities, from its clumsy intervention in Siberia, through its ambitious attempts to create the new state of Manchukuo on the Asian mainland and to reshape the politics of the Chinese and Mongols, to its brief but dramatic foray into Southeast Asia. The book compares the perspective of societies such as India and Tibet, which observed Japan from a distance, with the experience of societies which experienced Japanese intervention at close hand.

The authors highlight the contradictions in Japanese policy, which sometimes encouraged other Asian nationalist movements, sometimes suppressed or undermined them, and sometimes sought to create new identities out of little more than romantic imagination. This book provides a valuable resource for students of East Asia.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Transformation of Taiwanese Attitudes toward Japan in the Post-colonial Period

HUANG CHIH-HUEI

THE PROBLEM

Taiwan was the first colonial territory acquired by Japan as a result of war with the Qing Empire (1895); it was also a territory delivered from Japanese colonial rule (in 1945) as a consequence of another war. Among the territories colonized by Japan in Asia and Oceania, Taiwan's colonial period lasted the longest, even though the 50-year span is but a short period compared with the duration of European colonialism in other parts of the world. Unlike the situations in many former colonies, however, the Taiwanese people retained an amiable attitude toward Japan after the end of colonial rule. This attitude has been frequently mentioned in travel accounts and guidebooks written by Japanese who have visited Taiwan since the war.[1] In the few scholarly writings dealing with Japanese colonial rule, this attitude has often been held in contrast with post-colonial Korean sentiments toward the Japanese, although both Taiwan and Korea have made great efforts in decolonization with regard to education policies and social institutions.[2] These comparisons tend to search for an explanation of this difference of attitudes toward Japan in the dissimilar policies and techniques of rule applied during the colonial period. To understand this phenomenon fully, however, it is necessary to examine the drastic transformation of cultural context in Taiwan in the wake of the regime transition after the end of colonial rule, particularly the polarization of Taiwanese opinions about Japan before and after the 28th February Incident of 1947, and the symbolic role played by Japan in that event.

The term '28th February Incident' actually refers to a period of several weeks in which the most extensive rebellion and severe repression in Taiwan's post-war history took place. Recollections and testimonies of this repression began to be published only after martial law, which had been imposed in 1949, was lifted in 1987. This chapter examines the process of formation and transformation of Taiwanese attitudes toward Japan after the imperial era in the light of these traumatic events.

Recent historical and anthropological research has emphasised the tensions of empire, and has shown how colonialism was shaped in struggles, and how imperial projects were made possible and vulnerable at the same time.[3] However, if the examination of the effects of these imperial projects can be extended to post-colonial times, a more complete picture might be obtained. As an extremely complex socio-psychological mechanism, the so-called discursive resistance by the colonial subjects may not end with the departure of alien rulers from the colony.[4] Instead, as will be shown below, I find that the resistance by the ruled was full of resilience and subjectivity, characterized, among other things, by a readiness to treasure and use the cultural legacy left by a former colonizer as a weapon against oppression by a successor colonial power. The events analysed in this chapter strongly suggest that Taiwanese resistance to successor colonialism (that imposed by the Kuomintang regime) was the primary cause of their seemingly paradoxical pro-Japan attitude.[5] By way of contrast, it must be said that, with the cessation of colonial rule, Japan itself has shown mostly indifference, helplessness and a lack of remorse toward its former colony. All this is an indication of the weakness of Japanese culture in its encounters with other peoples when the pomp and circumstance of imperialism was over.

THE DRAMA OF 'FIRST ENCOUNTER': WELCOMING THE ARRIVAL OF NATIONAL ARMY

The ethnic composition of postwar Taiwan is rather complicated. The two main ethnic categories are Han Chinese and indigenous Austronesians, often called aborigines. The relationship of the Austronesians with the Japanese and with the much larger Han Chinese community raises a separate set of issues and will not be dealt with here. This chapter, rather, will limit its scope to the Han people. Although Han immigration to the islands dated largely from the seventeenth century and after, a major distinction exists within the Han community between

the so-called 'natives' (*Bensheng-ren*)—the majority of the Han population – who began to migrate to Taiwan about 400 years ago and thus lived for 50 years under Japanese colonial rule, and the 'mainlanders' (*Waisheng-ren*) who came from mainland China after the war, especially at the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the retreat of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang forces to the island. The terms for these two categories originated in the post-war social context, and were a Chinese nomenclature peculiar to Taiwan. Since the two ethnic categories were distinguished after the war, the ethnic and political conflicts between them have persisted to the present.

