Passports of Taiwan

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Horror Stories

The e-mail message came to me on March 2002, shortly after the foreign ministry of the Republic of China proposed to print the name "Taiwan" on the cover of its passports. As with many stories that are circulated in cyberspace, the message did not have a clear point of origin. It was only noted by one of its many senders that these were true stories that had happened to a Ph.D. student at the University of Southern California.

The stories tell of her frustrating experiences of being repeatedly mistaken for someone from Mainland China.

On her first day in the United States, she had an argument with an officer from the Social Security Bureau when she applied for her social security card. Seeing the officer fill in the box indicating nationality with "China," she asked him to make a correction because she was "from Taiwan, not China."[1] The officer checked his computer carefully and refused because he could not find the Republic of China in the database. He explained that he had to put "People's Republic of China" on her application since it was "the closest match." The Ph.D. student "made a concession" *(tui er qiu qi ci*) and asked to have the name Taiwan used instead. However, she was rejected again because she did not hold a Taiwanese passport. She insisted that "[the] Republic of China is Taiwan." The officer was annoyed and threatened not to give her a social security card at all if she continued to argue with him. Without revealing whether or not she was able to convince the officer to put "Taiwan" on her file, she concludes that she "intensely hates (*tonghen*) the passport" because "it is not convenient to use (*buhaoyong*)." But what made her even more frustrated was that the Social Security Bureau thought she was a "Mainland Chinese" (*daluren*)[2]. "I hate to become (*biancheng*) a Mainland Chinese," she grumbled.

In a second story, her attempt to use the name Taiwan was rejected once again.

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[1] The e-mail message is in Chinese with English translations of the conversation inserted into it. Here the English part is retained when conversations are in question, including the capitalization of "CHINA" and "TAIWAN."

[2] In Taiwanese lexicon, *daluren* (Mainland Chinese) refers exclusively to those from the People's Republic of China. *Zhongguoren* (Chinese) is a more ambiguous term that could include all native speakers of Chinese languages and their descendents or be equated with *daluren*.

When passing through U.S. customs, she wrote "Taiwan" on her I-94 form[3] because the "American Customs did not have a country named Taiwan." The customs officer insisted that she should write "CHINA" since "TAIWAN did not appear on the passport." He suggested that, if she wanted to put Taiwan on her I-94 form next time, she should "get a TAIWAN passport."

In the end, she argues that, "those who don't want the passport to have 'Taiwan' on it are the ones who don't care that the box of nationality is filled in with the name P.R.C." and should just "go back to their ancestor country (*zuguo*) and use the red-covered Mainland (*dalu*) passport." However, while accusing those who do not support the proposal for a new passport of not knowing their true nationality, she does not think that the new passport would be a statement severing Taiwan's ties with China. Instead, without declaring a total refusal to the national title of the "Republic of China," she wraps up the stories by explaining that her reason for wanting a passport with "Taiwan" on it is practical: "It is convenient to use (*haoyong*)."

Her stories resonate with another one published in the opinions column in the daily newspaper *Liberty Times* (Ziyou Shibao) slightly more than a year earlier.[4] In an overtly discriminatory tone, Han Ming-rong, a medical doctor, describes the Chinese (*zhongguoren*) as "unpopular in the international society" because they are always taken as "illegal immigrants" trying to "sneak into other countries." Owing to the unpopularity of the Chinese, Han explains, when a group of medical doctors went to Argentina for a conference, they were detained in customs and later deported when the customs officers saw their Republic of China passports and mistook them for Chinese. An R.O.C. passport, he argues, may cause humiliation (*xiuru*) to the Taiwanese because of the possibility of mistaken identity.

These stories and numerous others often heard in Taiwan express the anxiety shared by many from the island: the danger of being mistaken for someone else and therefore not being recognized, accepted, and allowed into the global community of "passport regimes" that demands rigid boundaries as well as proper travel documents.[5] In a world that sees the state as the only legitimate entity that commands borders and controls movement, the Republic of China is a nonconforming entity that strives to conform to a global order that gives it little room to do so. Although the passport of the Republic of China, a de facto independent political entity without

[3] Arrival/Departure Record Card, which certifies that US Immigration and Naturalization Services has allowed the individual to enter the country.

[4] Han Ming-rong, "Wuo shi Taiwanren, Bushi Zhongguoren" [I am a Taiwanese, Not a Chinese], *Liberty Times*, October 30, 2000.

[5] The development of modern states, as John Torpey observes, is the "development of the passport regime" in which states gradually secure and develop bureaucratical means and documents to define movements and to issue passports that grant people right of crossing border. John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

international recognition as such, is “inconvenient to use” and may cause “humiliation,” the island commonly known as Taiwan continues to adhere to the national title of the Republic of China. Any outright rejection of this “inconvenient” and possibly “humiliating” tie to China would infuriate the People’s Republic of China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province. Even though the Beijing government does not recognize the legitimacy of the Republic of China, it considers the designation of “Taiwan” even more unacceptable for it clearly announces a separation from China. This claim of Taiwan as a part of China is the result of the civil war between the Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) that saw the KMT fled China to Taiwan in 1949. With the help of the United States, the KMT secured its rule of Taiwan, a former colony of Japan. As Taiwan and the surrounding islands became its only foothold, the KMT asserted that it would one day reclaim China and restore the rightful title of the Republic of China there. Until the late 1980s, the KMT’s dictatorial rule over Taiwan has rested on the assertion that Taiwan belongs to the Republic of China, a state founded by the Nationalist Party in 1911 when Taiwan was under Japanese rule. Since the abolishment of Taiwan martial law in 1987 and subsequent democratization in the 1990s, the state has hovered uneasily between the legacy of KMT rule over China and the facts of more than six decades of *de facto* independence. Therefore, although the CCP and the KMT have different ideas about which “China” has right over China, they nonetheless consent on the claim that Taiwan is inseparable from “China,” whichever “China” it is.

Much like the Ph.D. student who insisted that she was from Taiwan and resented being taken for a “Mainland Chinese,” most people in Taiwan are ambivalent about how they want to be recognized internationally.[6] The awkwardness of the Republic of China, hence, results not only from its lack of international recognition. It is embedded in the unstable hyphen between nation and state. This inability for nation and state to achieve complete unity is not unique to Taiwan. “Nations and states,” as Arjun Appadurai suggests, “are one another’s projects.”[7] That is, “while nations (or more properly groups with ideas about nationhood) seek to capture and co-opt the states and state power, states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolize ideas

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[6] Taking after Nai-de Wu, Robert Marsh identifies four kinds of national identities in Taiwan: Taiwan nationalist, Chinese nationalist, pragmatics who favor both independence and unification when certain conditions are met, and conservatives who favor the status quo. The pragmatics, according to Marsh, are the majority. In addition, Marsh also notes that, contrary to popular belief, the (formerly) bureaucratically defined categories of *benshengren* (Taiwan-born) and *waishengren* (persons with Chinese mainland *jiguan*) are not always congruent to how one would choose Taiwan’s future in relation to China. See, Robert Marsh, “National Identity and Ethnicity in Taiwan: Some Trends in the 1990s,” in Stephane Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future: National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001). See, also, Rwei-ren Wu, “Toward a Pragmatic Nationalism: Democratization and Taiwan’s Passive Revolution” in the same volume.

[7] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996)*, 39.

about nationhood."[8] In a world system that recognizes nation-state as the only valid expression of sovereignty, the modern nation-state, argues Prasenjit Duara, "claims sovereignty within distinct, but not undisputed, territorial boundaries" externally, as the state "claims to represent the people of the nation" internally.[9] However, the "ideas about nationhood" are forever contested by different pulls from within and without, from the margins of the nation and from the forces of the global. Therefore, nation and the consensus upon which the spatial and temporal unity of this political community is imagined are "always in a crisis of contention and displacement" and consequently "always changeable."[10]

Nonetheless, even with the legitimacy of the nation-state under constant challenge and no clear answer to the island's political future in sight, the people of Taiwan continue to travel without proper passports and to make room for themselves across and around national boundaries, while the Republic of China in Taiwan continues, albeit with various degrees of success, to secure a nation and maneuver for recognition within international space.

