

# Between Understanding and Reconciliation: From the Perspective of Taiwan Studies

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*This paper focuses on understanding, which is the first step of the long journey toward reconciliation, and intends to examine the way Taiwan's pro-Japanese image has been expressed as an uncritical story in the view of research into modern and contemporary Taiwanese history. The layers of memories flowing among multiple generations are the historical products of Taiwan under the 51-year Japanese colonial rule, and the political changes of a hundred years. The historical evaluation of Taiwanese society under Japan's colonial rule is difficult and divided into many parts, and thus does not lead to a simple and straight discussion of a colony. Therefore, we must avoid casually connecting an uncritical story with something that is pro-Japanese. The predicament of not being able to clearly state our past is a scar of colonialism that is engraved over many generations. Reconciliation will only be a possibility when others have a proper understanding of history.*

## 1 Introduction: Is Taiwan “pro-Japanese” ?

What is reconciliation? *Daijisen* defines it as “reconciliation of people who were fighting, or who were opposed to one another.” In other words, reconciliation is only necessary because there has been a conflict or dispute beforehand. However, considering Taiwan's discourse about Japan's colonial rule and war experiences in the context of reconciliation may confront us with more challenges. China and Korea, two of Taiwan's neighbors that also experienced invasion and rule by the Empire of Japan, have undergone endless conflicts and collisions with Japan regarding the perception of history and war responsibility in the fields of politics, diplomacy, and private media. Compared to these two nations, Taiwan's attitude seems to be completely different, far removed from the tasks of apology and reconciliation, and even described as “pro-Japanese.” This description of Taiwan as pro-Japanese has been a historical evaluation regarding Japan's colonial rule, and it has overflowed into various spaces of discourse. “Pro-Japanese Taiwan” has become a proper noun, as opposed to “anti-Japanese Korea” or “anti-Japanese China.” This simplified schema is commonly used as a framework for perceiving the historical position of East Asia regarding issues in Japanese society today. In severe cases, there have been many arguments that pro-Japanese Taiwan is right, and that

“anti-Japanese Korea” and “anti-Japanese China” are wrong or unjust. This sort of understanding of “pro-Japanese Taiwan” has resulted in controversy and aroused criticism in China and Korea.

How shall we understand the uncritical story of Taiwanese history? Since the 1990s, the following four types of interpretations have been accepted in Japanese society. The first is to consider “pro-Japanese” as evidence of the legitimacy of Japan’s colonial rule. As the generation that received Japanese education has been more complimentary than critical about it, this argument states that Japan’s rule over Taiwan was a “conscientious rule” that did the colony a favor, unlike European and American imperialism, which aimed to exploit the area. The second interpretation is based on the postwar experience of the Taiwanese, called the Kuomintang rule. The 2.28 Incident in 1947 and the White Terror that followed highlighted the backwardness and uncivilized characteristics of the Kuomintang. At the same time, the Taiwanese longed for the “Japanese era” that had previously promoted good order, and the experience of “China’s evil” gave the Taiwanese people a new understanding of “Japan’s good.” This type of “pro-Japanese” interpretation strongly implies that objectivity can be achieved through comparison. It emphasizes that “pro-Japanese” not only represents a positive attitude toward Japan, but also a display of aversion to China. The third interpretation of positive Taiwanese attitudes to Japan is based on a theory of Taiwanese political strategy. The positive discourse about the Japanese colonial era internally leads to the strategy of criticizing the Kuomintang and externally securing Japan’s support, and also becomes a means to keep the Chinese government in check when the relationship between the two nations gets tense. The fourth interpretation is the perspective of a life course, seeing “pro-Japanese” as displaying a type of nostalgia—the pre-war generation longing for the memory of youth. This attitude is about people framing the first half of their lives positively and thus affirming the Japanese era.

