

THE SLIPPAGE BETWEEN EMPIRES: THE PRODUCTION OF THE COLONIZED SUBJECT IN TAIWAN (1920-1945)

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Taiwan makes an interesting case in postcolonial studies not only because of its multilayered colonial trajectory but also because of the intricate relationship between the colonial powers. After Japan's surrender in 1945, Taiwan fell into another "colonial" power – the nationalist party's rule, which is considered the "re-colonial" period by many scholars. Although the lifting of martial law in 1987 ushered in the so-called "postcolonial period", the legitimacy of Hoklo-centric Taiwanese cultural nationalism was challenged by aboriginal movements in Taiwan. As a result of the various forms and shifts of colonial power, Taiwan's subjectivity is never a fixed entity, but an ongoing process of (re-)construction. Writers have constantly striven to find answers to Fanon's ontological question: "In reality, who am I?"

Focusing on Taiwan's cultural resistance under Japanese rule, this paper examines the changing practices of identity formation of Taiwanese intellectuals. It will first analyse the Taiwanese Cultural Association's enlightenment agendas and its turning left during the assimilation period. It will then examine how Taiwanese authors responded to Japan's intense imperialisation during the wartime (1937-1945). Through a number of case studies, this paper argues that Taiwanese subjectivity is repeatedly hinged between the two competing, though not necessarily incompatible, forces – Japan's colonial modernity and China's Han culture. The bifurcated identity, in which "Taiwaneseness" is constructed on either the Han ethnicity or the Japanised modernity, points to a proto-nationalist vision of Taiwan. Although it is insufficient to lead to total decolonisation, it offers colonized Taiwanese elites pragmatic eclecticism in their position-takings.