Four Hundred Years of Ethnic Relations In Taiwan

Yih-yuan LI

I. Introduction

From a cultural point of view, the past four hundred years of the ethnic relationships on the island of Taiwan can be divided into seven periods; these are: (1) before 1622, a period of pioneer exploitation; (2) from 1622 to 1662, an early colonial or Dutch period; (3) from 1662 to 1683, Koxinga’s period; (4) from 1683 to 1875, the early Ch’ing period; (5) from 1875 to 1895, the late Ch’ing period; (6) from 1895 to 1945, the late colonial or Japanese period; (7) from 1945 to date, the Republican period. This paper intends to delineate the relations and interactions between various ethnic groups under the different cultural models which were perceptualized by different migrants and colonial agents.

II. The Period of Pioneer Exploitation

Before 1622, the year when the Dutch colonial power reached the Pescadores or the Peng-hu Islands, the Chinese had never established any administrative organization in Taiwan. However, when the Dutch landed at the coastal area near the modern city of Tainan in 1624, they found there were already 11,000 Han Chinese living in the southern part of Taiwan (Chen, S.H., 1979: 29). In fact, the Chinese crossed over Taiwan Strait from Fukien province to visit Taiwan quite frequently and their visits dated very early in history as can be seen from the recorded names of Taiwan. As early as the Former Han Dynasty (3rd Century B.C. to 1st century A.D.), the Chinese called Taiwan “Ying-chou.” In the Later Han Dynasty (1st–3rd century A.D.), it was named “Tung-chi.” In the Three Kingdom period (221-277 A.D.), Taiwan was referred to as “Yi-chou”, and later in the Sui Dynasty (6th century) a much more popular name, “Liu-chiu”, was adopted (Lien, 1928 (1955) : 1-4). Even though the Chinese had been coming to and contacting Taiwan for two thousand years, they had never really settled the island, because they had been using a conceptual model of culturalism towards Taiwan, in contrast to
the European model of colonialism which was exemplified by the Dutch during the period in which they controlled the island. What we refer to here as "culturalism" is a concept based on a cosmological model which sees the world as a differential and hierarchical continuum with the "Middle Kingdom" at the center of the universe, while the Western concept of colonialism is based on a sociological model which views the world as an egalitarian and discrete system (Chu, 1983). Under the model of culturalism, the areas outside of the "Middle Kingdom" are all barbarian countries of differential degree and hierarchical status. Hence, before their assimilation into Chinese culture, they are to be excluded from regular administration, and their people are to be considered as "raw" and in need of assimilation. In contrast to this Chinese cultural view of the world, Western colonialism considered areas beyond their cultural world included under their colonial administration even before they could be acculturated into independent civilized states. In other words, with regard to other parts of the world, the Chinese view is socio-politically exclusive while culturally inclusive, but the Western view is socio-politically inclusive while culturally exclusive. Keeping this contrast in mind, we may understand why it was that, although the Chinese had been coming to and contacting Taiwan for thousands of years before the early seventeenth century, they had not tried to put this offshore island under their administrative system. The Chinese came to Taiwan mostly as sojourners, as they did in other parts of Southeast Asia, where they lived as, what has been usually called, Overseas Chinese. In this early time, the relationship between the Han Chinese and the aborigines of Taiwan was essentially casual and sporadic. The Chinese saw the aborigines, who provided fauna and flora for trade, as the most extreme degree of savage peoples; hence they named the aborigines "raw barbarians." In dealing with these uncooked barbarians, the Chinese were cautious and non-committal: they tried to assimilate the aborigines but with a rather passive and discreet attitude (Lien, 1928(1955):1-7).

**III. The Dutch Colonial Period**

The Dutch colonial forces landed on the Pescadores, an offshore island of Taiwan, in 1662. Although they retreated to the East Indies only several months later under pressure from the Chinese and from other European colonial powers, their colonial influence on Taiwan dates from that time. Two years later, in August 1624, the Dutch landed in what is now the town of An-ping, a seashore area of the city of Tainan in Southwestern Taiwan, and began to build a fort called Zeelandia to symbolize their colonial authority. Later they built another fort called Provintia to form a center for commercial activities (de Beauclair, 1975).