Taiwan's political isolation contrasts sharply with its assertive and continuous expansion of its economic role. The island's "advancing" towards other parts of Asia, in particular China and Southeast Asia, through capital outflow has caused an economic downturn on the island, while its presence in Asia has prompted some to suggest that Taiwan has become a sub-empire in Asia. However, while this economic "miracle" of the past few decades has resulted in the rising visibility of Taiwan in the international community as a successful model of development for other Asian countries, there is still the profound sense that Taiwan is only a silent player, at once there but not really there, existing but unseen and unheard.

At the same time, the constant military threat from China has induced the island to look for visibility on the global stage as a survival strategy. Hsu Chu-fong, a representative of Taiwanese nongovernmental organizations to the United Nation's world summit in 2002, claims that Taiwan needs to "announce its 'existence' through every possible channel" even as China tries to squeeze Taiwan out of global society. However, its existence has to be a "worthy" one (*you jiazhi*) that would "serve as a model for other countries to learn from."[11] While avoiding the issues of cross-strait relations and sovereignty, publisher Yin Yun-peng made a similar statement. "Linking track with the world and sailing into the future," she suggests, is "the only and

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[8] Ibid. 39.
[9] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 70.
[10] Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1994). 173.
[11] Chu-fong Hsu, "Zai Nanfei Wei Taiwan Daping" [Fighting for Taiwan in South Africa], *Liberty Times*, Aug. 31, 2002.

essential road for Taiwan to take"[12] because it is an inevitable outcome of globalization and it is a responsibility as well as a right that must be granted to the progressive island widely acknowledged for its economic and political "miracle."

Underlying these sentiments for a "worthy existence" for a deserving global citizen, however, is the anxiety of not knowing how to get over the hurdle of national customs requirements and the liability of a passport that is "not convenient to use." This effort to (re)discover a recognizable identity through self-scrutiny or through an outward search is not merely a manifestation of nationalist aspiration. It is the desire to be seen, heard, and recognized. Nonetheless, attempts to transcend boundaries, to reach an unattainable global future, or to overcome past history of foreign occupations, Ackbar Abbas warns in his study of Hong Kong, often fall into the "temptations" of the local, the marginal, and the cosmopolitan or "what we might call the fallacies of three worldism, two worldism, and one worldism" in which one chooses to take an "off-the-shelf identity" as the native, the marginal, or the cosmopolitan. "In an attempt to appear as subject in these figures," Abbas points out, "the postcolonial in fact disappears in these representations and self-representations."[13] The question of how to deal with these foreign pasts and futures continues to haunt the search for the most fashionable attire that at the same time can reflect one's inner self.

Unidentifiable by their identifications, these improper and incomplete global trespassers unofficially known as Taiwanese often experience the same frustration as the Ph.D. student who could not be properly recognized and could not escape the question of nationality. As the question of the passport becomes evident in every attempt to pass a national customs, "Taiwan" emerges and is redefined in every contact between national discourses and global aspirations. The search for proper identification for travel often clashes with national boundaries and gets trapped in the juncture of global, national, and local forces. One might, after all, have always been mistaken.

Issued in Taiwan: A New Government and Old Politics

I, too, have a horror story.

In the summer of 1996, after finishing my first year of undergraduate study at an American university, I took a trip back to Taiwan. At the check-in counter, I was told that I had been rejected entrance to Taiwan because I did not have a visa. I assured the officer that there was no need for a visa because I had a Taiwanese passport. He

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[12] Yun-peng Yin, "319 Ge Gushi: Dianran Xiangzhen Xiwang" [319 Stories: Lighting Up Hopes in Xiangs and Zhens], in *319 Xiang Xiangqianxing* [319 Xiangs March Forward] (Taipei: Common Wealth Magazine, 2001), 7.

[13] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), 11 and 14.

looked puzzled because my passport was labeled as the “Republic of China.” Knowing that he must have mistaken it for the “People’s Republic of China,” I explained to him that they were different. Nonetheless, he did not believe me and insisted that I could not enter Taiwan without a visa. After more than fifteen minutes, he finally suggested that we call the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago and ask them if they would allow me into Taiwan. But the representative from the Office was even more difficult to deal with. He asked me whether I was from Taiwan or the Mainland and then chastised me. “You are a citizen of the Republic of China (*zhonghuaminguo gongmin*). You don’t need a visa. Don’t you have common sense?” I told him that I knew where I was from but the American did not and I needed an authority from Taiwan to tell him that. The phone was passed between me and the American officer and the fruitless conversation went on, with me trying to explain in simple phrases that I was a Taiwanese and the R.O.C. representative insisting on using “citizen of the Republic of China” when it was clear that the American had no idea what the Republic of China was. At the end, the officer finally allowed me to check in. When I thanked him and left the counter, he said in utter frustration that, “Couldn’t you just put ‘Taiwan’ on your passport?”

A few years later, his question was almost answered.

On January 13, 2002, on the twentieth anniversary of the Formosa Association of Public Affairs, an overseas pro-independent Taiwanese organization based in Washington, D.C., Taiwan’s president Chen Shui-bian made a promise to put “Taiwan” on the passport for the convenience of overseas Taiwanese.[14] This promise, while welcomed by the majority in Taiwan,[15] stirred up great controversy because it threatened to challenge the *status quo*, the infinite delay of any decision on Taiwan’s relation with China and the island’s perennial existence as the diplomatically almost nonexistent Republic of China. The President later asserted that it was a decision based on practicality. Adding the word “Taiwan” to the passport was akin to printing “Made in Taiwan” on products from Taiwan.[16] However, those who supported the one-China principle, including the Beijing government, disagreed and saw it as a gesture toward independence that could cause serious repercussions on the cross-strait relation between Taiwan and China. To the hard-core proponents of Taiwan independence, including Chen’s own Democratic Progressive Party , the words “Issued in Taiwan” posed a compromise that was too much to bear, for they relegated Taiwan to a “local government” under China, similar to Hong Kong.[17]

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[14] Some America-based Democratic Progress Party officers later acknowledged in a private conversation that Chen’s statement was completely unexpected and sent the DPP into a scramble to cover up for his lapse.

[15] Poll conducted by *China Times* [Zhongguo Shibao], January 16, 2002.

[16] *China Times*. January 15, 2002.

[17] After legislators of the Chinese Nationalist Party, the People First Party, and the New Party

These controversies surrounding the passport added another chapter to the lengthy debates on Taiwan's relation with China that had surfaced during the 1980s when political democratization allowed for the articulation of a Taiwanese national identity.

Although the KMT never gave up on the principle that Taiwan would eventually reunify with the Mainland under the Republic of China, under pressure from antigovernment movements, facing international isolation after being banished by the United Nations in 1971, and being challenged economically by other developing Asian countries in the 1980s, it steadily loosened up political control and complied with requests from oppositional movements in the last two decades of the twentieth century. This democratization, often regarded as another Taiwan "miracle," was also a "Taiwanization" or "indigenization" process that gradually consolidated a Taiwanese national identity that was separate from China.[18] In effect, "democracy" has also come to be a highly valued "national characteristic" that separates Taiwan/R.O.C. from communist China and legitimizes the continuing existence as well as international acceptance of Taiwan. As Lucie Cheng observes, Taiwan, though not recognized as a sovereign state, characterizes itself as a "good member" of the international community by claiming to be more modern and more democratic than China in order to differentiate itself from its cross-strait neighbor.[19] Hence, it is vital for the state to constantly reinvent itself and define the conceptual basis upon which its people can be identified and, thus, represented. During his term in office, Taiwan-born president Lee Teng-hui steered the KMT regime further away from its one-China stance and worked to cultivate a Taiwanese political identity and transform the KMT into a *bentu* (indigenous) party instead of a "foreign polity" firmly attached to its Chinese roots.[20]

The opening up of the political terrain allowed the Democratic Progressive Party to attain legal status and to grow into the second largest party in Taiwan by the

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threatened to attach a rider to the budget bill barring the foreign ministry from amending the passport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made a compromise to print the English phrase "Issued in Taiwan" rather than "Taiwan" alone to the new passport. DPP legislator Shen Fu-shiong opposed the resolution for the phrase implies that there were more to the Republic of China's territory. Another DPP legislator Lin Chin-hsing further explained that the words "Issued in Taiwan" would relegate Taiwan into a "local government" instead of a national government. "Issued in Taiwan xinban huzhao han ting" [New "Issued in Taiwan" Passport to Be Called Off], *China Times*, July, 2002.