In the following discussion, I use the term 'Taiwanese' when referring to the 'natives' lest they be confused with the Austronesian aborigines; 'Taiwanese' is also the term they use for themselves, and has been a common usage from the beginning of Japanese rule. The mainlanders, who began to be called *Waisheng-ren* after their arrival in Taiwan, on the other hand, tend to use 'Chinese' in their self-identification; but in order to separate them from the people of the People's Republic of China, I will retain the term 'mainlanders' for them. Since the latter were citizens of a nation at war with Japan and its former colonial subjects, their attitudes toward Japan were rather different from those of the Taiwanese. But when the war was over and the two ethnic groups came into contact, they were not aware of and did not anticipate the consequences of that difference.

Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945. From press reports and official documents of the time, it is clear that immediately after the Emperor's concession of defeat, the colonial administration in Taiwan was brought to a complete stop. From then on, the colonial government devoted all its efforts to such matters as the disposal of government dossiers and the repatriation of Japanese citizens. Society as a whole did not suffer any disturbance, and the last report from the Office of the Governor (Taiwan Tōchi Shūmatsu Hōkokusho) stated that during this period of time Taiwan was generally peaceful, except for a few cases of revenge against the Japanese. The expressions on the faces of the Taiwanese people were said to be rather cheerful.[6] This political vacuum lasted for 70 days until the establishment of the Administrative Commander's Office by the new regime from the mainland on 24 October. During this time, no police or judicial system was in existence, while the Taiwanese took over all kinds of public utilities. Japanese supervisors and senior officials were no longer at their posts, but electricity and water supplies remained normal and the postal service, telephone, highway and railroad transportation all operated smoothly. Consumer prices were stable and

the economy showed no sign of decline. All in all, this was a surprising period of high autonomy.

On the other hand, the gentry from all over Taiwan were setting up 'Committees for Welcoming the Nationalist Government', printing flags of the Republic of China for the occasion. The populace was taught to sing the national anthem, songs for welcoming the national army were written, celebratory arches were erected, parties were held and parades were arranged. Everywhere there were banners with the slogan, 'Celebrating our return to the mother country's bosom.'

Indeed, at that time the Taiwanese people had limitless expectations of the mother country, and the prospect of returning to its bosom gave them incomparable joy. Although the Taiwanese had been enlisted into the Japanese army during the final stage of the war (1944), they had not been sent to battlefields in China because Japan still had some suspicion about their loyalties. Instead, most of them were dispatched to the Pacific and Southeast Asia, where they served in transportation, supply and maintenance units rather than front-line combat. Thus, most of the Taiwanese soldiers in the Japanese army had had no experience of fighting with Chinese. In the minds of the common people, the Chinese army had to be much stronger than the Japanese one, since it had defeated the Japanese and was – with the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union – one of the four acknowledged great powers of the world. Returning to the mother country's bosom not only meant freedom from the day-to-day reality of colonial restriction but also a transformation of status. The Taiwanese ceased to be second-class citizens (colonial subjects) of a defeated nation and became the citizens of a victorious Great Power. This double advancement in personal identity certainly brought them great happiness.

While they were waiting in hopeful anticipation, the arrival of the replacement army was postponed again and again. On 16 October, the day the national army was scheduled to land at the harbour of Keelung, an excited crowd gathered on the pier without catching any sight of the Chinese forces. When they were told that it would not arrive until the next day, some of them even stayed on the pier overnight. On the 17th, about 12,000 soldiers and 2,000 officers from the national government's 70th Army finally entered the port aboard more than 30 American-made battleships. Amid a sea of waving flags and cheering voices, the army marched into the city. They were welcome by tens of thousands of people; even the soldiers themselves were surprised and moved by such enthusiasm.[7]

But the real surprise was for the Taiwanese public, for the army they saw was a group of men wearing tattered clothes and grass sandals and staggering in their steps. Each of the soldiers carried a broken umbrella and a wok on his back; some even toted bundles with various kinds of woks and bags of rice on poles, as if moving their entire possessions. The soldiers carried their most important equipment – their guns – in disarray, with the muzzles sometimes upward, sometimes downward. This appearance was in great contrast to the Japanese soldiers who brought up the rear of the line, for these were full of spirit, neat and clean, and well disciplined. Taiwanese rationalized their surprise, telling each other that the umbrellas actually could serve as parachutes, or were some sort of shoulder guns, and speculating that the Chinese troops had other weapons hidden inside the leggings. All of those who had witnessed this reception were later, in their recollections made during the 1990s, to express their utter disappointment with this 'first encounter'; people who had not been present at the scene also had a vivid memory of it as the farcical event was widely broadcast by mouth.