From that time until 1662, the year the Dutch were defeated by Koxinga, a tri-fold or three-strata ethnic relationship was established and substituted for the two-fold relationship between Han Chinese and the aborigines during the pioneer exploitation period.

As we have stated above, the Dutch adopted a model of colonialism similar to other European colonial powers toward their colony, that is, they had ambitions about the land, so they tried to establish an administrative system to maintain a stable society for productive and commercial activities. When the Dutch reached Taiwan, they found there were already quite a number of Chinese who lived on the island, in addition to the aborigine tribes. After thirty-eight years of colonization, the Chinese in Taiwan had increased from a few thousand to more than 25,000 "fighting-men", not including women and children (Campbell, 1903:36). From the very beginning the Dutch adopted what J.S. Furnivall later called a "plural societies" policy (1939:446) to deal with these two strata of inhabitants.

Before the Dutch colonization, the Chinese who lived as sojourners in Taiwan were either engaged as fishermen or as merchants dealing with the aborigines for trading goods, while the aborigines were engaged in hunting, fishing and simple slash-and-burn horticulture as their main means of subsistence (Candidius, 1649:10; Tsao, 1979:54-65). The Dutch administration was happy to maintain the middleman status of the Chinese merchant to deal with aborigine trade, but they reserved the privilege of withholding taxes from the Chinese traders. There was quite a lot to be gained from this taxation. For example, in 1649, the Dutch East Indies company earned 467,543 guilder from their Taiwan trading tax (Tsao, 1979: 36). Moreover, the Dutch encouraged the Chinese migrants to engage in more intensive agricultural activities which would, on one hand, increase the agricultural products of the island and, on the other hand, teach the aborigines more advanced cultivation techniques (Ibid.: 37-42). However, the Dutch saw the aborigines differently than the Chinese. They considered these native tribal peoples as permanent residents, different from the sojourner status of the Chinese. They tried hard to convert the aborigines to Christianity and they established schools to educate the native peoples. According to Dutch records, in the year of 1643, there were more than 5,400 natives converted to Christianity, under the enthusiastic work of two devoted missionaries, Rev. George Candidius and Rev. Robertus Junins. In 1647, there were five schools with 200 children and 766 adults admitted as students. The Dutch ministers developed romanization of the aboriginal languages to translate the Bible and other teachings which were helpful either for missionary work or for colonial administration (Wen, 1957:9-30). At the
beginning of the Dutch colonization of Taiwan, the aborigines resisted, and they allied themselves with the Chinese in opposition to the Dutch. However, after the success of the Christian missionaries among the aborigines, the situation was changed. In 1652, when there was a riot led by a Chinese named Kuo Hui-i against the Dutch taxation system, the colonial government was able to persuade the acculturated aborigines to stand with the Dutch government and fight off the Chinese (Tsao, 1979:43). In sum, during the Dutch colonial period, the policy of administration was essentially a pluralistic society policy which kept the aboriginal tribes under their direct jurisdiction but which treated the Chinese as a kind of trading sojourners. Therefore, the ethnic relationship in this kind of situation was a rather unstable equilibrium.

IV. Koxinga's Period

In 1662, Koxinga, an anti-Manchu general of the Ming court, overthrew the Dutch and established a regime in Taiwan which he saw as a base for activities against the Manchurians. Koxinga's take-over of Taiwan was actually not a simple accident, since in the later part of the Dutch period the conflict between the Han Chinese and the Dutch was rather severe. (The above-mentioned riot led by Kuo Hui-i was but one of the more serious events in this conflict.) Therefore, Koxinga's take-over of Taiwan represented the victory of the Han Chinese over Dutch colonialism and from that moment the ethnic relationships on the island changed from the three-strata acculturation model to the two-strata assimilation model.

