BOOK REVIEW ROUNDTABLE

Is Taiwan Chinese?
The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities

BY MELISSA J. BROWN

ISBN: 0-520-23181-3 (hardcover); 0-520-23182-1 (paperback).

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MURRAY A. RUBINSTEIN
Baruch College of the City University of New York

CAL CLARK
Auburn University, Alabama

FU-CHANG WANG
Academia Sinica, Taipei

ALAN M. WACHMAN
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

KUANGCHUN LI
National Central University, Taiwan

SHIAW-CHIAN FONG
National Chengchi University, Taipei

CHIH-YU SHIH
National Taiwan University

TIMOTHY CHEEK
Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia

MELISSA J. BROWN
Department of Anthropological Sciences, Stanford University
ISSUES & STUDIES

Rethinking Taiwanese and Chinese Identity: Melissa J. Brown's Is Taiwan Chinese?*

MURRAY A. RUBINSTEIN

Melissa Brown's *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* is a challenging book, one that will be the starting point of future discussions of the very nature of identity and the role that identity as a construct plays in Chinese and Taiwanese intellectual and political life. By developing a set of provocative and very useful analytical constructs, and by demonstrating how one may see Chinese and Taiwanese identity construction anew, Brown has forced us to revise the way we think about questions of identity and the evolution of identity. In her provocative and very timely monograph, this University of Washington-trained anthropologist very boldly suggests that we must totally rethink the ways that we approach, conduct research on, and write about the nature and multi-leveled meanings of identity in the Chinese cultural universe.

She begins by laying out a set of schemas and arguments that suggest new ways to consider just what identity is. She then proceeds to show how

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MURRAY A. RUBINSTEIN received his Ph.D. from New York University in 1976. He is currently Professor of History and Chair of the Asian/Asian-American Studies Program at Baruch College of the City University of New York. He is also chair of the Taiwan Studies Group of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS). He has written/edited five books on Taiwan and on Christianity in China. Among the monographs is *The Protestant Community on Modern Taiwan* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991). The edited books include *Taiwan: A New History* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999) and *Religion and the Formation of Taiwanese Identities* (with Paul R. Katz) (New York: St. Martin's/Palgrave, 2003). He can be reached at <maruby1@msn.com>.

*A lengthened version of Rubinstein’s comments can be found in Klaus-Peter Kopping, Bernhard Leistle, and Michael Rudolph, eds., *Ritual and Identity? Performative Practices as Effective Transformations of Social Reality?* (Hamburg: Munster/London: LIT, 2005).
different forms are created in two very different provinces and among two strongly diverse minorities (少數民族, shaoshu minzu) populations—the yuanzhumin (原住民) of the Taiwan plains and the Tujia of Hubei (湖北省土家族). Her argumentation is built on the core processes she has been able to discern from the historical, mythical, and modern-day data she has obtained through her reading of the existing scholarly literature, the historical archives, and the ethnographic data that she gathered in her own fieldwork. While she stands securely on the shoulders of her predecessors, she makes clear to us that these distinguished scholars—two of whom are colleagues of hers at Stanford—may not have seen the total picture nor understood the implications of the results of their own research. She may not be so bold as to say this (though I can), yet still remains convinced of the value and the pioneering nature of that research itself.

The book is organized into six chapters. The first is a carefully presented introduction. Here, the author skillfully places identity issues into the context of the modern political realm of Taiwan/mainland politics. She then lays out the various schemas and approaches to data that both drive her argument and make her case of seeing identity formation in a way not usually thought of or even approached. I see the value of these constructs and admire the way Brown makes use of them, but I do have some problems—writ large and also writ small—with the approach itself, and will suggest these problems as I conclude this review.

The second chapter is a history of the relationship between the Han immigrants to Taiwan and the yuanzhumin (here the plains Aborigines 平埔族), that—following the lead of John Shepherd¹—links the history of both groups together. This approach is a powerful and challenging one that confronts those scholars, like myself, who usually present Taiwan's first centuries of development as Minnan Han (閩南漢族) conflict with Hakka Han (客家漢族) and also (but to a lesser degree) with the island's indigenous peoples. However, it is an argument in line with those that Taiwanese historians are putting forth in both scholarly literature and in textbooks

and popular literature, for it makes the case for a Taiwanese difference based on the embrace and integration of the aborigine "other."