[18] For studies on Taiwan's democratization process and identity politics, see, for example, Stephane Corcuff, ed., *Memories of the Future*; Murray Rubinstein, ed., *The Other Taiwan: 1945 to Present* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996); and Alan Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

[19] Lucie Cheng, "Transnational Labor, Citizenship and State-Building Ideology in Taiwan," *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 48 (2002), 37.

[20] The KMT as a "foreign polity" is Lee's term. See, Rwei-ren Wu, "Towards a Pragmatic Nationalism," 203-206, for an analysis on how Lee appropriated the DPP's nativism to transform the party into a "Taiwanese KMT."

mid 1990s. Since its emergence as an oppositional force to the Chinese Nationalist Party in the 1980s, the DPP has outlined political democratization and Taiwan independence as its major agendas.[21] As the KMT gradually eroded its old ties to China, the DPP also softened its opinion on the issue of Taiwan independence while continuing to push for political reform. Although it still maintains that the future of Taiwan should be decided by the people through democratic means, the DPP shies away from calling for immediate independence. However, their divergent stances on the issue of Taiwan independence remain the most important difference that separates the two major parties in Taiwan. Therefore, both sides keep playing on the issue of ethnicity and national identity in order to hold on to their political base even if it is an issue that neither one can really act on.

Towards the end of his final term, in an interview with German Deutsche Welle radio station, Lee defined the relation between Taiwan and China as a "special state-to-state relation (*teshu guo yu guo guanxi*)." The statement, made in 1999, clearly delivered the message that Taiwan as the Republic of China was a sovereign state and demanded to be treated as such in cross-strait talks. Lee's statement was interpreted as a dramatic change from the one-China principle and an endorsement of Taiwan's nation-building project. A total break from the old KMT seemed to be on the verge and the two extreme opinions on Taiwan's relation with China seemed to have finally converged on a middle ground tilting towards separation from China. Yet, the earth-shaking results from the following year's elections provided another twist on this already complicated plotline.

The push for democratization finally resulted in a shift of power in March 2000, when the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election with 39 percent of the vote and the KMT was voted out of the presidential office for the first time in 55 years.[22] While Chen claimed the peaceful transition as a "glorious moment" and a "beginning of a new era" that would "set a new model for the Asian experience of democracy,"[23] the self-proclaimed New Government still had to confront the thorny issue of national identity. Forced to operate within the constraint of the Republic of China, it found less room for its Taiwanese nationalist agenda.

Chen's triumph sent the island into a daze. It was a victory that stunned his supporters as much as his adversaries. The next day, headlines of newspapers across the island proclaimed that, "the Sky [*tian*] has been overturned." The sky refers to the

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[21] For the DPP's China policy and development, see, for example, T.Y. Wang, "'One China, One Taiwan': An Analysis of the Democratic Progressive Party's China Policy," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 35 (2000).

[22] During its campaign, the DPP has constructed a history of Taiwan's democratization process that would lead to the downfall of KMT and the rise of DPP. Accordingly, the triumph of Chen was the inevitable outcome of this democratization and Taiwan's nation-building endeavor.

[23] Chen Shui-bian, "Inaugural Speech," May 20, 2000.

KMT, whose party emblem is a white sun on top of a blue background. It also implies a governing force that would forever stay above and is seemingly as indispensable as a force of nature. But the impossible was achieved. Despite the uncertainty lying ahead and the shock of a tectonic shift still reeling, people celebrated late into the night that Chen declared his historically unprecedented victory.

Since the 1990s, elections in Taiwan have been known for their popular enthusiasm and festive spirit. For the Taiwanese, every election is a big carnival. And a historical event like this, of course, called for even larger celebrations.[24]

One celebrator, standing outside Chen's campaign headquarters in Kaohsiung City, told me that they had to party because "the Chinese might send a missile or something across the Taiwan Strait tomorrow."[25] Other celebrators were not as concerned about China and were more concerned about taking part in the incredible event. The scene was wild yet orderly to the extent of being surreal. Vehicles came from all over the city. But instead of a massive traffic jam, people in their cars and on their scooters simply joined into an orderly parade circulating around downtown Kaohsiung. They blared their car horns and waved flags while the police watched without interference. When I jokingly asked some young people banging their drums on top of a pick-up truck if they would get a ticket from the policeman standing right around the corner, they assured me it was not an issue at all. "No worries!" One of the men shouted back. "The police are off-duty tonight because the sky has just collapsed." It was almost as if the island had been turned upside down.

To some, it has indeed become so.

For over fifty years, the Nationalist Party and the state had been one and the same thing. Numbed by half of a century of KMT rule, the people in Taiwan expected the KMT to always be the governing party. This decoupling of the party and the state was unthinkable and hard to swallow by many KMT supporters and confusing for most people in Taiwan. The "fall" of the KMT, to its avid supporters, was the "fall" of the Republic of China.

While the Beijing government remained mostly calm and restrained in its reactions to the election results, tensions arose from within the island. Disappointed and disillusioned, some KMT supporters vented their frustration on the incumbent

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[24] Part of the KMT's "black and gold" politics involved catering big banquets in temple plazas or other outdoor public spaces for voters to eat for free. Although the practice had since been outlawed in the late 1990s, elections and the all-you-can-eat free "running water feasts" (*liushuixi*) are still synonymous to many Taiwanese. Emerged from "street movements" (*jietou yundong*), the DPP has always been very adept in mobilizing its supporters and staging campaign rallies, even at the time when the party was not yet legalized. The festive atmosphere of Taiwan's election might have been partially resulted from the tradition of "running water feasts," the "street" characteristic in the DPP's campaign strategy, and the parties' need to out-stage one another.

[25] The statement was a reference to China's missile threat over Taiwan during the island's first direct presidential elections in 1996.

president and KMT chairman Lee Teng-hui. During the days after the election, they rallied outside of KMT's Taipei headquarters and asked for Lee to step down as the party's chair. The demonstrators claimed that he "betrayed" the KMT as well as the Republic of China. It was their belief that, by refusing to endorse the popular James Soong, who left the party to run for the office as an independent, Lee split the KMT vote. Rumor had it that Lee had always supported Chen. Therefore, he deliberately misled KMT supporters to believe that the incompatible KMT presidential candidate Lian Chan, whom he approved, had a chance and they should not waste their votes on Soong.[26]

Conspiracy theories were abundant during those days. When the news of the demonstrations against Lee was shown on TV in a teashop in Kaohsiung, a middle-aged man, who had previously stated his support for Chen, claimed that those marching were not Taiwanese. Pointing out the accent of a demonstrator who had been interviewed on TV, he said, "That must be a *daluren*." Although the theory seemed far-fetched, to my surprise, others in the shop agreed. They believed that "real Taiwanese" would embrace this victory for democracy. Therefore, the demonstrators and party supporters must have gotten some help from the Chinese and they had gathered those "illegal immigrants" to disrupt the social order so as to revoke the election results. In an ironic twist to the KMT's rhetoric during the Cold War era that maintained there were communist bandit spies (*feidie*) among the people, the customers in the teashop believed that there indeed were Chinese spies among the people. But the KMT and the communist spies must have reconciled with each other, for these spies now worked for the KMT.