According to Tsao Ying-ho, an authority on the early history of Taiwan, during the twenty-two years of Koxinga's and his heir's reign, there were quite a number of Chinese who migrated from Fukien to Taiwan. At the end of this period, the population of Chinese was about 200 to 250 thousand (Tsao, 1979: 276-277). The new migrants, which included Koxinga's soldiers and the anti-Manchu civilians, were encouraged by Koxinga's court to engage in opening up the frontier land for agriculture, because during that time the food was very inadequate. Actually, during the whole of Koxinga's reign, the policy was to increase staple foods rather than the commercial products which are the main interests of colonialism. Due to this difference in policy between Koxinga's court and the Dutch colonial government, those Chinese who had played the middleman and engaged in commercial activities with the aborigines decreased somewhat in number, and the relationship between these two ethnic groups shifted into a new era (Ibid.: 292-293).

The policy of Koxinga's court toward the aborigines was essentially a passive one. It continued to deal peacefully with those tribes converted by the Dutch and actually treated them as ordinary civilians since they were "cooked" natives, according to the Chinese cooked-raw classification model. However, also following this cooked-raw model, Koxinga's court considered raw aborigines as belonging to a realm outside the Chinese cultural sphere. It tried to demarcate the territories between "man" and barbarian: it was not active or interested in acculturating the barbarians even though it was willing to have them assimilated into Chinese culture. This attitude of passive assimilation persisted until the early Ch'ing Dynasty.

V. The Early Ch'ing Dynasty

In 1683, after twenty-two years of reign in Taiwan, Koxinga and his heir's regime was overthrown by Manchurian or Ch'ing troops. However, the change of regime did not change the policy. The ruling class of the Ch'ing Dynasty was alien to the Chinese, but it had been assimilated into Chinese culture and hence adopted a Chinese cultural model in dealing with ethnic problems.

During the 212 years of Ch'ing administration in Taiwan, the ethnic relationships on the island can be divided into two periods: the early period, from 1683 until 1875, and the late period, from 1875 until the cession of Taiwan to Japan in 1895.

The policy of the Ch'ing government toward aborigines in the early period did not change very much but actually continued the cooked-raw classification model of Koxinga's court. Cooked aborigines or shu-fan, the royal officers considered as fellow citizens. Throughout the period there were native officers and also magistrates in charge of aboriginal affairs, but they were never active in acculturating the tribal men in so far as they had already symbolically worn and dressed in the Chinese costume and hair style. Raw aborigines or sheng-fan, the government tried to ignore the existence of since they were out of Chinese territory and therefore out of the Chinese category. Following Koxinga's policy, the Ch'ing administration maintained the original line that demarcated raw and cooked areas, and thereupon developed a system of "Ai" (or garrisons) for passes which was formalized as part of the local military network in 1789 (Wen 1957: 467-494). However, the Ai line moved back and forth frequently following the reclamation of frontier land by the Chinese. With every change of the Ai line location, there was conflict between the raw aborigines and the Chinese. According to records, throughout the Ch'ing period there were 43 major and 145 minor conflicts between the two ethnic groups. But it was through these ups-and-downs, that the raw gradually became cooked and the Chinese territory extended step by step (Huang, 1987: 129-206).
While the relationship between the Han Chinese and the aborigines was a focus point of ethnicity during the Ch'ing Dynasty, other ethnic situations also emerged, i.e., the composition of and opposition between various dialect groups among the Han Chinese themselves. The people who came to Taiwan before or right after Koxinga were mostly from southern Fukien Province and spoke Hokkien or Minan dialects. These Hokkien migrants, were again divided into two main groups: one from the county of Chuan-chow which itself consists of five hsien or prefectures, and one from the county of Ch'angchow which consists of seven hsien. While the Hokkien people enjoyed the early reclamation, a few decades later, the late migrants came: the Hakka or “Guests” from another southern province, Kwangtung. By the time the people who spoke Hakka dialect moved into Taiwan, most of the coastal plain areas of the island had already been settled by the Hokkien. Although the Hakka eventually settled the hilly areas, their quarrels with the Hokkien over land and irrigation waters were quite severe. Actually, fighting along dialect group lines characterized the whole migration history of the Han Chinese on Taiwan, and it is usually referred to as “fen-lei-hsien-tou,” the ethnic armed-combat or ethnic feud”. According to one author, between 1768 and 1860 there were at least thirty major ethnic feuds. That is, almost every three years there was a severe fight between various dialect groups (Chen, 1975:81-83).