The first interpretation of colonial advantages is widespread in Taiwan, and has been the subject of much criticism. In particular, after the Chinese translation of *On Taiwan* by Yoshinori Kobayashi was published in 2001, there was tremendous controversy in cultural, academic, and political circles. Cultural and academic circles argued that remarks such as those made by the “Japanese language people” described in the Japanese media should be avoided regardless of their good intentions, as the political powers of Japan would be likely to manipulate the words of someone from an ex-colony. On the other hand, some commentators also pointed out that the phenomenon of “colonial advantage” is an indication that Taiwan is at risk, and that its historical independence is feeble<sup>1</sup>. The Japanese people described in *On Taiwan* were criticized as representing the “union of Taiwan’s independence and Japan’s right wing” in Taiwan. In fact, the media went on to attack the Chen Shui-bian government at the time, and this developed into a political conflict.

The second and third types of interpretation described above have been greatly influenced by the consciousness of China in Japanese society since the 1990s, rather than by interest in the colonial history itself. Thus, we will not discuss them here in detail. The fourth discourse

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1 For representative discourse, refer to Chen Kuanghsing, Li Chaochin eds., *Fansi Taiwanlun: Tairipipanquan de Neibuduihua*, (Taipei: Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies, 2005). (陳光興, 李朝津編『(反思)〈台灣論〉: 台日批判圈的內部對話』台灣社會研究季刊研究社)

states that “Japan,” evaluated positively, does not refer to Japan as such, but is rather a tool for the Taiwanese to talk about themselves as Taiwan. Anthropologist Kamizuru (上水流) points out that this can be seen as part of Taiwan’s “Forming a ‘Self-Portrait,’” and that the term “Japan” should not be overestimated here<sup>2</sup>.

This paper focuses on understanding, which is the first step of the long journey toward reconciliation, and intends to examine the way Taiwan’s pro-Japanese image has been expressed as an uncritical story in the view of research into modern and contemporary Taiwanese history.

## 2 Characteristics of the “Japanese Language People” and Japanese texts

Let us begin by organizing the problems.

First, we should note the specificity and limits of Japanese texts by the “Japanese language people” in Taiwan. In studies of how Taiwanese society evaluated its history during Japan’s colonial rule, Japanese scholars have frequently found their evidence in Japanese texts, including interviews, memoirs, and autobiographies of the “Japanese language people” in Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> However, even today, when decades have passed since colonial rule, the behavior of intending to speak Japanese must require strong will power. It is clear that many who received a colonial school education saw Japanese as the main language for their thoughts and expression, so chose also to write in Japanese. Further, the choice of Taiwanese people to speak Japanese indicates the consciousness of language transmission toward Japanese society. Japanese is a foreign language in Taiwan today, and the appealing thing about the Japanese language is naturally Japanese society, not Taiwanese society. In other words, Japanese society is seen as the recipient of speech. Writing by “Japanese language people” in Taiwan is published by Japanese publishers or introduced by Japanese scholars. This consciousness of narrators becomes much clearer in publications by Japanese publishers or audience research conducted by Japanese scholars. Considering its linguistic and narrative distinctiveness, the re-importing into Taiwan in the form of translation of the discourse or text of the “Japanese language people” from Taiwan, which had not originally seen Taiwanese society as the object of its speech, has naturally resulted in strong social responses.

Second, the prewar generation and the “Japanese language people” have always been considered equal in the general consciousness, despite the fact that non-Japanese language people, who were indifferent to Japanese texts, formed a large majority of prewar Taiwanese society. I have already pointed out the issue of hierarchical severance between the “Japanese language people” and the non-Japanese language people. That is, the penetration of the Japanese world into Taiwanese society is strongly related to the hierarchical distinction that can

2 Kamizuru Hisahiko, “Jigazou no keisei Dougu toshite no Nihongo,” in Igarashi Masako, Mio Yuko eds., *Sengo Taiwan ni okeru Nihon: Shokuminchi keiken no renzoku, henbou, riyou* (Tokyo: Fukyosha, 2006), p. 187-216. (上水流久彦「自画像形成の道具としての〈日本語〉」五十嵐真子、三尾裕子編『戦後台湾における〈日本〉—植民地経験の連続・変貌・利用』風響社)