The replacement army not only entered larger cities like Keelung and Taipei, but also reached other parts of Taiwan. In remote Taitung, for instance, a former Japanese soldier (veteran) went out to welcome the National Army, and fifty years afterward he had this vivid recollection:

> I didn't expect that the soldiers from the mother country were all like 'beaten soldiers'. They were in rags, dispirited and shuffling in disoriented steps. Some even carried woks, basins, and shoes on their shoulders; I couldn't but tell myself at the time that I could single-handedly fight against ten of such soldiers. Some younger schoolmates with me felt very shameful for what they saw, and were rather disappointed with the 'mother country'.[8]

As a matter of fact, the 70th Army had originally not been designated to take over Taiwan; rather, according to the memoirs of some of the officers involved in the event, the better-disciplined 18th Army had been allocated the task. As it turned out, however, the ship carrying the 18th Army's commander-in-chief encountered a storm not long after its departure and had to return to the mainland; in consequence, the 70th Army were dispatched in short order. These troops were nicknamed 'an army of beggars' on the mainland, because they were from the poverty-stricken inland and their equipment was the worst

in the Chinese army. 'Therefore, they gave the Taiwanese people a quite negative impression; such was the unkindness of history, and it was due to the government's negligence.'[9]

POLARIZED EVALUATION OF JAPANESE EDUCATION: SLAVES VS. WORLD CITIZENS

The drastic shift in Taiwanese attitudes toward the mother country, from high expectation to dismal disappointment, began with the landing of the troops, and was accelerated by a series of policies carried out by the Administrative Commander's Office – the centre of political power in Taiwan – after its inauguration on 25 October.

Apart from military units, the task force which came to take over Taiwan also included several thousand civilians who had been enlisted on the mainland. These comprised three major categories: policemen, administrators and teachers. The first two groups were in charge of registering and appropriating the properties (including material and facilities) left by the Japanese; the teachers were given the duty of propagating Mandarin in schools, and of decolonizing the Japanese legacy in the domain of cultural policy. In all of this process, the Taiwanese had plenty of opportunities to gain a better understanding of the people from the mother country.

First, the troops were without any discipline; they would fire into the air just to scare people, even for trifling matters such as a quarrel between a couple. On one occasion, a group of soldiers opened fire on a train and forced it to stop, so that they could board the train and reach their destination in time. Such actions were quite a surprise to people who had been accustomed to the strict discipline of Japanese troops, and the outrageous events were commented on by society at large. By contrast, such behaviour was nothing unusual on the mainland, which had experienced continual civil war since the 1910s as well as the eight years of fighting against Japan.

Taiwanese were also dumbfounded by the corruption of the officials who came to take over Japanese properties. They often made changes in the property list and put valuable things into their own pockets. Corruption was rampant in the taking over of enterprises and institutions. In his memoirs Chung Yee-ren offers this example: when the former Japanese naval fuel plant, with which he was familiar, was taken over, it was immediately shut down and the workers

driven out; the equipment and machinery were sold as scrap iron so that the officials could profiteer from it.[10] The Administrative Commander frequently reprimanded his officials for this kind of conduct after the establishment of the new government. In his admonitions, such terms as 'extortion' and 'bribery' often appeared; these were strange new words in Taiwan, causing people to wonder what they meant.

Educated people suffered most from the change of language. Japanese was forbidden and the Peking dialect of Chinese (Mandarin) was declared the 'national language'. Although this language was similar in linguistic structure to the southern Fukien dialect used in Taiwan, it was difficult for the Taiwanese to comprehend phonetically. Schoolteachers were required to begin teaching in the new language immediately, even though they were still learning it themselves. Even teachers from the mainland often did not speak fluent Mandarin because they hailed from other parts of China. Taiwanese intellectuals were not opposed to learning the mother country's language; in fact, when place names and street names were changed from those designated by the Japanese to new ones after localities on the mainland, they did not voice any objection. On the other hand, they were shocked and dismayed when in October 1946 the new government prohibited the use of Japanese. At that time there were two newspapers and more than a dozen magazines in Taiwan. After the departure of the Japanese, these publications were printed in two languages: Japanese for the Taiwanese writers and readers, and Chinese for those from the mainland. The prohibition provoked extensive discussions in the press, among which the most representative was the opinion expressed by the critic and writer Wu Zhuoliu. Wu had been a prominent figure during the Japanese period fighting against colonial rule from the stance of Chinese nationalism; he was an intellectual with high expectations for the mother country. In the piece he wrote:

> Why is it that Japanese is a bad thing? It is because it has been armoured. But once the armour is removed and it reverts to its original state, then Japanese is not bad at all. In this disarmed condition, it can serve the positive function of cultural transmission because many cultural works of the world have been translated into Japanese. The prohibition of Japanese has caused some animosity between Taiwanese and mainlanders. In such circumstances, rational debates are useless. From the cultural perspective, could it be true that the existence of Japanese would hinder the spread of Chinese culture? This must be judged in fairer terms. ... A

> culture expressed in Japanese is not necessarily a Japanese culture. A lot of information about cultures of the world has been translated into Japanese.[11]

