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Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, Collection Mondes Autochtones, 2012, 252 pp. + xv.

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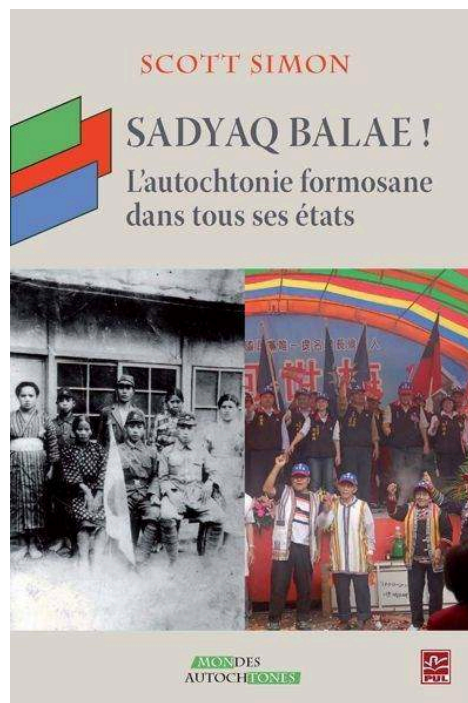
Scott Simon, *Sadyaq Balae!* *L'autochtonie formosane dans tous ses états* (Sadyaq Balae! Formosan indigeneity in all its states),

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- 1 As the book's back cover blurb notes, few ethnographic works in Western languages deal with Formosan indigeneity. This book is the only one in French devoted exclusively to the issue. Scott Simon draws on a rich, finely analysed ethnography of the Sadyaq Austronesian societies, especially in the last five of the book's eight chapters. He adds to and carries on from previous contributions – articles and book chapters on the subject by Fiorella Allio, Véronique Arnaud, Josiane Cauquelin, and Chantal Zheng, to cite just the main authors in French on the identity dynamics among Taiwan's Austronesian peoples (who represent 2% of the archipelago's 23 million inhabitants).
- 2 In 2004, Josiane Cauquelin published a monograph in English entitled *From Headhunting to the Modern World* on another



of Taiwan's Austronesian societies, the Puyuma, and the transformations it underwent under the influence of successive policies of the Japanese government and the Republic of China regime.¹ In this book, Josiane Cauquelin stresses rituality as well as kinship and social organisation among the Puyuma, but offers no more than about ten pages on their constitution as an ethnic group and on their relations with a state apparatus controlled by the Han majority with whom they live today in the same villages.

- 3 It is just the reverse in *Sadyaq Balae*: whereas in general a classic monograph deals with kinship relations and rituality, this book covers them more succinctly in the latter part of Chapter 2 (pp. 47-62), to be referred to briefly as and when argumentation requires it, thus making for an easier flow. A brief first chapter goes over the social and economic conditions of indigenous peoples and their place in Taiwan's lively identity debate as well as in the contextualisation of research itself. Although directed at the author's students (p. 1), and thus taking a didactic approach, it is not a textbook. It does demand effort on the reader's part, containing throughout many vernacular terms, proper names, and place names.
- 4 The book's general structure is justified by the author's choice of clearly situating his subject, indigeneity, in the field of political anthropology. More specifically, it follows the path hewn by mainly French anthropologists such as Marc Abélès, Georges Balandier, Maurice Godelier, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, and Pierre Clastres. In line with the last named, Scott Simon qualifies the Sadyaq as an egalitarian society (division of tasks between sexes is seen as complementary rather than unequal), without political institutions, and as a "society against the state,"² a notion he defines as a "social logic according to which several societies refuse any accumulation of power" (p. xi) and reject "the emergence of a unifying state, social stratification, and subordination" (p. 4). The book's main problematic is "understanding the relations between the Sadyaq [...] and the state during successive administrations of the Japanese (1895-1945) and the Republic of China (post-1945)," and why the Sadyaq accepted the Taiwanese state's legitimacy on their territory, only to remain marginalised inside the country (p. 3).
- 5 The author's approach is itself political in the sense that he uses a non-hegemonic anthropology, i.e., rejecting all forms of domination. The choice of re-transcription of vernacular terms is in line with the practice of symmetrical anthropology between the observer and his interlocutors, the same as in all that concerns terminologies, given the author's systematic desire to justify his options and define concepts. He stresses that indigeneity forms part of a "relationship between a community and the state or between an individual and the state," noting helpfully that it is just "a legal classification" (p. 227). The author defends writing the term "indigenous" with a small letter, similar to "citizen," so as not to objectify the notion as an ethnic group and thus neglect the effects of colonisation and inclusion in a state system, or the diversity of groups and individuals designated under this category (p. 227).
- 6 The spelling of "Sadyaq," used in the book's title and used to designate the collection of linguistic groups, Truku, Tkedaya, and Teuda, is borrowed from Ferdinando Pecoraro's Romanisation method, precisely because none of the local actors claim it, preferring three other forms of Romanisation depending on their origins (pp. 25-26).
- 7 Similarly, the use of "Formosa" (*Ilha Formosa*), bequeathed by sixteenth century Portuguese explorers, rather than "Taiwan," in the absence of a name in Sadyaq languages for the island geographically speaking, sheds light on the contours of domination of a Han state on Austronesian populations (p. 12-14), which the author calls

