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Memory Contested, Locality Transformed:
Representing Japanese Colonial ‘Heritage’ in Taiwan

Min-Chin Chiang

In the search for a Taiwanese identity rooted in the land of Taiwan the
Japanese colonial past plays an ambiguous role. The Japanese colonial sites
became a constituent part of the new identity and cultural narrative of
Taiwan in the 1990s and 2000s, when a memory boom was experienced in
Taiwan representing new politics both cultural and economic which
 differed from the previous political periods of Japanese and postwar KMT
(Kuomintang; Chinese Nationalist Party) rule.

Min-Chin Chiang presents the extreme complexity of sharing the Japanese
colonial past in postcolonial Taiwanese society. In this book she examines
possibilities of decolonization through community-based heritage activi-
ties. Problems and ambiguity stemming from the tentative transformation
from colonialism to locality help to trigger further thinking or warn against
the ideological trap of taking mutuality in ‘sharing’ the past for granted.

Hence, decolonization does not necessarily mean ‘removing colonial mate-
rial traces’. Preserving colonial sites through recognising the contested
nature, actively exploring and engaging controversial voices, insisting with
finding out historical depth of every memory version attached to the site,
and transforming structural inequality with persistent locality building
would better contribute to trigger a decolonizing process. This is the
significance of the colonial sites as ‘heritage’ for the postcolonial society.