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Allen Chun Ph.D.

Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan, achun@gate.sinica.edu.tw

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Schubert, Gunter and Jens Damm Eds. *Taiwanese Identity in the Twenty-first Century: Domestic, Regional and Global Perspectives*, Abingdon: Routledge. 2011.

This edited volume is a collection of 13 essays by a diverse group of scholars from Germany, Taiwan, France, and the UK. Several of the contributing authors, including the co-editors, are associated with the University of Tübingen; thus, the work presented here may be the result of collective research. The essays demonstrate that the authors are experts in Taiwan studies or social scientists actively involved with Taiwan. As suggested by its title, the work's field of inquiry includes Taiwan's recent history and contemporary politics. Given the typical association of Taiwan with postwar Republican-era KMT¹ policy, there is a need to update our profile of Taiwan to include the sociopolitical transformations that have taken place in the last few decades. If invoked at all, history here is one upon which the future is predicated.

The essays are framed within domestic, regional, and global contexts that reflect their primary relevance for presumably, contemporary area studies specialists and political relations of all kinds. The authors portray Taiwan's internal transformations as *sui generis* and illustrate the ways in which such transformations impact Taiwan's relationships with its neighbors and beyond. However, the directionality of global/local relations is misguided. The use of the keyword "identity" and the notion of identity formation in the book serve as convenient ways to characterize changes in Taiwan's perception of itself from the early postwar-era (marked by the KMT's policy of monocultural nationalism) to the present day. Today, say the authors, multiculturalism and economic liberalism have replaced the identity politics of a now bygone era. However, just as Taiwan's conservative stance against the "Republic of China" was the product of Cold War dualism, Taiwan's expulsion from the U.N. was what ultimately forced it to adopt "a third way."²

It is possible to view identity formation largely as an internal discourse, but the significance the authors attribute to such identity formation is misplaced. Heylen's reinventions of historical memory and Fleischauer's historiography of the 2-28 massacre of Taiwanese reflect, in essence, the ongoing consequences of the KMT's negotiation with its Taiwanese majority. Wu's essay on the evolution of the KMT's "One China" policy is also articulated as a kind of domestic internal dialogue that attempts to reconcile the options of reunification and independence; in the process, says Wu, such dialogue has adopted the ambivalences and ambiguities that reflect the nuances of the constantly changing relationships across the Straits. Corcuff sees changing identities in terms of relationships between ethnic mainlanders and Taiwanese islanders and the ongoing tensions resulting from the cultural and political meanings of these identities. Fell delves into the ramifications of ethnic identity for party politics, while Schubert and Braig expound on the ramifications of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party's policies of ethnic indigenization³ for the future of cross-strait relations. The remaining essays on regional and global perspectives are articulated largely in terms of a language of international relations or with reference to cross-cultural comparison. Chu's essay ruminates on the consequences of Taiwan's identity politics on relations between China and the US. Keng assesses political entanglements caused by increased economic and social integration across the Straits. King examines the effects of cross-strait marriages on perceptions of national identity in both Taiwan and the PRC. Lee looks at the possibilities of divided sovereignty from a legal point of view. Damm describes the changing status of overseas Chinese, overseas Taiwanese, and *huaren*⁴ from a long historical perspective. Shih speculates on the role of Taiwan in an East Asian imaginary. Finally, Kaeding compares identity formation in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

¹ Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party.

² Ironically, Taiwan's postwar economic takeoff began at a time when it was diplomatically shut out as a nation. The decision to liberalize the economy parallels policy changes adopted by the British colonial government to promote a free market economy in order to transcend Cold War nationalist strife that had plagued Hong Kong in previous decades.

³ Ethnic indigenization refers here to a cultural policy that favored the interests of the majority Taiwanese population.

⁴ *Huaren* literally means Chinese in a culturally neutral sense, without political nuances of the usual term *zhongguoren*.

While the diversity of these essays covers a range of seminal issues, the essays all display a stereotypically political science-oriented view, especially with respect to their definition of identity. The spin on identity, broadly conceived, contrasts with interests of more empirically minded social scientists, fixated on hard power and statistical trending; nonetheless, most or all of these works seem to underscore the assumption that identity is a tangible entity that people have by nature or necessity. Yet, the relevance of identity to politics, per se, is never really problematized. The constant making and unmaking of identity in the process of crisis is analytically distinct from its strategic uses. This depiction of Taiwanese identity may indeed be an accurate characterization of contemporary Taiwan society, at least viewed in literal terms, but Taiwan's transformation from its Cold War past to the present is the consequence of a complex socio-political process that deserves critical scrutiny in its own right. Just as people seem to think that Taiwan's economic miracle was the eventual result of its neo-Confucian tradition or the natural victory of free market principles, which disguise the complex geopolitical and divisive social factors that led to such an outcome, the rise of Taiwanese identity is given an equally positivist spin.

Allen Chun PhD
Institute of Ethnology
Academia Sinica, Taiwan
achun@gate.sinica.edu.tw