This line of argument is then laid out in greater detail in the two chapters that follow. In chapters 3 and 4, using constructs introduced in chapter 1, Brown presents two narratives of Han/plains yuanzhumin-Han integration. This integration produces plains yuanzhumin as Han. She argues that there are two distinct strategies at work—a long-term cultural strategy and a short-term inter-marriage strategy—that have different results and produced different forms of what is nominally Han identity.

In the final substantive chapter, chapter 5, Brown takes the issue of identity across the Taiwan Strait to the northwestern province of Hubei. It is here that Brown undertook fieldwork among and archival work about the Tujia, a major ethnic minority in that province. She then spells out the approach to minorities adopted by the PRC and ROC, and then contrasts the two.

The final chapter, one neatly titled "Theory and Politics," adroitly brings the various schemas and modes of analysis together and also returns to the problem of identity and politics.

My simple laying out of the book's chapters can do little justice to the well-integrated and carefully thought-through whole. Let me thus return to the introduction, the place where Brown opens the intellectual battle with her first and very powerful salvo. I must ask forgiveness for the following early nineteenth century naval metaphors, but will admit I am addicted to the Aubrey/Maturin Series of Patrick O'Brien and tend to see even scholarly conflicts of our day in these "Age of Fighting Sail" terms.

When we look closely at the introduction, we cannot but admire how the plan of battle is so neatly set. I confess here that as one who has recently edited and published, with Paul Katz, a book on Taiwanese identity, I feel I am on that field of battle standing, with weapons in hand, opposed to the powerfully equipped Queen of Ideas that is Melissa Brown. Brown sees

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2The series of more than twenty volumes constitutes one long novel, which explores both naval history in the Napoleonic Age and British social history à la Jane Austen. The first of the Aubrey/Maturin series is Master and Commander (London: William Collins, 1970).
"identity" as a problem of rhetoric—with all the slipperiness that the very word "rhetoric" implies. Such rhetoric does not, if I read her correctly, match the nature of identity and the process of identity formation as it has taken place over the last five hundred years. By stating matters as she does, Brown challenges the very idea of "identity" as it is now usually conceived by most who write on the subject. She suggests that both the Chinese and the Taiwanese all too narrowly conceive the argument over identity, and also holds that what exists can be seen very much as a case of building a foundation upon shifting sands. She argues that identities must be negotiated. She also argues—and this is very much in concert with the new Qing-as-Manchu (滿清) school of recent eighteenth-twentieth century Chinese imperial historiography—that we must go beyond questions of the Han perspective. She goes further and suggests that the very way both China and Taiwan deal with identity is to forget about certain realities such as the "slippery," culturally constructed quality of identity, and also the way outsider groups have defined themselves and evolved their own societies as a means of coping with the very challenge of Han identity and what it means to be "Han."

I do not believe, however, that one can go that far. If we try to see identity a bit differently, we reach another set of conclusions about its nature. Where Brown sees identity as construct, I tend to see it "organically," as a natural survival mechanism—perhaps even as an atavistic form of behavior—that helps individuals and groups adjust to their different physical and sociocultural environments and allows them to come to terms with different sets of relationships and sociopolitical and sociocultural circumstances. Yet I also see identity—and the forms that it takes in China and in Han areas beyond the center—as playing out early sets of absorbed Confucian mind-sets and norms. This localized, lower, and middle class form of adoption of elite ways of seeing one's self in the world allows them to identify themselves with the "Great" tradition. Richard Lofrano has made this argument, quite persuasively in his monograph on merchants in the later Qing.3

To that degree, identity is socially, culturally, and situationally determined. If one wants to see the process at play in modern America, one need not go any further than to examine the dynamics of the relationship between the Ivy League-educated Wasp aristocrat Charles Van Doren and the Ivy League-educated Boston Jew, Richard Goodwin in Robert Redford’s masterful tail of morality in 1950s America, *Quiz Show.*\(^4\) Perhaps these points are minor and Brown and I differ but little, but I certainly see them as points of difference to be discussed.