3 Japanese works by the ‘Japanese language people’ are organized in the form of a list by Hwang Ji-hye. Refer to “A View Toward Japan Appeared in <The Theory of Japanese Culture> of Taiwan,” *Language Cultural Studies of Asia-Africa* (71), 2006, p. 161-165. (「台湾における〈日本文化論〉に見られる対日観」アジア・アフリカ言語文化研究)

be seen in the separation of the “Japanese language people” from the non-Japanese language people. In Taiwan under Japan’s colonial rule, both economic and hierarchical differentiations existed between these groups of people. The colonial economic structure that preserved the landowning class expanded the social gap in Taiwan, and educational opportunities, or the lack thereof, led to a disparity in the historical experiences and awareness of other groups. The degree of Japanese education had the function of a hierarchical notation, and the use of the Japanese language became the expression and physical opportunity of identification. Post-war Japanese people have a dim consciousness of non-Japanese language people in the colony of Taiwan. Japanese people who visited Taipei in the 1960s made the following observation: “If we talk to middle-aged people when we are out shopping, most of them understand us. If we talk to someone and he or she does not understand, that means he or she is under the age of 30 or a foreigner.”<sup>4</sup> The Japanese people’s general awareness of Taiwan shows a similar structure and focus on the Japanese language to the Taiwanese people’s historical evaluation of the Japanese era, with the idea that someone who is not pro-Japanese will either be a “foreigner” or a “youth.” This is also an outcome of Japanese texts depending excessively on Taiwan’s “pro-Japanese” image.

Third, one model of evaluating the Japanese era is the theory of “the good points and the bad points.” Evaluations of the good points always include two ideas: the organization of the infrastructure that forms an index of modernization, including sanitation, transportation, industry and education; and the deep feeling toward the “good Japanese” of individual experience, especially Japanese friends or teachers, beyond the ethnic discrimination of colonialism.

The interesting thing is that, among the works of the “Japanese language people” considered to be “pro-Japanese,” “the bad points” are also mentioned without exception. As a result of these works being controlled by consideration for the Japanese readers and the intention of Japanese publishers,<sup>5</sup> these descriptions of the bad points in the books are given little space compared to the good points. These bad points are integrated into the issue of discrimination. The approval of modernization indicated that postwar Taiwan has been significantly influenced by the dynamics of politics, while the criticisms of discrimination tend to be based on vivid memories that scarred adolescents at the time. *The Taiwanese and the Japanese Spirit*, which is considered a representative pro-Japanese bestseller, is no exception to this pattern.

The stories of discrimination in these texts include the two following examples. (1) Inequality in the education system under the colonial rule, including preferential treatment of the Japanese and discrimination against the Taiwanese, in terms of the range and quotas of those entering school at the institutional level; and (2) discrimination from Japanese teachers and students at school at the experiential level. This shows that most of the people who experienced discrimination at the time reacted to this by enduring and accepting it as fate or by

4 Yoshino Kikuko, “Taiwan’s Language Life,” *Language Life*, Vol. 165, 1965, p. 73. (芳野菊子「台湾の言語生活」『言語生活』)

5 Ke Tesan (柯徳三) states in the interview on the channel Sakura that “The Bad Points” written in *Bokoku wa Nihon, Sokoku wa Taiwan: Aru Nihongo Zoku Taiwanjin no Kokuhaku*, (Tokyo: Sakura no Hana Shuppan, 2005 (『母国は日本、祖国は台湾—或る日本語族台湾人の告白』桜の花出版), was drastically deleted by the publisher. “I wrote many good and bad points in the book I published, especially about the discrimination by Japan, but they were all deleted in the book” The publishing company argued that they had obtained the writer’s consent.

resisting passively. In other words, most of those telling their stories recollect that, as young people, they showed “resistance within the system” (naturally there were some people who resisted actively or pursued a way out of the colonial system, but not many Japanese texts describe this).

In individuals’ colonial experiences of discrimination, their hearts were cured by those among their Japanese friends and teachers who treated them equally, as mentioned in the second item of the good points. Close relationships with those “good Japanese,” who showed good will even under a system of structural discrimination, were recollected after the war. Furthermore, another significant characteristic of these stories of the good points and the bad points is that they are mostly limited to experiences at school.

### 3 The prewar generation’s memories and differences

The latter part of this paper will summarize the generational differences in historical memories regarding the Japanese era.