The changed status of the Japanese language was of course connected with the changed status of Japan itself; more intriguingly, it was also connected with the status of the Taiwanese people. Before actually taking over Taiwan, the national government in Chungking had set up an agenda, the first item of which proclaimed: 'The cultural policy after taking over Taiwan should be the strengthening of national consciousness and the eradication of the slave mentality.' This was the first appearance of the phrase 'slave mentality'; later on the term was frequently used in the new government's propaganda. For instance, an editorial in the government newspaper titled 'Cleansing Mental Poisons' declared:

> Taiwan has gone through the oppressive rule by Japanese imperialism. Japan has spread all kinds of cultural and mental poisons to intoxicate and lure the Taiwanese people, attempting to alienate them from the mother country and achieve the goals of 'Japanization' and 'transforming them into imperial subjects'. It is our urgent task to clean up these mental poisons which Japan has inflicted on Taiwan for fifty years.

Another local newspaper retorted, in an editorial entitled 'Taiwan has not been enslaved', by saying: 'Although the Taiwanese have been economically exploited by the Japanese, they have never lived the lives of slaves and been educated to be slaves. Only after the recovery have we begun to hear the term "enslavement".'[12] From the arrival of the national government through to 1947, the debate on 'enslavement' between Taiwanese and Chinese intellectuals dragged on. Wu Zhuoliu commented:

> The statement that 'Taiwanese have been enslaved through education' is tantamount to the following in political terms: since you have an enslaved mentality, you are spiritually damaged citizens; therefore, you are not to be treated on a par with people of the mother country, and you deserve to be ruled at this time. The endless discussion on 'enslavement education' resulted in the resentment of the Taiwanese. They thought that they were disgraced. And this led to the revulsion against the mainlander. The Taiwanese thought the mainlanders were pigs, doing nothing but eating and sleeping.[13]

Other metaphors were that the Japanese were dogs and the Taiwanese were oxen. Dogs might be fierce and could bark, but they were loyal. Pigs were lazy and greedy (corrupt). Oxen were big and docile; they did work for their masters.[14] All these metaphors indicate how people evaluated the strained ethnic relations after the war, although the Japanese were eagerly waiting to go back to Japan, and there is no indication that they played any role in this debate on 'enslavement education'.

THE SCAPEGOAT: JAPAN'S ROLE IN THE 28TH FEBRUARY INCIDENT

The so-called 28th February incident arose as a simple and trivial event in which the police confiscated some contraband cigarettes; it escalated into the most extensive rebellion and violent suppression in the post-war history of Taiwan. A woman vendor selling illicit cigarettes was beaten and robbed by a bad-mannered mainlander policeman. The woman passed out and fell to the ground; an agitated crowd of passers-by then surrounded the policeman, who responded by opening fire as a warning. In the confusion, a bystander was shot dead. These events happened on 27 February 1947 in a small corner of the city of Taipei; in itself the incident was not all too serious, but because of the number of onlookers news of the event spread throughout the whole city on the grapevine. On the next day, crowds began to gather in front of the main government offices, demanding that the government step forward and resolve the problem, and that the mainlander policeman apologize. A protesting crowd also gathered on the plaza in front of the Administrative Commander's Office (the same building which had been the Governor's office during the colonial period). They were utterly unprepared when the guards opened fire with their machine guns without any warning, killing six youths and causing the protesters to scatter. People then began to set fire to mainlanders' shops and offices in revenge. On the streets, they would ask any mainlander-looking person whether he spoke Japanese, and if not they would beat him up.[15]

In response to the seriousness of the disturbances, the government declared martial law that afternoon. Stores and offices were closed down, violent conflicts gradually subsided; but the mainlanders did not feel the danger was over. People started to hold meetings and give speeches on their own initiative, and within the space of three or four days, 'Task Force Committees for the 28th February

Incident' were established in every major city. Members of the committees included merchants, workers and other urban dwellers, with the gentry and students in the leading roles. The committees' chief concern, however, was not merely the matter of the impounding of contraband cigarettes but, more broadly, a series of demands for political, social and economic reforms. Even though there were no direct links between the committees in the various cities, the specifics of their demands for reform were very similar. For instance, the committee in Taipei proposed thirty-two items on its agenda for reform, the first being that the heads of some important government departments and at least half of the members of the Legal Affairs Council should be Taiwanese. They also demanded that Taiwanese should manage state-owned enterprises. These demands were a reaction to the extreme imbalance of ethnic representation in the ruling echelon within the Kuomintang government. The committee also demanded that county chiefs and mayors be elected, and that freedom of expression, of publication and of assembly be guaranteed. In some places, the committees asked for improvement in the quality of school education. All these demands arose from the dissatisfaction felt by Taiwanese under mainlander rule. The various committees were quickly organized and conducted in a well-ordered manner; this was a surprise for the mainlanders, to whom the goings-on appeared to be some sort of pre-meditated large-scale rebellion. As for their demands, the Taiwanese behaved 'as if they want to overthrow the government and take over political power'.[16]