When one moves to chapters 3 and 4 where Brown develops her two forms/patterns of identity change, we encounter another, related set of problems created in good measure by Brown’s decision to focus on the *yuanzhumin* and not the Han as the focal point of the problem of "identity." The step Melissa Brown takes is a bold one, for if one follows each argument to its end, one must wonder to what degree many "Minnan Han" Taiwanese are Han at all given the amount of marriage and cohabitation that has taken place over the decades. I am putting things in terms of "blood," a dangerous thing to do given events in Germany, Kosovo, Croatia, and Africa in the twentieth century, but so does Brown by implication. Is this "purity" argument a valid one? Certainly the officials in the PRC seem to treat it seriously, within limits. However, do Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) members also do so? I think this is indeed the case: being Taiwanese is unique in cultural terms, they would argue, but not in terms of "Han-ness." The implications of the Wolf/Shepherd/Brown argument are not ones the "Taiwanese" on Taiwan might accept, but the arguments make perfect sense given the wording of the title.\(^5\)

Melissa Brown has produced a masterful, exciting, and very challenging book. No one person will see it the same way and each scholar will argue against or for it on the basis of his or her own area of expertise and concern. As a historian who has more than once assumed the mantle

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and made use of the "weapons" of the anthropologist, I see this book as a brave and largely successful inter-disciplinary tome. The forum that Issues & Studies has given us in this special issue is an excellent arena (or is it coliseum?) to test our skills and our weapons. Let the games begin!

"Is Taiwan Chinese?":
Does It Really Matter?

CAL CLARK

The clashing interpretations of the status of Taiwan's sovereignty in Beijing and Taipei create a perennial and lingering threat to Taiwan's political and economic successes. Few would argue with Professor Melissa Brown's assertion that Taiwan's national identity lies at the heart of the "Taiwan problem":

Ultimately the problem is one of identity—Han ethnic identity, Chinese national identity, and the relationship of both these identities to the new Taiwanese identity forged in the 1990s. The PRC claims that Taiwan (unlike Korea) is ethnically Han and therefore should be part of the Chinese nation. Even though Taiwan acknowledges and honors its Chinese heritage, it now claims not to be Chinese [and] ... has started to assert its claim to sovereignty in terms of the social basis of its identity (pp. 1-2).

From this perspective, hence, the main title of Brown's recent book, Is Taiwan Chinese?, is not only provocative but also suggests that the

CAL CLARK is a professor of political science and Director of the MPA Program at Auburn University. His primary research interest is the political economy of development. He is the co-author of Flexibility, Foresight, and Fortuna in Taiwan's Development (1992) and Comparing Development Patterns in Asia (1997), as well as co-editor of Beyond the Developmental State (1998) and Democracy and the Status of Women in East Asia. He can be reached at <clarkcm@auburn.edu>.

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answer is a — if not the — key factor in evaluating the legitimacy of the competing claims about political sovereignty over Taiwan and, perhaps, in devising a way out of the current deadlock. At least as this reviewer read the book, though, her thoughtful and thought-provoking analysis leads to almost the opposite conclusion. The subtitle describes the work quite well: The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities. The book includes excellent ethnographic studies of several plains Aborigine villages near Tainan (台南) and of the Enshi Prefecture in Hubei (湖北省恩施地區), China, as well as a historical reconstruction of intermarriage between Han immigrants and plains Aborigines in southern Taiwan and the resulting cultural change that ensued. Based on these case studies, Brown makes a convincing theoretical argument that ethnic and national identities are "socially constructed." If this is so, however, linking questions about permanent sovereignty and political status to national identity becomes somewhat problematic.