First, the prewar generation was exposed to a great deal of historical presentations focusing on imperialism, but the depth of their memories differed according to their age and years of study. **Figure 1** shows multiple generations who lived through 1945 in their adolescence. It reveals that there is a quantitative difference in the dynamics of the driving force of the Japanese identity, or those who were the subjects of Japanese Empire, among the prewar generation. Intellectuals born before 1930 are the generation that completed the full course of education if they graduated from middle school or girls’ school before 1945. With only five years’ age difference, the generation born after 1930 belongs to the “young citizens (少国民)” under the assimilation education who encountered the end of Japan’s colonial rule during middle school or elementary school. The generation born in 1925 was 20 years old by the end of the war, the generation born in 1930 was 15, and those born in 1935 were ten.<sup>6</sup>

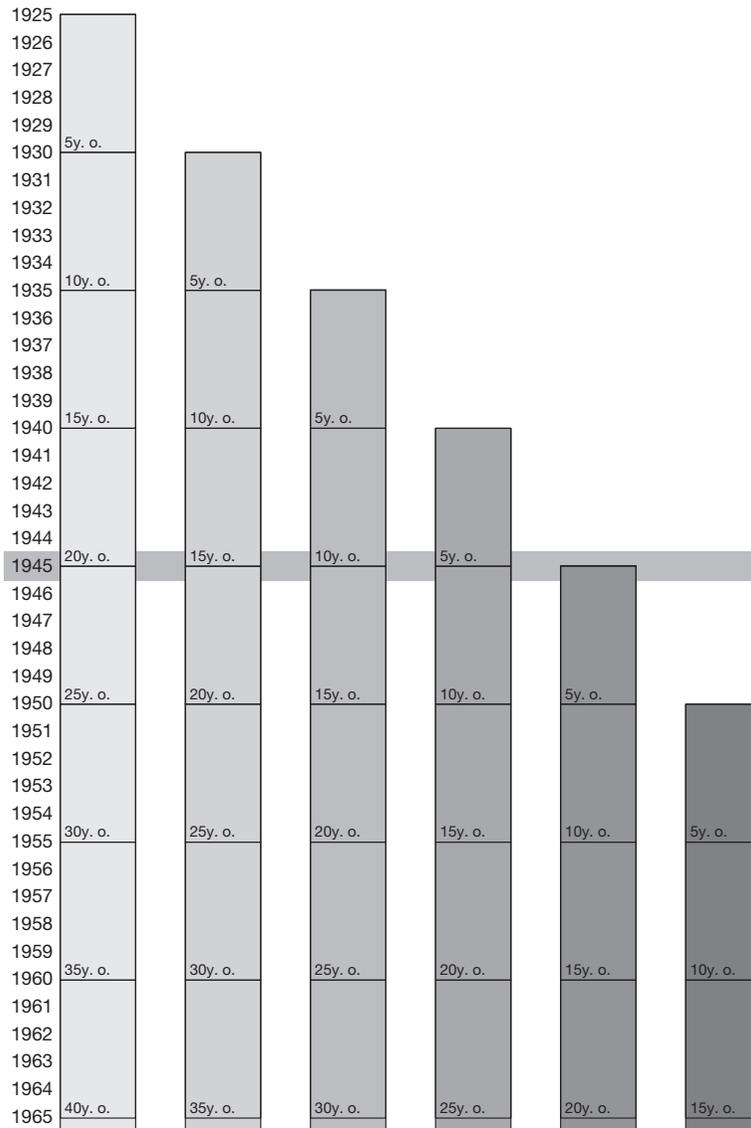
The content of the public education in Taiwan during Japan’s colonial rule, as described based on history education, was characterized by forcing the Taiwanese to describe Japanese history as their own, and inculcating into Taiwanese children that Japan was their country. In textbooks, Taiwan was a mere space that lacked history, and a “homeland without a past.”<sup>7</sup> Let us examine the range of possible influences of the historiography that was included in Japanese education in the same generation in terms of age group and population size. First, let us draw a line with the lower limit of age as the axis of ordinates. According to my observations, those who could talk precisely about the memories and events of Japanese education

6 In addition, Ke Tesan (柯德三) who appeared in JAPAN debut of NHK was born in 1922, former president of Taiwan Lee Tenghui (李登輝) was born in 1923, Tsai Kuntsan (蔡焜燦) in 1927, and the Taiwanese scholar Wang Yute (王育德) was born in 1924, Tai Kuohui (戴國輝) and Liu Chinching (劉進慶) in 1931, Hsu Chiehlin (許介麟) in 1935, Tu Chaoyen (涂照彥) in 1936. Also, Huang Chunming (黃春明) who wrote 「Sayonara Chai Chien (さよなら再見)」 was born in 1935.