“the blind spot of anthropology on ‘Taiwan’” (p. 12). This goes against the grain of culturalist anthropologists in Taiwan, who considered the island a conservatory of Chinese “traditional” culture and long neglected the Austronesian populations. Moreover, the author situates Taiwan not in Asia but in Oceania (Chapter 2), where Austronesian cultures prevail – from Formosa to New Zealand, and from the Easter Islands to Madagascar (p. 18). This approach turns out to be better placed to explode the Greater China concept, extract Taiwan from a narrow Sinocentric perspective, and focus effectively on Austronesian groups.

- 8 The Sadyaq, who now number about 35,000 and whose territory extends from the island’s centre to the north-east (in Nantou and Hualien counties), have been in the news in Taiwan. Previously grouped with the Atayals, they were recognised as an indigenous group by the Taiwanese government in 2008 (since 2004 for the Taroko). As the author notes in the introduction (p. 1-2), a big-budget film named *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* was made in Taiwan and the first part of the two-part film was released in September 2011. Produced by the famous John Woo and directed by the Taiwanese filmmaker Wei Te-sheng (not of Austronesian descent), this historic epic retraces the uprising by a group of Sadyaq against the Japanese in October 1930 in Musha Village (now in Nantou County), which led to bloody retaliation on Japan’s part. The author does not say how the film was received by the Sadyaq, his research covering 2004 to 2008, but it generated lively debates among the Taiwanese regarding the nature of the act of resistance against Japanese colonialism.
- 9 Scott Simon situates the conflict at the heart of a century-long history, the Sadyaq continuing to lose their sovereignty during the twentieth century. By the start of the new millennium, the process led to the development of social protest movements, the legal recognition of a specific status, and the bureaucratisation of indigeneity (Chapter 3). The Japanese era was the first experience of relations with state institutions. In Sadyaq’ memory, it remains a relatively positive moment in their history (“modernisation” of their way of life), despite bloody battles that led to a third of the Formosan Austronesian population perishing and to subsequent conflicts (some still current) between communities whose migrations were forced by the Japanese (pp. 76-79).
- 10 According to Scott Simon, the Musha uprising essentially grew out of the contradictions between a colonial system and a stateless society attached to its sacred law named *Gaya*, which denotes a collection of moral rules closely linked to hunting, especially head-hunting (the author taking pains to dispel negative stereotypes),³ until it was banned by the Japanese. It has now been replaced symbolically by hunting for animals, albeit banned by the Republic of China authorities. *Gaya* prohibits sexual relations before marriage, divorce, theft, and accumulation of wealth. It highlights sharing and social relations. In the author’s view, the persistence of references to *Gaya* is a form of resistance to continuing colonial rule and to assimilation, often designated as “Sinification,” which is creeping up on indigenous populations (pp. 57-62).
- 11 Challenges to this domination include demands for territorial sovereignty (Chapter 4). Indigenous peoples’ protests against major industrial groups such as Asia Cement (as well as storage of nuclear waste on Orchid Island by Taipower) are well known and benefit from mass media coverage in Taiwan. But the protests against the Taroko National Park, often described as a tourist jewel and nature reserve by Taiwanese authorities and media, is singular and instructive. The Park indeed generates little employment for indigenous people (unlike Asia Cement), opening up few decently paid jobs with responsibility.

Moreover, it shrinks hunting grounds to a minimum, and poachers face crippling fines, thus provoking anger among villagers and the rise of organised protests.