Brown estimates that a fairly high rate of intermarriage occurred between the overwhelmingly male Han immigrants to southern Taiwan and plains Aborigine women during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. With the ending of the brief period of Dutch colonialism, moreover, the succeeding Chinese regimes created more and more policy incentives for such mixed families and their descendents to identify as Han (with patrilineal ancestry linking them to China), creating what she terms "the short route to Han" (p. 134). Despite this Han identification, intermarriage produced cultural change in both directions, indicating that the plains Aborigines in Taiwan have had a significant impact on the culture of Taiwanese or Hoklo (福佬 Fulao, or 閩南人 Minnanren) today.

Interestingly, her ethnographic field work in southern Hubei found a similar situation in which immigrants over the last several centuries identified themselves as Han. Under the communist regime, however, many have been reclassified as Tujia. This reclassification came about not only because of the significant differences between their cultural practices and those of Han elsewhere in China, but also because of the policy incentives in post-Mao China for both individuals and local governments to have citizens classified as non-Han.
The final subjects in her study are the residents of three traditional plains Aborigine villages near Tainan. Most people here had Aboriginal identities until the early twentieth century when the Japanese outlawed foot-binding and, thus, destroyed the major "marker" between Han and Aboriginal cultures. Given the policy incentives to assume a Han identity noted above, intermarriage and the resulting cultural interaction and assimilation led to a change to Han identity. During the 1990s, though, political changes pushed these villagers toward viewing themselves as plains Aborigines again.

Based on these three empirical studies, Brown synthesizes several theoretical traditions in anthropology to conclude that ethnic and national identities are "socially constructed" in the sense that they are "formed and negotiated through everyday experiences and social interactions" (p. 13). This includes the environment created by the policies of political regimes, as all three case studies found instances where policy changes initiated changes in ethnic identity. Often the impact of public policy upon the identities of peoples or communities may be inadvertent or coincidental. Governments also attempt to influence the identities of their citizens or potential citizens by propagating what Brown terms "narratives of unfolding" about the development of a nationality or ethnic group that are clearly used for purposes of political manipulation (pp. 5-6).

Brown, therefore, views the "Taiwan problem" in terms of the incompatibility between how Taiwan fits into Beijing's and Taipei's narratives of unfolding. For most Chinese, Taiwan is an integral part of China that was stolen during the century of imperialist humiliations. Thus, the island's reunification with China is a prerequisite for the restoration of national dignity. Conversely, most people on Taiwan, regardless of ethnicity (Hoklo, Hakka, mainlanders 大陸人/外省人, or aborigine), see Taiwan as a society and polity that is separate and quite distinct from the People's Republic of China's whose undeniable economic success and democratization would almost certainly be destroyed by absorption into the PRC. This obviously sets up diametrically opposed answers to the question of whether Taiwan is Chinese. To Beijing, Taiwan is Chinese; claims about the development of a Taiwanese identity are utterly unacceptable. In sharp contrast, most
people on Taiwan—regardless of whatever their ethnic or national identities might be—have no wish to be incorporated into the PRC in the foreseeable future. This is evidenced by myriad public opinion polls and, more symbolically, by the pan-Blue (泛藍) candidates in the 2004 presidential race kissing Taiwan's soil.¹

Such totally incompatible views on national identity make a resolution of the dispute over Taiwan's sovereignty nearly—if not completely—impossible. Yet, it is also possible to wonder whether national identity per se really is the crux of the matter. For example, would it make any difference to the PRC's "narrative of unfolding" whether the people on Taiwan considered themselves Chinese or Taiwanese or Chilean or Tibetan? More importantly, Brown herself indicates that a Taiwan focus on national identity may, in fact, constitute playing the game by China's rules:

Ironically, although people in Taiwan distance themselves from Chinese national identity, they often do so from within a Han cultural perspective. New narratives of Taiwan's unfolding accept the assumptions that borders to Han and Chinese identities are clearly defined and that these identities are inextricably linked to each other. They argue that Taiwanese fall outside the border because of the degree of Aborigine and Japanese influence on Taiwanese culture. This position takes Confucian culturalism to its logical conclusion: if non-Han can become Han, then Han can become non-Han (p. 27).