In the moments of utter confusion, Taipei City Councilwoman Hsieh Chi-ta from the pro-unification New Party, which broke off from the KMT because of their disapproval of Lee's path towards sovereignty for Taiwan, also came to the rally and called for Lee's resignation from the KMT. To those affiliated with the 100-year-old party, it was not the KMT that was defeated. It was the R.O.C. that had been ultimately overthrown. Therefore, it was the right and responsibility of every citizen of the Republic of China to see that the "traitor" got what he deserved. Instead of carrying the party flags, the supporters waved small plastic "blue sky, white sun, and red earth" flags of the Republic of China, marking their agenda and their crisis as a "national" issue.[27]

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[26] For detailed account on the 2000 elections, see, Larry Diamond, "Anatomy of an Electoral Earthquake: How the KMT Lost and the DPP Won the 2000 Presidential Election," in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *Taiwan's Presidential Politics: Democratization and the Cross-Strait Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

[27] In gathering of other political parties, supporters would don colors of their parties (green for the DPP, yellow for the New Party, and orange for the PFP) and wave their party flags. However, supporters of the KMT have always waved R.O.C. national flag instead of their own party flag in

Lee eventually left the Party. The KMT formed an alliance (the "Blue" camp)[28] with James Soong's People First Party (PFP) as well as the New Party, and it took more than a step back from Lee's policy toward declaring sovereignty from China. Nonetheless, neither the KMT nor the PFP openly advocated for reunification with China. Instead, with the exception of the pro-China New Party, the "Blue" camp avoided any direct claim for sovereignty and took the populist route, constantly playing on the fear of clashes with China to pressure the DPP but refusing to make any clear statement about unification. To the Blue camp rallying under the banner of guarding the Republic of China, the goal was not to fend off China. Nor was it to find diplomatic space for the quasi-state political entity. Their goal was to take "Taiwan" off the agenda and maintain the R.O.C. on a passport that is "inconvenient to use." It was about containing Taiwanese nationalist aspiration or any kind of nationalist aspiration under the cover of the Republic of China. It was to defend the Republic of China from its very own ruling party, constantly scrutinizing it for every trivial sign that the New Government might head down the road of Taiwan independence and betray the "people."

James Soong came in a close second to Chen in the elections. Together, he and Lian garnered 61 percent of the votes. The result was interpreted by the Blue camp as evidence that the DPP was only supported by a minority and that the Blue side represented the majority on the island. With the DPP holding less than 50 percent of the seats in the Legislature, the Blue camp was often able to press Chen's administration to comply with their request or block the DPP's proposals, inadvertently providing the DPP a good excuse whenever their policies did not work out. While the DPP won the election in large because of its stress on reform against the KMT's corrupted "black and gold" (*heijin*, mob and bribery) politics, after the election, many issues were again pushed into the impossible bind of a dual Taiwan-R.O.C. identity. The KMT-led "Blue" and the DPP-led "Green" camps constantly accused each other of bringing "ideology" (*yishixingtai*)[29] into policy-making, and political debate fell into partisanship and arguments over national identity. Almost every public issue in Taiwan, from halting the construction of a nuclear power plant to reforming education, has been overshadowed by incessant bickering between the Blue and the Green camps and there has been little political

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gatherings, further reinforced the idea that the KMT and R.O.C. are the same thing.

[28] Since the election, political parties in Taiwan are often grouped into the "pan-Blue" and the "pan-Green" camps. The "Blue" refers to the KMT and those affiliated with the party. The pro-independent "Green" camp, while less clearly defined, usually refers to the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union, which broke out of the KMT with Lee's endorsement.

[29] The phrase *yishixingtai* was the translation of "ideology." However, nowadays, in Taiwanese popular discourse, *yishixingtai* often stands for "*tongdu yishixingtai*," that is, the idea of unification and/or independence.

space for anyone who does not adhere to the color scheme.

Guarding the Republic of China was a paradoxical project to at once defend the state while refusing to delineate its sovereignty, to avoid the issue of "Taiwan" but at the same time call attention to it by constantly monitoring the New Government's attempt to bring "Taiwan" into the mix, and to deny the designation of Taiwan on the cover of the R.O.C. passport while silently recognizing that Taiwan is all that the R.O.C. can cover and from where all the votes for the next elections would come. The Blue could not and would not place "Taiwan" in opposition to R.O.C. for "the Republic of China *is* Taiwan." But this effort to stop Taiwan from surfacing only further troubled the R.O.C. and polarized the two equally perplexing "nation-views."[30]

Unable to call for unification or to deny that the R.O.C. is Taiwan, for the Blue camp, guarding the R.O.C. became guarding the formality of it, the appearance and the name that only can be recognized and claimed in Taiwan. In the end, it was about maintaining appropriate procedures and legality, regardless of what nation is under the cover of the R.O.C. Adding "Taiwan" on the passport confirmed the fear and allegation that the New Government was about to renounce the Republic of China. Although the New Government insisted that the change was not a political statement, as John Torpey points out, "the control over distribution of passport" is an "essential attribute of national independence." Thus, "state-builders see the authority to issue one's passport as a vital element of sovereignty"[31] and the DPP's proposal could not be as innocent as they claimed it was. However, while rejecting the proposal, both the KMT and the PFP sidestepped the problem of national identity and sovereignty just as Chen and the DPP shielded their nationalist intent under the cover of practicality. Lian, the KMT chairman, claimed that his party's objection to the new passport was not to deny "Taiwan" or the people's will. Instead, he maintained that changing the cover of the passport was a "constitutional issue" because it would take a revision of the constitution to change a country's title even though the New Government did not propose to change the title of "the Republic of China."[32] Soong, on the other hand, claimed that the passport should not be linked with national identity. According to him, the change should have been an "administrative order" that could have been taken care of by a lower-level bureaucratic authority. There was no need to elevate the issue to a "major policy announcement" by the president unless it was to change the nation's title, which would require a revision of the constitution by the legislature and

[30] Duara speaks of "nation-views" as "the way in which the nation is represented and voiced by different self-conscious group" that "constitute and define" the nation. Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 10.
[31] Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*, 146.
[32] *China Times*, January 15, 2002.

was not in the president's power. Soong questioned the appropriateness of the procedure and called the proposal "out of line (*tuoxian* and *tuogao*)," that is, not performing according to the script.[33] None were willing to go as far as saying that "Taiwan" had no place on the passport. It was only a question about proper procedure. Much like the man from the Taipei Economic Office in Chicago, their point was to insist on using the formal name of "citizen of the Republic of China" without a footnote mentioning the colloquial name of "Taiwan."

While the two camps stood on opposite ends of the passport debate, a common theme running through their arguments was that the other side would jeopardize Taiwan/R.O.C.'s survival in the global society. The Blue camp constantly accused the DPP of being "antiglobalization" because its nationalist agenda would push Taiwan out of international organizations. The DPP, on the other hand, insisted that the Blue camp was "anti-Taiwan" and did not want to accept the reality that the R.O.C. would not be accepted by the international society.

Taiwan and the Republic of China could not find a way to co-exist on the passport. "Taiwan" then, became even more unspeakable than before, a ghostly figure that haunts and unsettles the nationalist debates between the New Government and the old parties. With the Republic of China and Taiwan clashing with each other, the passport is still inconvenient to use. There need to be other ways to get through customs.

Going Places

"The power to connect with the world originates from local places," Yin Yun-peng maintains in her introduction to *Common Wealth Magazine*'s (Tianxia Zazhi) twentieth anniversary special issue. "The key for all aspirations, visions, and efforts to succeed is to curtail the distance between the cities and the countryside and to find hope in every small town and village."[34] The hope for the Taiwanese to link up with the world, in her view, lies not in finding a solution to the incompatible pair of Taiwan and the R.O.C. or obtaining international recognition for the passport and the nation's title but in returning to local places within national boundaries. By searching inside, there may be the possibility to find a true identity and a position that would carry the people of Taiwan far into the future. Going in, therefore, becomes a way of going out that, hopefully, would not be captured by national customs.

Seeking to find a position in the world through production of the local is a response not only to a national project that cannot announce its name but also to the

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[33] *China Times*, January 15, 2002.