- 12 Such movements have, of course, led the major political forces to take corrective steps. Chapter 5 is devoted to elections on Sadyaq land that, needless to say, met with resistance in an egalitarian society. Observing the campaign close up, Scott Simon describes vote-buying exercises. Most often the winner is the one who pays the most. The author dwells on the role of churches,⁴ mostly Presbyterian, in election networking. But his most valuable contribution is the body of evidence explaining the Nationalist Party's (Kuomintang) stranglehold on indigenous peoples' constituencies despite the Democratic Progressive Party's (Minjindang) strong backing for their rights at the national level. Indigenous people's disdain for this national dimension and for a party they consider to be of their despised neighbours, namely the so-called ethnic Taiwanese, explains in part the percentage of votes going to the Kuomintang (often more than 80%), which is seen as representing "Mainlanders." Thanks to client networks built since the creation of mountainous counties, the deeply entrenched Kuomintang has imposed a local electoral system based on factionalism, social divisions (between the base and an elite), and an absence of ideological debate, keeping sovereignists at bay.
- 13 "Courtiers" who play the role of strategic go-betweens during elections figure prominently in the chapter dealing with development projects seen as "arenas of conflict between groups or individuals" (p. 149). Noting the role of agriculture associations, assistance to craftsmen, ecotourism, and churches (Catholic and Protestant) in development activities, Scott Simon explains the rarely studied relations between different social actors and agents of the state. He highlights the essential function of the county as a crucial mediator between the villages and the central administration that wants to industrialise them. From these dynamics, the author concludes that indigenous peoples trade their docility towards the state in exchange for its protection. This attitude is also a strategy and a form of passive resistance meant to preserve territorial autonomy.
- 14 This struggle for autonomy sometimes structured itself at a higher scale, notably with help from institutions such as the Presbyterian church⁵ (which also backs Taiwan independence) in the "Name Rectification Movement" (正名運動) under presidents Lee Teng-hui (1988-2000) and Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008) (Chapter 7). Such confluences have given rise to arrangements among different Austronesian peoples in Formosa seeking to get their voices heard by the top rungs of the state. Concessions they have received from the state have also opened the path to a complex process of atomisation of Taiwan's Austronesian ethnic groups, who have risen from nine recognised entities before 2001 to 14 since 2008. This dynamic meets the political needs of local elites seeking to consolidate their own power.
- 15 In the last chapter, indigenous peoples' demands are analysed in the framework of an international movement, in its institutional dimension (through initiatives in the United Nations), but also on the margins of state initiatives and in community gatherings. Scott Simon assesses the role of globalisation (in terms of transport and communication technologies especially) in indigenous people's aspirations to go beyond the straitjacket of the state in which they are mere "minorities" (p. 213). He also introduces the idea of spirituality as the basis of indigenous people's demands. The author describes meetings (in Taiwan or Canada) among members of various communities worldwide who share ecological concerns such as forest conservation and hunting rights. Hunting practices,

linked to relations with ancestors and transcending social divides, express indigenous people's spirituality as well their desire for political sovereignty (pp. 223-226).

- 16 Ambitions for legal autonomy within a Taiwanese state or the constitution of an indigenous nation on the basis of criteria such as history or language is, however, not shared by all members of concerned communities. Among those the author describes as "ordinary people," many prefer to stay away from talk of national identifications and relations with Taiwan or China. They reject new ethnic identities and denounce political instrumentalisation of indigeneity by their own elites, whose motives they question. They also flay the perceived vacuity in the ethnic recognition movements, which hardly resolve their day-to-day problems while dragging them *de facto* into dealings with government institutions and subjecting them to a state in which they have little stake. Many interviewees told the author that the term "Sadyaq" means "human being" and should therefore not be used to divide humanity. And even though they refer to Gaya, the term expresses universal values and constitutes an ultimate act of resistance of an egalitarian society faced with the hegemonic ambitions of colonial states.
- 17 Throughout his work, Scott Simon chooses to take into account indigenous spirituality, often absent from studies of indigeneity, as a "valuable ontology" (p. 212), leading to his dual conclusion (scientific and moral) wherein he signals his backing of the indigenous cause. Rather than calling into question the book's scientific quality, such a position helps the author overcome traditional cleavages between Taiwanese nationalism(s) and Chinese nationalism(s), which most studies of identity issues in Taiwan are concerned with, and to focus the research through a more general reflection on indigeneity, be it in anthropology or aimed at a readership less concerned with social sciences.

NOTES

1. Josiane Cauquelin, *The Aborigines of Taiwan. The Puyuma: From headhunting to the modern world*, London and New York, Routledge, 2004.
2. Pierre Clastres, *La société contre l'État* (Society against the state), Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1974.
3. Apart from the Tao on Orchid Island, all of the Austronesian groups in Taiwan practised head-hunting before it was banned by the Japanese in the early twentieth century. The ritual consisted of decapitating an enemy and carrying his head back to the village. Such a feat helped an adolescent gain entry into adulthood.
4. Evangelisation of the Sadyaq, starting in the 1950s, is now almost complete.
5. Scott Simon distinguishes between the Catholic Church, which acts as a conservative force and mediator between the state (with which it enjoys close ties) and indigenous communities in Sadyaq villages (p. 173), and the Presbyterian Church, founded on a liberating and anti-hegemonic Calvinist theology and thus contributing to the proliferation of indigenous peoples' Synods opposed to a centralising state (p. 184).

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