It strikes me that this approach has several important disadvantages. First, it gives at least some legitimacy to the PRC's claims to Taiwan that, a priori, could be challenged. For example, if it is legitimate to claim sovereignty based on national identity, could the United Kingdom lay new claim to its former colony based on the prevalence of the English language in the United States? Or even if one adheres to the "one China" principle, why could not China be considered a "divided country," such as Korea or Germany, whose halves are given international representation until they can solve their differences? Second, emphasizing a new and separate Taiwanese identity can only inflame Chinese nationalism and raise the tension in cross-Strait relations. Certainly, Beijing would never acknowledge

the legitimacy of such claims. Third, Professor Brown does an excellent job of showing that attempts by governments to use national identity for political purposes almost inevitably involve gross distortions of historical and social reality and that the identities of individuals and communities are subject to ongoing change and (re)negotiation. This would seemingly make them a less than totally desirable foundation for making fundamental and probably irrevocable decisions about Taiwan's political status. For example, one could easily argue that these factors make it impossible to provide a definitive answer to the question in the book's title. In short, Melissa Brown has provided an excellent and innovative study of national identity in Taiwan and China. Her analysis, though, suggests that the question "Is Taiwan Chinese?" might be less central than is often assumed to the political question of whether Taiwan should be part of the PRC.

Some Reservations about Melissa J. Brown's Is Taiwan Chinese?

F U - C H A N G W A N G

In her book, Is Taiwan Chinese?, Melissa Brown deals with two topics: (1) the issues of identity changes among not only Taiwan's plains Aborigines during the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, but also the Tujia in China's Hubei Province; and (2) the implications of her findings for the current "Taiwan problem." Using very com-

F U - C H A N G W A N G (王甫昌) received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Arizona in 1989, and is currently Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. His current research interests include Taiwan's ethnic relations, ethnic and nationalist movements, and ethnic politics. He can be reached at <fuchang@gate.sinica.edu.tw>.
prehensive secondary sources regarding historical development in Taiwan and China, as well as her own interviews in the field, Brown has put together a coherent historical account of the cases of identity changes in question and a rather convincing argument about their dynamics. To the best of my knowledge, Brown's volume may well be the first of its kind on the subject of identity change among Taiwan's plains Aborigines. This is a unique topic, as most of the extant literature deals with the political or economic aspects of plains Aborigines under different regimes throughout Taiwan's history. What is more, Brown proposes a theoretical framework for analyzing ethnic identity change, emphasizing the importance of migration, intermarriage, and regime change. This is indeed a welcome addition to the growing interest in, and literature on, not only plains Aborigines in Taiwan in specific but also the study of ethnicity in general.

While I find Brown's treatment of identity change via an anthropological approach fascinating, though not quite satisfying, the extension of her findings to the current Taiwan problem seems a little bit awkward. In what follows, I will first elaborate my dissatisfaction with Brown's treatment of the identity change issue, and then explain my reservations regarding the political implications of the empirical findings.

Ethnic Identity in Seventeenth Century Taiwan

My first comment relates to the way "ethnic identity" is loosely used in Brown's book. "Ethnic groups" or "ethnicity" are modern terms that only began to be widely used in English after the 1960s.¹ These terms were used by Brown, like many other students of Taiwanese history, to refer to the social groupings and interaction among Hans and Aborigines or between sub-groups of Hans dating back to the seventeenth century. In a modern

¹According to Glazer and Moynihan, the term "ethnicity" was included in the major English dictionaries only after the 1960s. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, eds., Ethnicity: Theory and Experience (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1. Another good indication is that when Raymond Williams published his now famous Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), the term "ethnic" was not included. However, the word made its way into the collection in the second edition published in 1983.
pluralist society (where the concept of "ethnicity" was first conceived), ethnic identity typically involves a sense of imagined common ancestry or culture among a large group of people whom one may never meet personally but yet feels a certain bond.\(^2\) An ethnic group is "imagined" to be different from a kinship group where every member is related to each other through a perceived common ancestry rather than real familial connections. Brown's choice of the term "narrative of unfolding" in this book beautifully grasps the very core of a "modern" ethnic imagination. I can certainly agree that the change of identity from Hoklo back to plains Aborigines for some "Han" residents in Toushe (頭社), Jibeishua (吉貝耍), and Longtian (隆田) after 1994 can be described as a change in ethnic identity given that their sense of peoplehood in this action was congruent with the newly emerging Taiwanese nationalist narrative of unfolding.\(^3\)