7 Chou Wanyao (周婉窈), “Shokuminchi Shugi no Kouyishou: Taiwan o Chushin ni,” *Ritsumeikan Language Cultural Studies* Book 20, Vol. 3, 2009, p.136. (「植民地主義の後遺症—台湾を中心に」『立命館言語文化研究』), Chou Wanyao (周婉窈), *Revised Edition: The History of Taiwan*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2013), p.141. (『増補版 図説台湾の歴史』平凡社)

comprised the generation enrolled in the upper grades of elementary school or in middle school in 1945. Considering this experience, the lower age limit of those influenced by Japanese education is the generation born in 1935, who entered elementary/public schools in 1941, and encountered the end of Japanese education in their fourth grade (at approximately ten years old).<sup>8</sup> Next, as the horizontal axis, it is necessary to refer to the percentage of school attendance of prewar Taiwanese children, regarding the context of sharing Japanese

**Figure 1** Multiple Generations who lived through 1945 in their adolescence



<sup>8</sup> The minimum age for primary and public schools was six years old. In fact, many people postponed entrance of school for a few years due to many reasons such as economic factors, parents' intentions, and health.

education experiences within the same generation. 61.6% of Taiwanese school-aged children attended school in 1941, of whom 73.6% were boys and 48.7% were girls.<sup>9</sup> In other words, approximately 70% of men and 50% of women experienced this type of history education.

In the interpretation of the novel *Orphan of Asia* by Wu Choliu (吳濁流), Tai Kuohui (戴國輝) describes the use of Japanese either consciously or unconsciously to describe “us” as “our” generational characteristic. This is not only an expression of mild protest resulting from resentment of the phenomenon or the 2.28 Incident. Most of “us” were born around the time of the 9.18 Incident (Manchurian Incident) and never experienced the movement of liberation from colonialism. Moreover, this generation suffered the triple distress of colonial slave education, the reinforced assimilation movement, and militaristic education, losing everything, including our native language 福佬話, 客家話, and even the dialects of the Formosans. In our generation, the “scars of the colony” were combined with poor language skills (due to the older age at which learning began, along with the 2.28 Incident and the state of the authorities afterwards, creating simple resistance to foreigners deep inside our minds and resulting in the slow progress of our generation’s language education), leading our generation to have the common language of only Taiwan-style Japanese.<sup>10</sup>

The evaluation of the Japanese era, in which the prewar generation experienced adolescence, connotes both the colonial rule itself and their own lives. However, one must note that there was a considerable difference in the axis of ordinates among generations and on the horizontal axis of the same generation. For example, the use of Japanese language in daily life: after the war, many people from the Japanese-educated generations settled with Japanese as an ordinary language alongside their mother tongue. However, Lin Chuangsheng (林莊生), born in 1930, describes the experience of becoming alert to this “inertia” after being reprimanded by Tsai Peihuo (蔡培火), a senior in the older generation, for using the Japanese language unconsciously after the end of the war. “This was the most impressive experience among all of my experiences of being reprimanded by him. One day, before setting off to study abroad, I called him and said ‘moshi moshi’ without a second thought. When he heard this, he immediately responded: ‘What era are we living in? Are you still saying moshi moshi?’ ‘Moshi moshi’ is the Japanese term that is spoken at the beginning of a phone conversation, equivalent to the Chinese ‘wei.’ It was still commonly being used in phone conversations among the Taiwanese. However, this senior reacted sensitively to a Taiwanese person speaking Japanese. Since then, I always mutter ‘wei, wei’ and clear my throat a couple of times before calling him. This is to keep myself from stimulating the anti-Japanese spirit by unconsciously saying ‘moshi moshi.’”<sup>11</sup>

We should that this anecdote was written by Lin Chuangsheng (林莊生) in Chinese. Lin, who entered Taichung First Senior High School in 1943, first learned Chinese in third grade