After the incident, the Commander Chen Yee stepped forward to assuage the public anger, telling the people that their demands would be met; secretly, however, he was requesting that Chiang Kai-shek on the mainland send over troops. Chiang immediately dispatched a campaign force, which landed on Taiwan on 10 March and was afterward stationed in various cities. Unaware of this deception, people continued to hold public meetings discussing the matter of reform. These meetings became the focus of the government suppression of the Taiwanese movement. All the subsequent large-scale massacres occurred at the scenes of public meetings, where the army fired indiscriminately on participants. Meanwhile, security and police personnel were everywhere arresting celebrities and students in their homes. Anyone who had criticized the government, whether they had participated in any committee or not, was subject to arrest and immediate execution without trial. The number of deaths during the entire incident remains unknown up to this day; many estimates place the figure somewhere between 10,000 and 50,000. All those killed belonged to the urban elite;

most of them were household heads or eldest sons of the family, thus leaving behind orphans, widows, bereft mothers and brothers, whose resentments were especially deep felt.

The army's involvement brought a quick end to the movement. From the reports to Chiang Kai-shek written by high-level inspecting officials sent by the central government, we can gain a glimpse of the suppressors' view of the event. Yang Liang-kong, the Inspecting Envoy Extraordinary, identified ten major causes of the incident. First, he stated, the Taiwanese people were misguided in their ideas about the mother country. His second reason was that the Japanese had left a poisonous legacy on the island. Then he cited other factors such as price increases, unemployment, mistakes in the new government's policies, and corruption. As for the 'poisonous legacy of the Japanese', he itemized the following: the worship of Japan by the Taiwanese; their gratitude toward Japan for small favours; the compulsory education enforced by the Japanese which had resulted in 'the total Japanization of the Taiwanese people'; and incitement by Japanese who had stayed on in Taiwan after the war. He also identified nine categories of participants in the incident: hooligans; returned overseas Taiwanese; politicians with hidden agendas; the Communist Party; young students; the Three-People's-Principle Youth Corps; the aboriginal tribes; members of the Royal Subjects Patriotic Society; and remaining Japanese. By 'returned overseas Taiwanese' he meant former Taiwanese soldiers who had been enlisted by the Japanese army and had fought in overseas battles. The Royal Subjects Patriotic Society had been established during the final stage of Japanese rule in response to military mobilization. The remaining Japanese were the few who were irreplaceable because of their skills and hence had been retained by the new government. They numbered only about nine hundred; the remaining 330,000 resident Japanese in Taiwan at the war's end had been sent back to Japan within one year.[17]

Later, Pai Chung-shi, the Secretary of the Defence Department, was sent to Taiwan to 'solace' the people. In a nation-wide (including the mainland) broadcast, he said:

> This incident is the result of the fifty-one-year rule of Taiwanese people by Japan, for the distorted and corruptive education enforced by the Japanese has enfeebled and divided the people, and has misguided them with a negative image of the Chinese government, people, and army. All this has caused the Taiwanese people to have contempt for the people and

> army of the mother country; this is the ultimate cause of the riots. ... As to the central government's intention regarding the administration of Taiwan from now on ... in the area of education, the national language must be promoted, the mother country's traditional ethics and culture should be promulgated, and the poison left by Japanese education must be cleaned up completely.[18]

From these two high-level officials' statements, it is clear that they both attributed the incident to Japanese influences, even suspecting that some Japanese were actually involved. In fact, there is no historical document indicating the participation of any Japanese. The memoirs of a Taiwanese intellectual who was regarded as one of the principal instigators also assert that no Japanese could have possibly played any role in the event. He puts it this way:

> I was by and large familiar with the condition of the Japanese remaining in Taiwan after the war. Many of them couldn't even have enough food, some had to sell their clothes; the better off, like the principal and the curriculum director of the Chia-yi Middle School had to make a living by riding cycle-rickshaw. Obviously they were at the end of their tethers; there is no way that they could have any influence upon the Taiwanese' behavior in the 28th February incident.[19]

In a manner of speaking, nonetheless, Japan was one of the major actors in the incident. The symbolic role it played was as a scapegoat used by the Kuomintang to explain away the dissatisfaction felt and expressed by the Taiwanese. In other words, in the eyes of the mainlanders, the Taiwanese, no matter how they expressed their actual attitudes, were creatures of Japan.