I am hesitant, however, to apply this term to the social grouping in seventeenth century Taiwan. A narrative of unfolding, I suspect, is exactly what is missing from the minds of seventeenth century Han migrants to Taiwan when they changed their "identity" from Han to plains Aborigine in order to take economic advantage of a tax system favoring plains Aborigines—or vice versa by the plains Aborigines who adopted the Han identity under the new Japanese regime in the early twentieth century since the economic advantage of a plain Aborigine identity disappeared during the change of regimes. In both cases, what Brown calls "ethnic identity" is in fact categories of social groups imposed on the ordinary people by the governing regime in accordance with their ruling interest. The modern social and political mechanisms that are so crucial to the development of

\(^2\)See Anya Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 24-27, for the six features of contemporary definitions of "ethnicity" as agreed upon by participants of a 1973 symposium sponsored by the Social Science Research Council in an attempt to obtain a working definition of the terms "ethnic group" or "ethnicity." The two features that are particularly relevant to my discussion here are a past-oriented group identification emphasizing origins and the fact that ethnic groups are larger than kin or locality groups and transcend face-to-face interaction (p. 24).

\(^3\)The statement holds true even though, as Brown argues, older generations residing in the three villages initially resisted the reclassification of identity from Hoklo to plains Aborigines due to their experience of being called "savages" as youths (Brown, pp. 124-30).
a "narrative of unfolding" were simply not in existence in seventeenth century Taiwan. Given the lack of a relevant narrative of unfolding, people who were categorized by the government as Han or plain Aborigines most likely did not feel any sentimental attachment to the label or to the people in the same category. It is very doubtful that members of a given "ethnic" category in seventeenth or nineteenth century Taiwan would have been willing to sacrifice their personal interests or even lives for others in the same government-imposed category—what would be common occurrence in contemporary social actions motivated by modern ethnic imagination.

I therefore would be very reluctant to apply the term "ethnic" to describe their change of "identity." It seems to me that the so-called "ethnic identities" were merely economic statuses based on whatever social division was beneficiary to the regimes' ruling strategy. The relative ease with which one could change one's identity through what Brown calls "the short route to Han" in the seventeenth century testifies to the relative lack of emotional attachment to any such preexisting identity. Although generally directed at all who apply the term "ethnic" to study social relations in early Taiwanese history, I think this critique is particularly relevant to Brown's book because it specifically deals with the issues of "ethnic identity." For the same reason, I would suggest a reevaluation of Brown's classification of the feuds (fenlei xeidou, 分類械鬥) in Taiwan during the Qing (清朝) era as "ethnic" feuds (p. 51).

When Did the Plain Aborigines Disappear from the Official Classification?

My second comment is related to a crucial historical fact on which Brown builds her argument about the long route to Han, namely the dynamics of the change from plains Aborigine to Han identity in the 1930s. Under the household registration system instituted by the Japanese colonial government, Taiwanese were classified into the "race" categories of Fujian (福建), Guangdong (廣東), plains Aborigines, and Mountain Aborigines. According to Brown, "'Race' was no longer recorded after 1915 or so, and the category was eventually removed from the form" (p. 54). A similar statement was also made elsewhere in the book (pp. 8-9). However, Brown fails to provide any references or evidence to back up these statements.
This "fact" was crucial because Brown then argues that the only remaining boundary marker between the Hans and plains Aborigines after 1915 would be the practice of the foot-binding of Han women, which when banned by the government in 1915 triggered the identity change among the plains Aborigines via "the long route to Han."