9 Taiwansheng Xingzheng Zhangguan GongshuTongjishi eds., *Taiwansheng 50 nianlai Tongji Tiyao*, (Taipei: Taiwan-shengXingzheng Zhangguan Tongjishi, 1946), p. 1241. (台灣省行政長官公署統計室編『台灣省五十一年來統計提要』台灣省行政長官公署統計室)

10 Tai Kuohui (戴國輝), “Shokuminchi Taisei to Chishikijin: Wu Choliu no sekaai,” *Ajia no koji: Nihon Sokuminchi Touchika no Taiwan*, (Tokyo: Shinjinbutsuouraisa, 1973), p. 310-311. (『植民地体制と「知識人」—吳濁流の世界』『垂細亜の孤児—日本統治下の台湾』新人物往來社)

11 Lin Chuangsheng(林莊生), *Huashu you Huairen: Wo de Fuqin Chuang Chuisheng, Tade Pengyou ji Nage Shidai*, (Taipei: Ziliwanbao, 1992), p. 280. (『懷樹又懷人：我的父親莊垂勝、他的朋友及那個時代』自立晚報)

after the war. It is rather unusual for members of the Taiwanese generation born in 1930 like Lin, excluding those in literary circles or the academic world, to compile their historical memories in Chinese.

Grounded in school education, postwar education can be described as another factor that influenced the prewar generation's memories of history. For those intellectuals who went on to high school or university and studied abroad in countries such as the US and Japan, individuals' historical memories and evaluations were inevitably readjusted whenever the official view of history was renewed, along with the changes that occurred with time and political power. Generations that spent their school years before and after the war obtained the opportunity to relativize their historical presentation. By their own efforts, they acquired means of language other than Japanese, including Chinese, English, and their mother tongue. Later, their choice of language differed according to their individual life paths or means of self-expression; however, this shows the effort of the prewar Japanese-language generation to overcome the "scars of the colony" and accomplish post-colonialism.

Hahn Liongshin (韓良信), born in 1932 and a first-grade student in Tainan Second Senior High School before the end of the war, said, "Taiwanese in my generation can speak Taiwanese, Chinese, Japanese, and English to some degree, but all a little broken. I've already lived in the US for half a century, but it's a shame that I can't be free from the accent and grammatical errors in English. As you know, my Japanese is elementary-school level, and Chinese not much different. My mother taught me the correct pronunciation of Taiwanese. I'm not sure if this is 'sad' or 'beneficial' for me. I certainly think that being able to read technical books, theses and novels in English and Japanese is a benefit. But if I'm to give a presentation, I feel quite nervous about what language I should use to write intellectual sentences."<sup>12</sup> The complicated emotions of Taiwanese, who have tried to use their initiative to overcome the scars of the colony in the postwar half-century, can also be found in the issue of language.

#### 4 Generations and memories under the rule of the Kuomintang

Full-scale compulsory education began in postwar Taiwan, expanding the scope of school education. The nationwide range of influence of presentations of history in school had previously been limited to those Taiwanese children who received school education. Due to the supply of national education after the war, the number of schoolchildren rapidly increased from 850 thousand in 1945 to 2.348 million in 1967, which amounted to an approximate three-fold increase in 22 years. The percentage of school attendance increased from 80% in 1945 to 97.16% in 1967. China's collective anti-Japanese memory, involving "the resentment of national invasion and family destruction (国仇家恨)" was taught through compulsory education. The nation's official model of historical presentation toward the natives who had lived in Taiwan since before 1945 was being portrayed to the general public who had not experienced prewar Japanese education.

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12 Email from Hahn Liongshin (韓良信) to the writer. February 16, 2013.

