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M.C. 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 activities. 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 material 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.

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