The ethnic feuding between dialect groups in Taiwan can also be displayed by a complex of special features in its hierarchical nature and the dynamic composition and opposition of these groups in the hierarchy. The hierarchical nature of these dialect groups can be illustrated as follows:

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<th>Provincial level</th>
<th>County level</th>
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<td>Hakka</td>
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been seen in a more passive assimilation policy, but it also led to the inclusion of more aborigines in the fellow citizen category.

During the same period, about the latter half of the nineteenth century, the hierarchical relationship of dialect groups among the Han Chinese mentioned in the above section also underwent a drastic change and a series of adjustments. The earliest migrant Hokkien group which dated from the Dutch and Koxinga periods had settled the Western coastal plains for more than two hundred years and also made up the essential part of city dwellers. The more recent migrant group, the Hakka, who had started their journey from the province of Kwangtung to Taiwan in the early eighteenth century (Chen, Y.T. 1978:95-102), had, after more than one hundred years of struggle with the Hokkien groups, eventually settled near the hillside areas of Pingtung, Hsien in the south and Hsin-chu Hsien in the north. Since that time, the ratio of Hokkien to Hakka has been maintained at about eighty-five per cent to fifteen per cent of the total Han Chinese population (Chen, S.H., 1956:3).

By the last half of the nineteenth century, the Hokkien groups had been settled in Taiwan for more than two hundred years and the Hakka groups had also been there about one hundred and fifty years. By this time, the fighting and battles for land and irrigation water between these dialect groups had ceased to be a main issue. The armed combats or feuds among them had decreased quite obviously or else had been substituted by a contest of some other nature. Although there were some fights or contests among the Han Chinese themselves during the last half of the nineteenth century, the groups who engaged in these contests were no longer divided along dialect lines. Rather, they were divided according to local identity or even recreational association in Taiwan. These kinds of contests sometimes happened within the same dialect group, something which would not have occurred in earlier times. This shift from dialect identity to local identity has been advocated by social historians and anthropologists as a point to demarcate the status of native inhabitant from those of migrant or sojourner; the term "nativization" has even been used to describe the shifting of identity among the Han Chinese in Taiwan (Chen C.N. 1987). Whether the shift during that period was in fact a nativization process or not is still argued among historians. However, one point is quite clear: the ethnic tension between the different groups of Han Chinese themselves had improved by that time.

VII. The Japanese Colonial Period

In 1895, after the first Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan was ceded to Japan. Beginning from that date, there was half a century of Japanese colonial rule, or the late colonial period in Taiwan. Two hundred and fifty years had passed since the early Dutch colonial period, when the Japanese started their colonial administration. However, the Japanese colonial policy was basically the same as its predecessor. The colonial power's interests were always focused on economic gains, particularly on the material supply to the homeland. Under such a colonial policy, therefore, ethnic relationships were indifferent in nature compared to those of the Dutch period, except for the colonizing shift from Occidental to Oriental.

Ethnic relations under Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan were also tri-fold or three-strata in nature: with the Japanese as colonials on the upper level, the Han Chinese in the middle, and the aborigines at the bottom. To deal with the Han Chinese, whose population on the eve of the Japanese occupation was already about two and a half millions (Chen, S.H., 1979: 18), the Japanese at first tried to retain traditional Chinese custom but to increase the productive ability of the Chinese in order to supply the material necessities of Japan. Japanese colonial policy, however, encountered severe resistance among the Chinese. Throughout the whole Japanese period, the conflicts against Japanese rule were innumerable.