Let us examine the historiography of the postwar Kuomintang education. After the Kuomintang's relocation to Taiwan, the counterattack against them became the nation's greatest mission, leading to the development of a new form of national integration in Taiwanese society. Legitimate Chinese history was taught, with "Learning to be Chinese" as the key to its historiography. This teaching focused on the ancient history of China covering a span of 5,000 years, including the Zhōu Dynasty, the Spring, and Autumn and Warring States periods, the Jin Dynasty, the Han Dynasty, and the "legitimate China" represented by the Republic of China since 1911, regarding the history of the Communist People's Republic of China. In this historiography, Japan was positioned as the greatest invader that had caused a national crisis since the Sino-Japanese War. Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) replaced the previous memory of modern history with the history of the Kuomintang, including "movement (Chen Jiongming (陳炯明) suppression and Guangzhou defense), the expedition to conquer the north (oppression on běiyáng jūnfá), its defeat (annihilation strategy of Communists), and the anti-Japan (China-Japan) war." Japan in this historiography was the enemy in the anti-Japanese war, which had led to eight years of invasion and massacre.

Now let us focus on how the memories of the colony in the prewar Taiwanese generation were not inherited here. The postwar generation of native families under the education of Chinese nationalism began to internalize China's anti-Japanese historical memories by standing next to their foreign classmates. The only time the history of Taiwan in Japan's colonial rule was mentioned was in the anti-Japanese movement, defined in the frame of Chinese nationalism and the Wushe Incident of 1930 (霧社事件). "Regardless of whether they were native or foreign, they rather neglect the past of the land called Taiwan in which they had grown. Or as in Chinese history, they had no choice but to depend on the arguments prescribed by the Kuomintang in order to understand the history of Taiwan," said Hsiao Achin (蕭阿勤), a socialist. He also described more severe cases of foreigners, especially one case of a Taiwanese woman with no knowledge or interest in Taiwanese history, despite having children who were members of and deeply involved in Taiwan's anti-Japanese political and social movement.<sup>13</sup>

Tousan (多桑), an autobiographical movie by Wu Nienchen (吳念真), which is well known in Japan, depicts an ideological conflict between the prewar Japanese generation and the postwar generation within a home. The father, born in 1929 and always describing himself as "born in Showa year 4," helps his elementary-school daughter draw a flag; he colors in the white sun on the upper-left corner of China's flag. When the daughter complains to the son, the father angrily responds in Taiwanese, "Is there such a thing as the white sun?" "Look at the Japanese flag and see what color it is!" The daughter responds in Chinese, "Always Japan, Japan. Is he Wāng Jīngwèi (汪精衛) or what?" "Traitor! Wāng Jīngwèi!" The father, who does not know Chinese well, asks his son, "What did she just say?" but the son ends the conflict between the father and daughter by passing it by with the response, "Nothing."

13 Hsiao Achin (蕭阿勤), *Return to Reality: Political and Cultural Change in 1970s Taiwan and the Postwar Generation*, Institute of Sociology Academia Sinica, Taipei, 2008, p. 84-85 (『回歸現實：台灣1970年代的戰後世代與文化政治變遷』台北·中央研究院社會學研究所).

The transplantation of Chinese nationalism and the severance of Taiwanese historical presentations definitely created a generational gap of historical memories between prewar and postwar Taiwanese. There is also room for further study regarding how the postwar generation from the families of “non-Japanese language people,” who became the subjects of school education as they were newly incorporated as people of the Republic of China, experienced the colony and the reconstruction of post-colonialist historical memories.

## 5 Generations and memories after democratization

The third period we are considering here is from the withdrawal of martial law in 1987 to the first regime change in 2000. During this period, new significance was given to the history of Taiwan in the process of establishing Taiwanese independence, while, at the same time, the position of historical memories of the Japanese era was renewed. Throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s, the modernization narrative emphasizing the infrastructure and educational resources of the Japanese era, which had been already accumulated before the relocation of the Kuomintang to Taiwan, emerged as a discourse that resisted the exclusively Chinese nationalist historical presentation of the Kuomintang. In political and social movements that attempted to recover the dignity of the Taiwanese and aid their self-recovery, the history of Taiwan under Japan’s rule is presumed to have been an “asset,” and the historical experience is considered to be a significant component in the independence of Taiwanese culture that differentiates it from Chinese culture.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis and reconstruction of Taiwanese history in the Japanese era have clearly played a great role in developing the awareness of “us.” However, as these new narratives have resisted the historical presentation of Chinese nationalism and attempted to regain their impaired reputation from the Japanese and “slave” characteristics of the past, they have also excessively beautified the modernization of colonial rule, resulting in overestimating its positive impact: this in turn led to criticisms from within Taiwanese society. One must pay attention to the awareness of the Japanese media regarding the controversies in Taiwanese society about the historical experiences of the modernization of the colony or the Japanese era. Framing the situation as one of a simplified binary opposition of “foreigner” versus “native,” “independence” versus “unification,” and “pro-Japanese” versus “anti-Japanese” risks misrepresenting Taiwanese society since the 1990s, in which pluralistic ideologies have coexisted.