[34] Yin, "319 Ge Gushi: Dianran Xiangzhen Xiwang" [319 Stories: Lighting Up Hopes in Xiangs and Zhens], in *319 Xiang Xiangqianxing* [319 Xiangs March Forward] (Taipei: Common Wealth Magazine, 2001) 7.

pressure from globalizing forces. Rob Wilson and Wilmal Dissanayake point out that "globalization, paradoxically, has led to a strengthening of local ties, allegiances, and identity politics within different nation-state formations."[35] Localization, therefore, operates within global and national contexts. The proliferation of places in Taiwan was born out of the conjunction of global forces and nationalist project(s). Hsin-yi Lu's study on community building in Taiwan demonstrates that the turn to the local corresponded with modern nostalgia for the authentic and nationalist projects to define national cultures in order to claim legitimacy in the international community as well as within the nation-state. She points out that "preservation and revitalization of local cultures corresponded with the rise of multiculturalism, which was seen as an essential step toward a liberal democracy and would engender the international acceptance of Taiwan as a progressive nation." [36] What had started as a resistance to the KMT's repression of Taiwanese identity served as a fertile ground for the formulation of a Taiwan-centered nation-building project as well as a response to global capitalism that threatened to wipe out all differences yet at the same time demands "difference" as a valuable commodity in the world market. As a result, "having a culture gradually became an imperative for Taiwan to consolidate its nationhood in the international community."[37]

Culture, in effect, has been the keyword in the construction of national discourses in Taiwan and elsewhere. Informed by Anderson's idea that nations are imagined and Gellner's assertion that the ruling class stresses similarities and spreads "national high culture" so that there can be one "culture" through which members of a nation can communicate and labor force is standardized, Allen Chun's studies illustrate the role "culture" plays in both the KMT and the DPP's nationalist projects.[38] Focusing his analyses on the state's cultural policies through the normative machinery of education, media, and workplace, Chun suggests that the KMT and the DPP, while having different nations in mind, both strive to legitimatize their claims and authority through defining, implementing, and deploying national cultures. For the KMT, implementing traditional Chinese culture not only served to homogenize the population for easier control but also provided the basis to justify the Republic of China as the bearer of authentic Chinese tradition and representative of

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[35] Rob Wilson and Wilmal Dissanayake, "Introduction: Tracking theGlobal/Local," in Rob Wilson and Wilmal Dissanayake, eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, (Durham: Duke University, 1996), 5.

[36] Hsin-yi Lu, *The Politics of Locality: Making a Nation of Communities in Taiwan (New York: Routledge, 2002)*, 18-19

[37] Ibid. 16.

[38] Allen Chun, "From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and the State Formation in Postwar Taiwan," *The Australia Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 31 (1991); "Democracy as Hegemony, Globalization as Indigenization, or the 'Culture' in Taiwanese National Politics," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 35.1 (2000).

all Chinese people. During the Cultural Revolution in China in the 1960s and 1970s, "traditional Chinese culture" legitimatized the KMT's rule in Taiwan and allowed it to demarcate a difference from Communist China. During Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui's regimes in the following two decades, a turn to indigenization successfully transformed the KMT from a "foreign polity" to a legitimate governing party of Taiwan.[39]

Hsin-yi Lu looks at the local level and demonstrates how the national search for culture shifted its attention in the 1990s to local community building projects. The supposedly grassroots-oriented project, she notes, "was initiated by the central government, directed by governmental workers and planners, and financed mostly by governmental subsidy."[40] Through these "community-making projects," the nation-state was able to "refashion" itself and, as a result, "the transition of the state power structure has largely determined its community policy."[41]

Seemingly apolitical, both the local and the cultural served as fertile grounds to cultivate national identity. Local cultures made it possible to announce national identity through connections to places rather than through bloodlines and to consolidate a nation through an inventory of its local places and local cultures within its territory. And with the nation-state unable to claim an international space, a turn to the local also provided a possibility or a hope to get around national boundaries to make connections to the world. Herein lies the paradox of this local project, for it aspires to bypass national boundaries while confining itself firmly within a national territory and reaffirming a nation-building project.

For an island where more than 90 percent of the inhabitants immigrated from China in the past 500 years, asserting a sense of local connection has become a strategy of tracing ties to the land and confirming one's legitimacy as an occupant of the territory. Prior to the presidential elections, James Soong built up his support by visiting or claiming that he had visited every township in Taiwan. During his term as governor of Taiwan, Soong had been to the "309 towns and cities" of Taiwan at least once.[42] The endeavor of going to each place is often described in Hoklo[43] as "*cháu tao tao*." *Cháu*, the verb, can be translated literally as "run" but broadly refers to various ways of moving from one place to another. *Tao tao* is the slang for "thoroughly." Together, *cháu tao tao* means going everywhere within a certain territory without missing one single location. It also conveys the meaning of making

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[39] See, Stéphane Corcuff, "Taiwan's 'Mainlanders,' New Taiwanese," in *Memories of the Future* on Teng-Hui Lee's "cultural China" for a different twist on the Chinese cultural identity in which a Taiwanese nationalist agenda was able to operate under the foil of a greater Chinese heritage.
[40] Lu, *The Politics of Locality*, 165.
[41] Ibid. 165.
[42] Diamond, "Anatomy of an Electoral Earthquake."
[43] Southern Chinese dialect spoken by roughly 70% of the residents in Taiwan.

an effort to cover every corner and thoroughly get in touch with every place. For Soong, embarking on the task of *cháu tao tao* helped to validate his claim that he truly understood the people and to diffuse the suspicion that he, as an immigrant from China when he was a child, could not identify with Taiwan.

But Soong wasn't the only one taking these trips. The restructuring of work time during the late 1990s allowed Taiwanese to engage in more leisure activities, including domestic travel. Aiming to boost ticket sales and encourage consumption, the Taiwan Railway Administration and Tourism Bureau devised a series of programs to encourage people, especially young and single urbanites, to visit small places in Taiwan by rail. This increased mobility also prompted people to look for more places they could go and see. *Cháu tao tao* became part of the popular discourse to search for "authenticity" in rural Taiwan and a past that has become foreign thanks to economic development and urbanization. Television programming and newspapers devoted sections introducing local cuisines, peoples, temples, resorts and all kinds of local color in Taiwan. Even the hip Channel V video jocks dressed in their baggy clothes took their shows to small towns. The production of local culture became something more than merely the writing of local histories. People were actively incited to travel to different locales and to consume the various local histories that have been written and local cultures that have been developed in the last decade.[44] Constructed for a nation-building project, localities became the new commodities that could be consumed in a global market of local places as a means of "linking track with the world."

In November 2001, *Common Wealth Magazine* published a four-volume special issue featuring the townships (*xiang*) and small towns (*zhen*) of Taiwan to celebrate the magazine's twentieth anniversary. *Xiang* and *zhen* are both administrative units in Taiwan that roughly correspond to townships, with *xiang* usually referring to less dense settlement and *zhen* to small towns. While the 319 townships in the series include both *xiang* and *zhen*, the title of the volume is *319 Xiang March Forward* (319 *xiang xiangqianxing*). Calling the 319 townships *xiang* instead of both *xiang* and *zhen* insinuates that these sometimes semi-urban areas are still rural countryside. Moreover, in Chinese, *xiang* also has the meaning of homeland. Therefore, the 319 *xiang* counted in the series are not only 319 townships but also 319 hometowns.[45]

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[44] In the early 1990s, Taiwan's Council for Cultural Affairs devised programs to encourage local organizations to "write village history" (*xie cun shi*) as part of the effort to build "integrated communities" in Taiwan. See, Lu, *The Politics of Locality*.

[45] Here, the project reminds one of Japan's domestic tourism promotions in the late twentieth century where people were encouraged to seek out the rural *furusato* (hometown). As Marilyn Ivy explains, the term "*furusato*" is a "fusion of two horizons of desire" that represents an "origin available for nostalgic recuperation" and appeals to "curiosity about the exotic, unknown, and strange aspects of yet another Japan." Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago), 105 and 101.