FORMS OF RESISTANCE: THE COMPARATIVE POLITICS OF THE COLONIZED

Because of the suddenness and seriousness of the incident, reporters kept accounts of it from the mainland and from foreigners resident in Taiwan at the time. Among the Taiwanese themselves, however, almost no one was able to express an opinion about the event in the media, owing to the heightened control on public expression after the suppression. Only a few Taiwanese who had been doing business on the mainland and who returned to Taiwan after the event had the chance to express their views in the mainland media. One of them main-

tained: 'Although the tragic incident of 28th February was caused by fortuitous factors, its inevitability had been determined by many factors long ago.' According to this businessman's analysis, these factors include the following:

> First, the taking over by the new government was merely the appropriation of the privileges enjoyed by Japanese rulers, without also assuming the duties served by Japanese rulers. Second, the question of land ownership. The Japanese had dispossessed the Taiwanese of much of their land. The government did not give this nationalized land back to the people; it just took it over, thus becoming the people's enemy in place of the Japanese. The people's hatred of the Japanese was transmuted into that of the Administrative Commander's Office. With regard to the policemen arresting vendors, when the armed policemen confiscated the contraband cigarettes, they took possession of them for themselves, which was something the Japanese police would have never done.[20]

Another Taiwanese stated agitatedly:

> It's a slur to say that this tragic event was caused by Japanphilia and xenophobia on the part of Taiwanese. We were at first very grateful to return to the bosom of the mother country, and it was because we thought with this we would be truly liberated and regain real freedom. But what had previously happened after more than one year's time was a total disappointment for us, resulting in this tragic event. ... The Administrative Commander's Office of today is just a simulation of Japan's Colonial Governor's Office; it is a completely authoritarian ruling apparatus, without paying any attention to people's concerns. Its incompetence and corruption in administration have even surpassed those of Japanese imperial rulers. I am not saying this in praise of Japan's rule, but we may as well make some comparisons: at the end of the war, the price of rice was 30 dollars per catty; afterward, consumer prices began to rise, factories were shut down, and now the price of rice has jumped from 30 to 1,400 dollars per catty. Taiwan has been a rice-producing area; its rice has been exported after feeding its own population. But why after only one year's rule [by the new government] is there not enough for ourselves?[21]

From the above statements, we can see that the Taiwanese had a completely different interpretation of the incident from the central government. But there are some subtle similarities too; namely, they considered the government from

the mainland to be just a substitute for Japanese colonial rulers, only worse than the previous regime. They objected to the government seeing them as pro-Japan and protested that the new authority was actually the old Japanese colonialism in disguise. The mainlanders reminded the Taiwanese of Japanese dictatorship, and this led them toward rebellion. In their comparisons, the earlier colonizers turned out to be a better set.

Such comparisons not only showed up in the discourses by Taiwanese at the time, but also appeared in their recollections fifty years after the event. After the 28th February incident, public opinion in Taiwan was everywhere suppressed. Two years later, in 1949, the Nationalist government was defeated on the mainland and, with an army of 600,000 men and one million civilians, it escaped to Taiwan. Under these circumstances, Taiwan's economic burden was increased and the political regime in Taiwan had to be strengthened. Therefore, the Kuomintang government declared martial law and postponed most elections for the national assembly. In the sphere of education, the campaign to eradicate Japanese mental poisons was continued and anti-communism was propagandized. Over 10,000 political prisoners were put in jail for being 'communist fellow-travellers' during the 1950s. For several decades afterwards, dissidents were often charged with the crime of 'sedition' and imprisoned.

Yang Kuei was one of them. The Japanese had imprisoned this well-known novelist for anti-colonial activities. He was famous for the following statement: 'I was arrested thirteen times for anti-government activities during the Japanese era; all together, I stayed in prison for just one month. During the Kuomintang period, I was arrested just once, but for this I was shut up for thirteen years.' The Kuomintang's suppression of free thought and expression, he said, was worse than that under foreign rule. This comparison, although never aired publicly, remained in people's minds. People avoided any mention of the 28th February incident. In school it was deliberately covered up, so that the generations educated after the war were totally ignorant of what had happened.[22]

Only after the mid-1980s, with the decline of the Chiang regime and the lifting of martial law in 1987, did this event return to public discourse after an absence of almost forty years. The survivors of those killed during and after the incident initiated this re-examination. Ruan Meizhu's father was the manager of a newspaper when the event occurred; after his arrest all trace of him disappeared. The government offered no explanation, and there was no way of knowing if he was alive or dead. Ruan began to make inquiries with family

members of other victims, and from their recollections she tried to get an accurate picture of what had actually happened at the time. She collected these testimonies into a book, which became an immediate best seller.[23] In the meantime, historians also started to track down historical documents; since the official archives were still closed, many researchers had to resort to oral history as a means of investigation. After 1990, a great deal of oral-historical data on the 28th February incident was published. These materials, gathered 40 years after the event, not only contain details of the incident itself but also touch upon the sorrow of losing loved ones (mostly in women's recollections, and very intimate in these cases), the discrimination suffered in daily life (for family members of the traitors) and the long-lasting fear of politics.