At first, the resistance of the Chinese against Japanese rule was direct armed battle. The period of these armed rebels lasted for more than twenty years, from 1895 until 1915. During the early stage of this period there were about fifty battles against the Japanese army, while in the later stage there were ten major armed rebellions in all parts of Taiwan. In all these actions, there were about 11,950 deaths on the battle field as well as an additional 2,998 executions by the Japanese police (Cheng, 1977: 1-3). In the later period of Japanese rule, the thirty years from 1915 to 1945, the armed rebellion among the Chinese eventually faded out, but direct anti-Japanese movement was substituted by a series of indirect counter actions, such as political, cultural, and economic protests. These activities continued right up to the eve of the restoration of Taiwan to China in 1945 (Huang, 1971). During the Japanese period, relations between the Japanese colonials and the Chinese were actually very strained and in disaccord. They finally ended with the Japanese retreat from Taiwan in 1945.

The Japanese colonial policy toward the Formosan aborigines was different from their policy toward the Han Chinese. At the beginning, there were arguments among the Japanese military forces about whether or not the aborigines should be diminished (Wen, 1957). However, they eventually adopted a European colonial policy to rather actively acculturale the aborigines. During the Japanese period, this policy
determined the relationship between the colonials and the aborigines: the more acculturational activities there were the more conflict there was between the two groups. Throughout the period there were dozens of aboriginal rebellions against the Japanese, culminating in the so-called Wu She Incident of the Atayal tribe’s rebellion in 1930. In that incident 134 Japanese officers and policemen and almost 900 aborigines were killed during twenty-three days of battle between the two parties (Ibid.: 868-878). However, even though the aborigines painfully resisted Japanese administration, they were acculturated step by step under the Japanese policy. At the end of the Japanese period, the population of nine aboriginal tribes grew from about 113,163 in 1906 to 162,031 in 1942 (Wang, 1967: 36), and almost ninety per cent of the young aborigines had undergone primary school education and spoke Japanese fluently.

VIII. The Republican Period

After the Second World War, Taiwan was restored to China. From 1945 until the present, the characteristics of ethnic relations in colonial times have changed, but the relationship between different dialect groups or sub-culture groups has somehow returned to that found in the time of the Ch’ing Dynasty. In 1945, the population of Taiwan was about six million (Chen, S.H. 1979: 18). In 1949, the government of the Republic of China moved to Taiwan after the Mainland was lost to the Communists. Following the Republican government retreat to Taiwan, there were about one million so-called Mainlanders, originally from different provinces of China, who migrated to Taiwan. This new group of migrants was mostly government officers and their families, intellectuals, urbanites, and soldiers. Even though some of these people speak the same Hokkien and Hakka dialects as Taiwan’s Chinese, they constitute a sub-culture group in contrast with the groups who moved to Taiwan before or during the Japanese time. In this situation, the earlier Hokkien and Hakka migrants naturally combined as a subculture group, usually referred to as Taiwanese in order to differentiate them from the Mainlanders. The contrast can be illustrated as follows (Li, 1956):

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\begin{align*}
\text{Han Chinese} & \quad \begin{cases}
\text{early migrants to Taiwan,} \\
\text{before the Japanese period}
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\text{Hokkien} \\
\text{Hakka}
\end{cases} & \quad \begin{cases}
\text{Taiwanese} \\
\text{from different provinces}
\end{cases} & \quad \begin{cases}
\text{Mainlanders}
\end{cases}
\end{align*}
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In the more than 40 years that have passed since 1945, there has been much intermarriage between these sub-culture groups; therefore, it is now very hard to say what the ratio is between these sub-culture groups. However, it is usually estimated that of the nineteen million total people in present day Taiwan, there are about 15.5 million Taiwanese, while there are about 3.5 million Mainlanders. For forty years of mixture and exchange, the essential cultural distinctions between these sub-culture groups have been minimal indeed. However, due to the struggle for political power, the tension between the groups has always been serious, and political conflict has extended into a conflict of ideology. So, in present day Taiwan, the ethnic relations are characterized by an identity crisis: the psychological dilemma between China and Taiwan, or the so-called “Chinese Complex” versus “Taiwanese Complex” (China Tribune, 1987). Whether this identity complex will be smoothed out eventually still depends internally on the democratizing trend of Taiwan, and externally on the communist political pressure.