From a generational viewpoint, the first generation ever to receive school education in postwar Kuomintang relativized the historical ideologies of education received thus far from external changes in terms of the modernization process, and, in many cases, gradually modified the track of historical awareness. The influences on the official ideologies of school education show that there may in the future be a generation that states, “I was Chinese until the age of xx,” in the same context as Lee Tenghui stated, “I was Japanese until the age of 21 (1945).”

Japan, needless to say, along with China and the US, is a significant external factor that is

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14 Hsiao Achin (蕭阿勤), p. 147.

inherent in the history of Taiwan. In the process of constructing the historical memories of the Japanese era, the Taiwanese generation that spent its youth after the withdrawal of martial law in 1987 has also faced the issue of a generation gap. For example, the movie *Tousang* shows that the generation in front of TV that only shows programs in their official language will be the generation of their grandchildren. This generation only uses their official language (Chinese) and neglects its mother tongue (Minnanyu, Kan-Hakka languages, and languages of native tribes), meaning that people have no common language with their grandparents. The distance from their grandfathers is much greater than the distance between the postwar generation and their fathers. It is not just a problem of language; there is a greater difficulty in passing down the colonial memories of the prewar generation to the next generation. The generation gap is not limited to home. For some “Japanese language people,” Japanese people who visit them to listen to them talk about the Japanese era may seem more familiar than the Taiwanese people in their grandchildren’s generation.<sup>15</sup> Japanese-era Taiwanese talking about the Japanese era to Japanese people with whom they can use Japanese as a common language, and who are indifferent to the postwar Chinese education with its negative image of them, seems to be much closer to this generation than the psychological distance they feel from their Taiwanese grandchildren’s generation.

Today, even over half a century after the end of the war, a gap exists between the generations that derived from prewar colonial rule, the postwar Chinese Civil War, and the cold war system. However, to overcome this severance, there is no choice but to proceed together to fulfill the incomplete task of reconstructing the historiography of Taiwan under the colonial rule, that is, the memories of the Japanese era from the Taiwanese pre-war generation.

## 6 Conclusion

The layers of memories flowing among multiple generations are the historical products of Taiwan under the 51-year Japanese colonial rule, and the political changes of a hundred years. The historical evaluation of Taiwanese society under Japan’s colonial rule is difficult and divided into many parts, and thus does not lead to a simple and straight discussion of a colony. Therefore, we must avoid casually connecting an uncritical story with something that is pro-Japanese. The predicament of not being able to clearly state “our past” is a scar of colonialism that is engraved over many generations. Reconciliation will only be a possibility when others have a proper understanding of history.

Historical memories and descriptions occasionally became politicized; consequently, Taiwanese society in the twenty-first century seems exhausted and worn out by pan-politicization. The efforts of reconciliation between the Republic of China and Taiwan still continue,

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15 Huang Shawherng (黃紹恆) stated sarcastically that he encountered the phenomenon that some “Japanese language people” do not want to talk about the past historical memories with Taiwanese people like themselves, and he could rather hear many stories from a Japanese scholar who joined him. Refer to the following thesis: Huang Sheng, “Ribei Zuoyi, Youyi Yanlun Guangpuli de Taiwan Tuxiang”, in Chen Kuanghsing, Li Chaochin eds., *Fansi Taiwanlun: Tairipianquan de Neibuduihua*, (Taipei: Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies, 2005), p. 16. (「日本左翼、右翼言論光譜裡的台灣圖像」陳光興、李朝津編「反思〈台灣論〉：台日批判圈的內部對話」台灣社會研究季刊研究社)

and the process of initiating fresh understanding of the historical memories of a colony has now begun, along with the basic process for mutual understanding and conversation among generations and ethnic groups, and more broadly between Taiwan, Korea, China, and Japan.

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