The contents of these memoirs show that, both for the participants in the incident and for their families, Japan still served as a point of reference, as a 'backdrop', for their evaluation of the current regime and as a weapon of resistance against that regime. One member of the elite who had worked in a local government stated:

> After the war I have worked in the fishermen's association and run a truck company; all my jobs were in the non-governmental sector because I hated the Kuomintang and didn't want to have anything to do with its institutions. Although the Japanese discriminated against the Taiwanese, Japan after all was a country under the rule of law and the distinction between public and private was clear-cut; under these circumstances, Taiwanese with qualifications could get promoted, even if only slowly. On the other hand, the Japanese were narrow-minded and they often tried to exclude 'non-Japanese'. The Nationalist government was too Han-ethnocentric; under its ruling Taiwan once again reverted to a state of authoritarianism.[24]

The following statement has a similar import:

> During the Japanese era people were more law-abiding and well-disciplined, unlike the dissipated people of today. During World War II, the youths of Taiwan had to speak Japanese, sing Japanese military songs and the national anthem, even if they didn't want to. It is as if history had played tricks with the Taiwanese; when the Nationalist government came to Taiwan, the Taiwanese had to 'learn to be like others' as they had done fifty years previously.[25]

In the circumstances, some Taiwanese resolved not to learn and speak Pekingese. One person reported the following episode: 'Once I was on a train and speaking in Japanese, then a mainlander came over and asked me why I was speaking in Japanese. How strange. Japanese was not allowed. How about English? When we were coming down from the train, the man even gave me a push; I almost got into a fight with him.'[26] In this case, the man was not using the Taiwanese dialect as a weapon against Pekingese; he was using the language of the former colonizer, which he regarded as a world language like English. This indicates not that the Taiwanese wanted to be Japanese again but that they did want to use a foreign language as a means of resistance.

CONCLUSION: REALITY AND ILLUSION REGARDING THE 'MOTHER COUNTRY'

For the past one hundred years the Taiwanese people have been dragged into the seesaw game of political competition between Japan and China. As Ruan Meizhu expresses it: 'On one side there was the Japanese colonial ruler, on the other was the beloved mother country. Facing this double-edged discrimination, we were mired in a deep identity crisis.'[27]

Indeed, after the 28th February incident the Taiwanese were in a crisis of identity. Members of the local elite had to go abroad for fear of being imprisoned.[28] There, they searched for their identity. Some became friends with the communists on the mainland; others migrated to Japan (later to the United States) and became involved in the movement for Taiwanese independence. Left-wing or right-wing, both of these tendencies were the results of the 28th February incident: on one side praise for the communist mother country, on the other a search for a new independent nation.

In 1995, the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party used the phrase 'ending of war' instead of 'recovery' in the celebration of the end of Japanese rule on 25 October. It was a refutation of the orthodoxy view that 50 years earlier China had recovered Taiwan. The president, Lee Teng-hui (a Taiwanese, the first to be elected president after the war) also participated in the celebration. These developments were attacked by the PRC government as a recurrence of the colonial-era 'Become Loyal Subject' movement and Lee's statement that 'I had been a Japanese until I was 22 years old' was cited as a proof that he was a slave of Japan.[29]

During the early period after the war, the mainlanders saw in the Taiwanese a reflection of Japan; on the other hand, the Taiwanese saw the mainlanders as the reflection of Japanese colonialism. But through the dynamics of the comparative politics of the colonized, the Taiwanese attitude toward Japan began to undergo a profound transformation from nationalist aversion to post-colonial nostalgia. Japan itself, however, had nothing to do with this process. Even though it was being used as a scapegoat in post-war politics in Taiwan, Japan was totally evasive on the issue; and when its former colonial subjects were being slaughtered, Japan was indifferent in its response. Less than two years after the end of the imperial era, Japan had so thoroughly shed its imperial mantle that it showed not the slightest interest in the fate of its subjects of 50 years.

NOTES

1 See, for instance, R. Shiba, *Taiwan Kikō* [On a journey to Taiwan] (Tokyo: Asahi-shinbunsha, 1994); Daiyamondosha, *Chikyū no Arukikata: Taiwan* [Knocking about in the Earth: Taiwan] (Tokyo: Daiyamondosha, 1997).

2 Mark R. Peattie, *Shokuminchi: Teikoku Gojunen no Kōbō* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1996); E. P. Tsurumi, 'Colonial Education in Korea and Taiwan', in Ramon H. Myers and Mark R. Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895–1945.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

3 Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

4 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

5 During the early years of Japan's rule of Taiwan, mainland China was under the reign of the Qing Empire and the Kuomintang was not yet in existence. After the Kuomintang established the Republic, it showed no eagerness to recover Taiwan. As for the Taiwanese, the idea of the fatherland which served as the rallying symbol for their resistance to Japanese colonial rule had no particular association with the Kuomintang. Nevertheless, when the war ended in 1945, the Kuomintang regime 'reclaimed' the island. Since Japan did not actually cede sovereignty over Taiwan to the Kuomintang in any definite manner, there is some controversy over Taiwan's status in international law, quite apart from its place in the ROC–PRC dispute.