With regard to the Taiwan aborigines in the Republican period, all the aboriginal tribes have been treated as fellow citizens legally. They elect their own representatives to the prefecture and provincial councils, as well as to the national Congress. Their youth are encouraged to accept modern education from primary school through university, and their livelihood has been protected somewhat in the reservation areas (Li et al., 1983:7-19). However, in the past twenty years, with the rapid industrialization of Taiwan’s society, more than one quarter of the total 330 thousand aborigines in Taiwan have moved down from their mountainous reservation areas to the industrial cities of the western coastal district and therefore constitute a special cultural minority referred to as “urban aborigines” (Li and Hsu, 1985:1,421-23).

These so-called “urban aborigines” have adapted to modern urban life rather poorly. Linguistically and culturally, the Formosan aborigines belong to the Malayo-Polynesian or the Austronesian stock; like many people of the same culture, they originally lived a rather simple life, depending upon slash-and-burn horticultural products. They enjoyed their subsistent life-style, so they had practically no interest at all in such economic activities as saving, or even investing. Therefore, when they moved down from their mountainous reservation areas to urban settings, they found the complicated urban life rather difficult. They often experience a kind of withdrawal feeling and therefore form a group marginal to the whole urban environment.

Living in the city, most of the aborigines engage in lower-income jobs, such as unskilled labor, longshoreman, seaman, etc. They not only suffer from low social status but usually also face ethnic prejudice from the
cultural majority group of Han Chinese. Today, the situation is getting even more serious as quite a number of the aboriginal women have been compelled to prostitute themselves, and many of the young aborigines suffer from alcoholism as well as from difficulty in finding suitable mates (Li and Hsu, 1985: 1413-1424; Hsu, 1987: 87-117). To face such maladjustment problems and ethnic prejudice, some of the aboriginal elite have promoted a self-help organization called “the Association for Aboriginal Civil Rights” which deals with the future of aboriginal economic, cultural, and political status. On the whole, the problem of the ethnic status of aboriginal tribes will be one of the important issues in the democratizing trends of Taiwan’s future political and social landscape.

IX. Conclusion

Within the last four hundred years, Taiwan’s history can be divided into six or seven stages according to differences in administrative agents. However, from the point of view of ethnic relationships, there were actually only two major models for alternative use and one minor model for supplementary use. The two major models are (1) the model of culturalism used by the Chinese in three different periods, and (2) the model of colonialism used by both the Dutch in the earlier colonial period and the Japanese in the later colonial period.

The model of culturalism adopted by the Chinese is based on a cosmological concept which sees other parts of the world as socio-politically exclusive although culturally inclusive. When dealing with other ethnic groups, such as the Formosan aborigines of Austronesian cultural origin, the Chinese used a kind of passive assimilation attitude. So, before aborigines were assimilated into Chinese culture, they were considered as “raw barbarians” and so were excluded from the administrative boundary of Taiwan. Once they were assimilated, which was assumed if they even symbolically wore Chinese costume and hair style, their status changed to that of “cooked native” and they were included in the Chinese boundary.

The model of colonialism adopted by the Dutch and the Japanese successively is based on a sociological concept which sees other parts of the world as socio-politically inclusive although culturally exclusive. Therefore, under the Dutch and the Japanese colonial administrations, Taiwan was essentially a pluralistic society for all cultural and economic activities. However, from a socio-political point of view, the island was a real part of each of these countries’ administrative systems, so they adopted an acculturation policy which was intended to actively rather than passively acculturize the aborigines into civilization.

The Chinese themselves used a model of “segmentary opposition” to deal with their own ethnic or dialect group problems. This kind of hierarchical opposition and composition model operated during the Ch'ing Dynasty; however, whether or not it will be adopted in the modern setting is really a crucial point for the future of this “beautiful island” or “Ilha Formosa” of China.