These 319 *xiang* are grouped into four subgroups by region, each with a special attribute to define its place in relation to other regions. The North is the gateway to the globe, the East is the last "pure" land that holds the seeds of the future, the Middle has the best of Taiwan's resources and is the key to development, and the South is the fertile agricultural homeland whose "low development" might attract those nostalgically seeking to return to the land. Every one of the 319 townships has its distinctive feature. Some of them are known for their "cultural assets" (*wenhua zichan*) or "cultural industry," such as Sanyi and its wood carving or Shenkeng and its tofu cuisine. Some have their special "local character," such as Chutong's awareness of environmental issues and Shimen's reputation for hospitality. Accompanying every account of the 319 *xiang* is a "township profile" outlining its demographic composition, area, elevation, number of factories, number of hospitals, number of *cun* and *li* (smaller administrative units), number of volunteer organizations, and its major (cultural) products.

While the title grants a measure of mobility to these *xiang* in their forward march, it was the people who were supposed to "march forward" from the cities to come visit them that would ensure that the *xiang* would advance to the future. As the opening epigraph at the front of each volume proclaimed, "319 *xiang* are waiting."[46] They are waiting to be seen, discovered, and collected. With the publication of the series, the magazine also issued a "319 Xiang Passport." The program was incorporated into the Cultural Bureau's "Year of Cultural Assets" activities. Holders of the passport were to go to the 319 *xiang* and collect a stamp from every town and village issued from the local authorities. Condensed into small stamps that can be collected, local places can be counted, possessed, narrated as a series, and carried everywhere through the medium of a document that emulates the proof of national membership in the act of crossing borders. The "319 Xiang Passport" is the nation turned inside out.

While Lu warns against the state's heavy-handed top-down approach to local projects and the dependency of community-building projects on the nation-state, cultural worker Tsai Shau-bin sees the opposite and argues that the government should have done more. He complains that the monumental task of surveying and inventorying the "cultural assets" of the island should have been carried out by the government.[47] However, to see the objectification of culture into things that can be counted, possessed, and circulated only as a way for the state to manipulate them and build hegemony and Tsai's complaint as kind of blind faith to the state's

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[46] Chin-chin Hsiao, "Chufaba! 319 Xiang Zai Dengdai" [Set Out! 319 Xiangs Are Waiting], in *319 Xiang Xiangqianxing*.

[47] Shao-bin Tsai, "319 Xiang Wenhuazichan Xiangqianxing, Buxiang!"[319 Marching Forward is a No Go!], *e-South Newsletter*, October 8, 2001. http://www.esouth.org

nation-building project would be to overlook the desire for "culture" and for "rootedness" that is prevalent in Taiwan.

Attending to the local provides a means to ground things in a shifting world without having to touch on the dilemma of national identity. The transformation of localities, people, and cultures into collectibles makes it even easier to define and possess them. An exchange that I witnessed between two tour guides who were taking part in a training session offered by the Kaohsiung City government explains the strategy plainly. When a guide doubted that she might not have "enough culture" to perform her task, her friend replied, scornfully, "Culture? Throw money into it and you've got it (*qian diujinqu jiu youle*)." In a short sentence, he summed up a simple resolution to the complicated problem of how to "have culture." Instead of painstakingly scribbling down local histories, one simply buys them off the shelves. Moreover, much like goods that could be bought, cultures and local places can be made into a form of display for window-shopping: "You spend some money and build some nice-looking facades for buildings, tidy up the streets, and hang some new business signs. Then you can say you have culture." In fancier academic jargon, local places and cultures can be invented and commodified or put on display as a way of stabilizing the constant flux of modern temporality and spatiality. Accompanying this turn to the local is a more urgent desire for consumable forms of culture to complete or compete with the globalizing, nationalizing, and localizing projects.

Having traveled and collected stamps, peoples, and cultural goods, the travelers as well as the collectibles can construct a bond that comes from living and traveling within the same territory, a bond that underscores the desire and ability to travel and de-emphasizes the question of what nation one has in mind. The project to go places in order to transcend national boundaries and improper travel documents, consequently, grounds its travelers and residents firmly within national territory. Nonetheless, while it reaffirms and maintains a national *geo-body*,[48] this mutual sense of belonging based on shared experiences on the same land instead of shared bloodlines allows for an articulation of "Taiwan" that is more inclusive yet at the same time susceptible to trespassing.

The inclusive approach is evident in a collection of historical figures under the title of "Authentic Taiwanese" (*Zhenggang Taiwanren*) published in 2000. In the introduction, Chuang Yong-ming outlines the purpose for the collection as allowing people to learn history with a light heart. Worrying that history could be heavily burdened by colonial occupation and that the local cultural education "devised in a hurry" could not sufficiently "awake historical memories and identity with the land," Chuang suggests that the people of Taiwan need to "relax" and accept the colonial

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[48] The term comes from Thongchai. See, Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped*.

past as part of one's heritage and see history as an "accumulation of the life experience of people on the land."[49] Therefore, the best way to learn history, according to him, is through historical figures that had lived and traveled on the island. Chuang explains that, "be these people Aborigines, Hoklos, Hakkas, Mainlanders, or foreigners," they could be "true Taiwanese" as long as they "had devoted sweat, tears, and blood to the land."[50] As a statement that anyone could be Taiwanese, the collection documents twenty "foreigners" who had worked hard (*dapin*) for Taiwan, starting with George Leslie Mackay, a Presbyterian missionary from Canada whose contribution to the community had made him a quintessential "local" figure in the northern town of Tamshui (Tanshui). The rest of the book includes names from English, German, as well as Japanese origins. British missionary James L. Maxwell, German biologist Hans Sauter, and Japanese anthropologist Torii Ryūzo stand side by side on bookshelves. Everybody becomes Taiwanese.

The collection is part of the current effort in Taiwan to construct a Taiwanese culture as a diverse culture and to appropriate Taiwan's colonial past to identify the island as a place always already occupied by various international forces. Centering history on the land of Taiwan makes the island into an all-encompassing place where the foreign and various articulations of history are subsumed and incorporated into a larger pluralistic discourse of a "true Taiwan." Moreover, it repositions Taiwan at the crossroads of global flows of peoples and things and redefines Taiwan as an already internationalized global player. Yet, although these "foreigners" have attained recognition as Taiwanese, the people of Taiwan find it utterly difficult and perplexing to be "true Taiwanese." For more than a century, colonial occupations brought about constant shifts of identities and left people disoriented. From the Japanese colonizers to the Chinese nationalists, various regimes implemented policies to make the people into appropriate national subjects. Questioning the discrepancy between the national title and its "content," poet Lee Ming-yong expresses this sentiment: "The people on the island have been Japanese and Chinese because of foreign governance. But unless Taiwan is once again devoured by governing forces from without, one day people on the island will come to be (*chengwei*) Taiwanese."[51] One day. Which means that the people of Taiwan are not yet Taiwanese. While Lee believes that the people are not

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[49] Yong-ming Chuang, "Taiwan Fang Qingsong" [Taiwan Relax], in Huai Li and Chia-hua Chang, eds., *Zhenggang Taiwanren* [Authentic Taiwanese] (Taipei: Yuan-liou, 2000), 1. In June 1997, Taiwan's Ministry of Education announced the Knowing Taiwan (Renshi Taiwan) textbook reform to create a new junior high school curriculum consists of three textbooks on Taiwanese history, geography, and society, as opposed to the old textbooks that center on China. See, Stéphane Corcuff, "The Symbolic Dimensions of Democratization and the Transition of National Identity Under Lee Teng-hui," in *Memories of the Future*.

[50] Chuang, "Taiwan Fang Qingsong," 1.

[51] Min-yong Lee, "Guojia Mingshi de Fenrao" [The Trouble of the Nation's Name and Content], *Liberty Times*, March 10, 2001.

yet Taiwanese and there is still a long way to go before they are, the friend who forwarded me the passport stories has a different take: "Deep down, I believe everyone wants Taiwan to be independent. But there is nothing we can do about it. And in a foreseeable future, we will all very likely become (*biancheng*) Chinese. When that time comes, all I can do is say, 'damn it.'" Therefore, the people are not (yet) Chinese but something else. What could they be, then, if they do not fall anywhere in the either/or dichotomy of Chinese and Taiwanese?