6 Taiwan Governor-General's Office (ed.), *Taiwan tōchi shūmatsu hōkokusho* [Report on remaining affairs at the end of the rule], unpublished manuscript (Taipei: Taiwan Governor-General's Office, 1945). With regard to the circumstances of the rulers right after the end of the war, see Huang Chao-tang, *Taiwan sōtokufu* [Taiwan Governor's Office] (Tokyo: Kyōikushya, 1986).

7 Institute of Modern History (ed.), *Koushulishi 4: Ererba shijian zhuanhao* [Oral history 4: Special issue on the February 28th Incident] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1993), p. 101.

8 Cai Hui-yu (ed.), *Zouguo lian ge shidai de ren* [Men across two generations – Japanese soldiers from Taiwan] (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1997), p. 464.

9 Institute of Modern History (ed.), *Koushulishi 4: Ererba shijian zhuanhao* [Oral history 4: Special issue on the February 28th Incident] (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1993), p. 101.

10 Zhong Yiren, *Xin Suan Liushi'nen* [The bitter sixty years] (Taipei: Free Times Publishing Company, 1988).

11 Wu Zhuoliu, *Nichibun haishi ni taisuru kanken* [An opinion on the abolition of the Japanese, Xinxin: 7] (1946), p. 12. In Wu Zhuoliu, *Yoakemae no Taiwan* [Taiwan before dawn] (Tokyo: Shakaishisōsha, 1972), pp. 286–287.

12 Huang Yingzher, *Sengō shoki Taiwan ni okeru bunka saikōchiku (1945–47)* [A Reconstruction of Taiwanese Culture during the Early Post-war Period (1945–47)], *Ajia no rekishi to bunka* [The History and Culture of Asia] (Kyoto: Kyuko Shoin, 1997), pp. 171–195.

13 Wu Zhuoliu, *Yoakemae no Taiwan* [Taiwan before dawn] (Tokyo: Shakaishisōsha, 1972), pp. 244–266.

14 Huang Wenxiung, Zhu gou niu – *Zhonguo shazhu, Riben gou, Taiwan niu* [Pigs, dogs, oxen – Chinese chauvinist pigs, Japanese dogs, Taiwanese oxen] (Taipei: Qianwei, 1997).

15 Shi Ming *Taiwanren sibai'nen shi* [Four hundred years of the history of the Taiwanese] (Taipei: Caogenwenhua, 1998), also in various memoirs of the 1990s.

16 Lin Mushun (ed.), *Taiwan er yue geming* [The February revolution of Taiwan] (Taipei: Qianwei, 1990), p. 170.

17 Chen Fanming (ed.), *Essays on the February 28th Incident of 1947* (Irvine: Taiwan Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 196–206.

18 Lin Mushun (ed.), *Taiwan er yue geming*, pp. 170–171.

19 Institute of Modern History (ed.), *Koushulishi 4*, p. 89.

20 Abstracted from Chen Fanming (ed.), *Taiwan zhanhoushi ziliaoxuan – Ererba shijian zhuanji* [Selected historical material on post-war Taiwan – A special collection on the February 28th Incident] (Taipei: Memorial Peace Society for the February 28th Incident, 1991), pp. 258–268.

21 *Ibid.* A catty equals 0.6 kg.

22 To take myself as an example, I am of the generation born after the war, my relatives were not victims of the 28th February Incident, and I only became aware of the event when I was in college in the 1980s. When I asked my parents about it, they responded that they knew about this but did not tell it to the children because of the risk. This attitude is quite common among those born after the war.

23 Ruan Meizhu, *Yuo'an jiaoluo de qisheng* [Weeping from gloomy corners] (Taipei: Qianwei, 1994).

24 Cai Hui-yu (ed.), *Zouguo lian ge shidai de ren*, p. 467.

25 *Ibid.* p. 39.

26 Zhang Yanxian (ed.), *Danshui heyu ererba* [The 28th February Incident at the Tansui waterfront] (Taipei: Wu Sanlian, Foundation for Taiwan Historical Material, 1996), p. 239.

27 Ruan, *Yuo'an jiaoluo de qisheng*, pp. 308–309.

28 They were later blacklisted and refused to return to Taiwan until the early 1990s. In a sense they were political exiles.

29 Huang Wenxiung, *Zhu gou niu – Zhonguo shazhu, Riben gou, Taiwan niu*, pp. 12–13.