A Borrowed Place

In 1994, scriptwriter Wu Nian-chen directed his first feature film *Duo Sang* based on the life story of his father, a mineworker who grew up under Japanese rule and suffered a lifetime of hardship after the decline of gold mining in northern Taiwan. Throughout the film, the father repeatedly expresses his admiration for everything Japanese and argues with his KMT-educated young children when they do not share the same sentiment. Yet, the man's dream of visiting the "ancestor country" he longed for is not fulfilled until after he takes his own life. When the son brings his picture, or as Wu puts it, his soul, to Japan, he lines up at the customs window for "foreigners." But the camera pans around and the audience sees that father and son are, in fact, standing in a position somewhere between the signs for "foreigners" and "citizens."

The scene is a telling portrait of the "tongue-tied" older generation's ambiguity over self-identity after decades of successive "foreign" occupations on the island.[52] Wu's father certainly was not the only one caught in between. From the agonizing quest of Taiwanese World War II veterans to gain recognition from the Japanese government to former president Lee's admission that he was once a Japanese, the presence of the former colonizer still looms large in Taiwan. Leo T.S. Ching further argues that, "although the current debate over Taiwanese independence and reunification with China is a post-Japanese phenomenon, the Japanese colonial period remains a powerful subtext in which the question of 'Taiwanese consciousness' and 'Chinese consciousness' are embedded and contested."[53] This strong attachment to Japan and a Pan-Asian cosmopolitan aspiration of today's Taiwan seemingly mimicking the Japanese ideal has many worried.

Chen Kuan-hsing fervently criticizes Taiwan as a sub-empire trying to take on the same role as its former colonizer and is suspicious of any Taiwanese nationalistic or state-building endeavor. Seeing the rewriting of Taiwan's history as a reincarnation

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[52] Wu describes the generation that grew up under Japanese rule as a generation that could not formulate its thoughts and communicate them in the languages now spoken in Taiwan. As a result, their speeches become "incoherent and tongue-tied." D.W. Davis, "A New Taiwan Person? A Conversation with Wu Nian-chen," *Positions: East Asian Cultures Critique* 11.3 (2003).

[53] Leo T.S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001), 8.

of repressive national discourse, Chen terms the effort to reposition Taiwan as a "future-oriented" interpretation that selectively pieces together a certain history to serve and reaffirm a subimperialist Taiwan-centered imagination. In particular, Chen focuses his criticism on the "reaffirming of Japanese occupation movement" that claims ties to one colonizer (Japan) in order to resist another (China) and alleges it as based on a "separatist ideology" that "divorces Taiwan from China by foregrounding Taiwan's relationship with Japan and downplaying that with the mainland."[54] Furthermore, Chen sees this self-centered worldview as continuous with a (Japanese) colonial imagination in which "the previously colonized make use of the colonizer's cultural imaginary in the move to become the new colonizer." "The 'discovery' of Taiwan's new identity," he argues, "comes almost completely from the cultural imaginary constructed by imperialists at the historical transition."[55] Therefore, there is nothing new about the search for a "new past," for the search is inherently imperialist, a poorly imagined construction that is hardly original.

Unfortunately, Chen himself could not provide any alternative to the oppressive and unimaginative "reaffirming of Japanese occupation movement" other than implicitly endorsing Taiwan's (rightful) position as a non-nation and masking his own desire to divorce Taiwan from Japan in order to foreground the island's relation with the mainland. However, becoming Chinese is an equally, if not more, painful choice for many Taiwanese who could not readily take up the identity of a "Chinese" or a cosmopolitan intellectual sliding between various roles. Although the KMT spent decades to build Taiwan as the authentic cultural China, even for those who strongly believe in Taiwan's tie with the mainland, Taiwan is, in Shu-mei Shih's words, "a diasporic Chinese community that can never return 'home'."[56] Homecoming, then, is at best a dream never fulfilled and at worst a nightmare that literally kills.

In writer Wu Chou-liou's celebrated semi-autobiographic novel *The Orphan of Asia* (*Yasiya de Guer*), the protagonist's quest for an identity in China sends him to the same awkward position and fatal outcome as Wu Nian-chen's miner father. Written decades before *Duo Sang*, the novel spans from the year 1910 to war-time Asia and depicts an idealistic young intellectual's journey to the metropolis of Japan and the "ancestor country" of China in search of himself only to find that he is trapped between the two, treated as a Japanese spy by the Chinese and a second-class colonial

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[54] Chen, "The Imperialist Eye," 50. While Chen is critical to the inherently repressiveness of nationalist discourse as colonial discourse, his selective neglect of "Taiwan" and the power of national imagination in Taiwan has always been questioned. Furthermore, in bringing class into discussion and thus stay true to his "leftist" position, Chen also overlooks how ethnicity/language and class in Taiwan are intertwined and cannot be easily divorced. See, Kuei-fen Chiu, "Houzhimin de Taiwan Yanyi" [Interpretations of Postcolonial Studies in Taiwan], in Kuei-fen Chiu, *Rethinking Postcolonial Literary Criticism in Taiwan*.

[55] Chen, "The Imperialist Eye," 50.

[56] Shih, "Globalization and the (In)significance of Taiwan," *Postcolonial Studies* 6.2 (2003), 151.

subject by the Japanese. Unable to find a place in the world, he crumbles and goes insane. The story does not end where the novel ends, though. Wu Chou-liou suffered through his own fruitless search and became another victim crushed under the weight of confusing identities, taking his own life, as Wu Nian-chen's father did. To this day, readers of *The Orphan* still debate over the position of Wu and his protagonist, either prescribing them as proto-Taiwanese nationalists or as the heirs of a pan-China anti-imperialist movement.[57]

From Wu Chou-liou's fictional character to Wu Nian-chen's father, stories of Taiwanese people's search for a position often end in the literal demise of the subject without result. Like the people who could not decide whether they are Chinese or Taiwanese and the father whose position remains between a foreigner and a citizen even after death, Taiwan seems to be forever stuck in the perpetual predicament of "not quite," not only in its quest for an identity but also in its pursuit for a place in the modern world.

Borrowing the idea of colonial modernity from Tani Barlow and informed by Chen Kuan-Hsing, Hsia Chu-Joe interprets the history of urban developments in Taiwan under Japanese rule as a forlorn experience of colonization that results in the island's inability to escape colonial construction.[58] Whereas some attempts to appropriate the foreign experiences on Taiwan as a part of an indigenous history that could subsume them under a Taiwan-centered articulation of the past, Hsia sees no way out. For him, successive foreign occupations persist to inform and construct the colonized people's imagination of their selves and the world. Therefore, modern day Taiwan is built on the past of colonial occupation, and the island inherits, physically as well as conceptually, visions of its former master. The modern aspiration to position Taiwan in the world and to move forward into a global future, Hsia maintains, is a "thirdhand modernity" that has been transferred twice, a "West (*xiyang*) by way of Japan (*dongyang*)."[59] Modernity, then, lies somewhere else and needs to be translated, thus, deferred and delayed. It becomes impossible for the Taiwanese both to trace modernity's origin and to claim it after its double translation.

The origin of the past is unattainable. Modernity and the global are at a distance. And the future seems to be colonized by a modern teleology that leads to a totalizing vision of globality, one that is desired but at the same time feared and unapproachable. Taiwan, then, is at best an incompetent impostor trying to become a

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[57] For detailed analyses of Wu's novel and its implication on contemporary Taiwan's identity issues from diverse perspectives, see Leo T.S. Ching, *Becoming Japanese*, chapter 5, and Ping-hui Liao, "Image Consumption and trans-local discursive practice: decoding advertisements in the Taipei MRT Mall," *Postcolonial Studies* 6.2 (2003).
[58] Chu-joe Hsia, "Building Colonial Modernity: Rewriting Histories of Architecture and Urbanism in the Colonial Taiwan," *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 40 (2000), 50.
[59] Ibid. 62-3

colonizer and to take up the worldview but unable to claim the roots for it, marginalizing itself as the colonized waiting to catch a future-bound train or as another semi-empire still trapped in the colonizer's imagination. The difficulty of how to assert oneself in the world and make the foreign place home remains unanswered.

However, Hsia's assertion that Taiwan is constructed and constricted by its colonial history can be read against his own writing, if we want to take the argument one step further. Modernity, colonialism, and globalization are products of each other. "Taiwan" as an idea and a category emerges out of and can disappear "in the very process of negotiating the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism."[60] While Hsia sees the "unimaginative" construction as prohibitive and inauthentic, it is equally important to recognize that, once the historical circumstances of Japanese colonialism and the separation from mainland China have produced "Taiwan" as an idea (however inauthentic it may be), it also enables "Taiwan" to speak from a position, one that Hsia refuses to recognize but one that the people on the island are eager to define. Today's Taiwan is searching for ways to connect with the world not necessarily as one kind of postcolonial but by trying on every possibility, looking for ways in, out, and within the confines of its past history and the present world order. While there is always the danger that the island might fall into the "three fallacies" that Abbas identifies, attempting to stifle Taiwan's effort to gain recognition and achieve some kind of identity into these available representations equally misses the possibility of seeing the productiveness of Taiwan's awkward position.

In Chen's eagerness to paint all nationalist aspirations with the same postcolonial brush and Hsia's assertion of Taiwan's history as a history "without subjectivity," they have readily taken on the role of marginalized third-world postcolonial intellectuals and have failed or refused to see the much more complicated relation between Taiwan and its colonizers beyond that of a black man trying on a white mask. What frightens Hsia and Chen is exactly what worries Lee Min-yung and my friend. Taiwanese do not just mimic. They, in effect, have the potential and ability to become Japanese, Chinese, or something else. As Shih points out, "dis-identification (not just counter-identification)" is the basis upon which the "new collective imagination of a non-authentic multiculture may be possible."[61]

Wu Nian-chen's film is titled in English as "A Borrowed Life." It was a borrowed life because the father's life seems to be always dictated by circumstances not of his making—the War, the coming of the KMT, the decline of the gold mine, and a new era under a new government. It is also a name that suggests the island's

[60] Abbas, *Hong Kong*, 11.
[61] Shih, "Globalization and the (In)Significance of Taiwan," 150.

own fate. As the grandfather laments in the film when his youngest son is drafted by the KMT following his older son's service in the Japanese army, he is "always raising sons for others" and the Taiwanese are always serving different masters. The debt to its former master is even more evident in the film's Chinese tile *Duo Sang*. It is a borrowed phrase from Japanese "tōsan" that means "father," which is the term that Wu had always used to address his father. That the son calls his father in a foreign language might be interpreted as another unfortunate chapter in the island's history in which the people uncritically take up the colonizer's word. Yet, it might also point to a different direction in thinking about Taiwan's appropriation of its colonial past and the possibility of its cosmopolitan aspiration. It is not the grandfather who raises sons for others but the sons who are able to adopt a foreign language and a foreign man as his own father. At the end, every Taiwanese child is a bastard child. And a bastard child can become anyone or no one at all. It is from a position between being a child of a foreign father and an orphan in the world that Taiwan continues to trace its past and its future.

In Transition

In 2002, when the proposal to print "Issued in Taiwan" on the passport encountered objection, there was another change that was introduced. The name of Taiwan did not find its way on to the passport. Instead, the foreign ministry quietly printed pictures of black-faced spoonbill cranes on the pages inside, reasoning that the birds could serve as the unique and unmistakable symbol of Taiwan. The black-faced spoonbills are treated as national treasures for their scarcity and the island's significant place in their migrating route. Announcing their presence on the passport and on the island sidesteps the thorny issue of the nation-state and implies Taiwan's eagerness to be a good citizen of the globe by feeding into a heightened environmental conscious of the new century. That the island finds its representative in migratory birds that are without a homeland, however, also points to the hopes and hopelessness of taking part in the world. Even if it is from somewhere else, it can be appropriated, albeit temporarily, to take one to the world and to the future. Unable to claim a place, at least for now, Taiwan pins its hopes and projects its anguish to a global imaginary that now remains contested and intertwined with its colonial legacy and uncertain history.

Coda

As quietly as they had printed the bird on the passport, the New Government put Taiwan on passport cover in June, 2003 without raising too much media attention. Citing multiple poll results that indicate the majority of the people in Taiwan

preferred having the name “Taiwan” for “convenience,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs eventually convinced the legislators that this was what their voters wanted and the “Blue” camp relinquished their position in the end.

During the eight years of DPP’s rule, the KMT has also abandoned their anti-communist stance and began cultivating close relations with the CCP. They accused the DPP of “locking up the country’s door” and pushed for closer and closer economic ties with China while their leaders such as Lian became powerful brokers for business deals between Taiwan and China. This strategic alliance as well as the KMT’s assertion that the DPP was “anti-globalization,” “anti-business,” and “anti-economic development” helped the KMT to reclaim power in 2008. Since then, it has pushed for a “one-China, different interpretation” official line and established strong connection to China, allowing for more and more industries to move to the mainland and more and more Chinese tourists to enter Taiwan.

The close tie with China, however, does not result in closer identification with China. Instead, competition for work opportunities, interactions with Chinese people, and even encounters in international sporting events have prompted more and more Taiwanese to claim that they are not Chinese. The number of people identifying themselves as Taiwanese and not Chinese has risen to a historic high. The younger generation that have taken Taiwanese history and languages classes at school, part of the reform policy of the Chen regime, have an even stronger “Taiwanese only” identity. While the KMT interprets the “status quo” as a double negative of “not-unified and not-independent (status),” many young people in Taiwan interpret it as “being an independent entity without declaring it.” As a college student explains it, “there is no need to declare independence because we are independent. We are not a part of China.” Nonetheless, even though there is a growing consensus of “we are not a part of China,” there is still no consensus as to what to do about the Republic of China. While all supporting the claim of “we are not a part of China,” some argue that using the name “Taiwan” relegates the independent political entity to the status of “only a local place,” some see Taiwan and the Republic of China as “the same thing,” some claim that “as long as we are independent, I don’t care what name we use,” and some question the legitimacy of the Republic of China all together.

On March 18, 2014, after the KMT legislators hastily passed a service and trade pact with China without due process, protestors stormed into the chamber of the Legislature and proceeded to occupy it for 33 days. Tens of thousands participated in the protest now known as the Sunflower Occupation, forcing the KMT government to slow down its involvement with China. In the beginning of the occupation, the objection to the pact was articulated along the lines of civic rights such as job security and democracy. However, as the protest went on, the question of how the state should

protect the right of its citizens inevitably led to the question of exactly what kind of state the Republic of China is and whether or not the people's right can be defended if they are under this quasi-state. If the rally slogan was "my country, my responsibility (*ziji de guojia ziji jiou*)," then there was a need to define exactly what this country is. And if the issue was how a small privileged group of people monopolized economic opportunity in the country through their political ties, there was the need to trace the root of this privilege, all the way back to how the KMT took control of both the Republic of China and Taiwan. By the time the occupation ended on April 10, 2014, protesters were holding up posters claiming for Taiwan independence. Many began to mimic deceased activist Cheng Nan-rong's famous statement "I am Cheng Nan-rong. I support Taiwan independence" and leave post-its with their names and the same statement on the walls surrounding the Legislature.

Thus emerged, "Taiwan independence" is not an ethnic nationalism against a group of people who wanted to return to China and bring Taiwan with them. It is a civic identity that seeks for universal right as citizens of recognizable states and a national identity of sharing the same space and the same future. Many in the group that fled China in 1949 have settled in Taiwan and have children and grandchildren who now call themselves Taiwanese while some Taiwanese/Chinese have turned their backs on the (old) Republic of China to cooperate with Chinese capitalists and then returned to Taiwan to seek control of political offices in the Republic of China. The fault line between Taiwan and the Republic of China, therefore, no longer lies along ethnic divisions even though the island's troubled past still haunts it. The issue at hand now for the people in search of a state is not only to figure out how to deal with China but also how to decouple the history of Taiwan and the history of the Republic of China, as the Republic of China is forever tied to China and tangled with the KMT's Chinese roots.