I am somewhat skeptical because I know for fact that the "race" classification was a major item in censuses taken in Taiwan throughout the Japanese era. In addition, the Japanese police department still reported the actual numbers of Taiwanese by the race distinction in their annual report on household registration as of 1932. In fact, when Taiwan was returned to Chinese rule after 1945, the new Chinese regime embodied by the Office of Taiwan Governor-General (台灣行政長官公署) was able to publish the exact population figures of Fujian, Guangdong, plains Aborigines, and Mountain Aborigines in Taiwan from the vast amount of official documents and statistics handed over by the Japanese regime. It was the Nationalist regime (the Kuomintang [KMT, 國民黨]) that decided to drop the category of plains Aborigines when conducting its first census in 1956. One could say that the plains Aborigines "disappeared" from government statistics beginning with the KMT era, and not during the Japanese rule, as proposed by Brown. If the Japanese regime continued to distinguish, at least in its official classification, the plains Aborigines from other Taiwanese through the 1940s, then the meaning and the effect of the foot-binding

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4The Japanese colonial government conducted seven censuses during its reign over Taiwan: 1905, 1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, and 1940. The 1940 census was interrupted by the outbreak of the Pacific War and was never finished. For the other six censuses, "race" was a basic census item. The distinction between the Fujian, Guangdong, plains Aborigines, and Mountain Aborigines was made in the "race" item and computed in all six censuses. The terms "plains Aborigines" (平埔族) and "Mountain Aborigines" (高山族) were adopted after 1935 to replace the old terms, as per the earlier Qing’s usage of "Cooked Savages" (熟蕃) and "Raw Savages" (生蕃).

5In those annual statistics, "race" and "sex" were the only two items reported. See, for instance, Police Department of Office of Taiwan Governor (台灣省總督府警務局), Annual Report on Household, 1932 (《戶口(昭和六年未調)》).

6See Office of Taiwan Governor-General (台灣省行政長官公署), ed., Fifty-one Years of Taiwan's Statistics (《臺灣省五十一一年來統計提要》) (1946), 90-91. According to these statistics, there were 62,119 plains Aborigines in Taiwan in 1943 out of an entire population of 6,585,841.
ban policy on the said identity change as proposed by Brown would need to be reconsidered.

"Taiwan Problem" or "China Problem"?

My final point regards the political implications that Brown's findings have for identity change. The real substance of the book revolved around using cases of identity change at the borders to illustrate the "Chinese" ideas of what constitutes "Chinese" or "Han" (chaps. 3-5). The introductory chapter of the book was organized, however, in a way designed to shed light on the heatedly debated issue of "is Taiwan Chinese?" that is occurring in the midst of China's strong objection to Taiwan's pursuit of political independence. I totally agree with Brown's assessment that—given the Chinese culturalist idea about what constitutes "Chinese" as a national identity, or "Han," as an ethnic identity—the leaders and people of China will never agree that Taiwan has evolved into a culture so different from the Chinese that it deserves a separate sovereignty. Indeed, any campaign for a de jure Taiwan independence would be in even deeper trouble if its "narrative of unfolding" relies heavily, if not entirely, on the shaky ground of a culturalist argument. Brown's findings have effectively enlightened the readers about the Chinese perception of their own nationalist narrative of unfolding. As a result of internal struggle among different camps, Taiwanese independence discourse after the 1990s has been based more on civil or territorial nationalist arguments than on ethnic nationalist claims. While still recognizing their "Chinese" inheritance based on culture and ancestry in an ethnic sense, more and more people in Taiwan now emphasize the political, economic, and social experience of the past five decades when Taiwan underwent tremendous changes in all categories in support of their appeal for a sovereign state. Some Taiwanese advocates draw an analogy between the historical relations between Great Britain and both U.S. and Australian independence to support their own demand for recognition of separate sovereign states across the Taiwan Strait.

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7I am following the distinction of territorial versus ethnic nationalism proposed by Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
That, however, is only a small part of the problem. Does it really matter to the Chinese regime and/or most Chinese people what are the Taiwanese claims of legitimacy for seeking political independence? Will the issue of unification/independence ever be settled by any form of argument or debate over whether or not Taiwan is Chinese? It seems that what is commonly referred to as the "Taiwan problem" is really a "China problem" to the degree that the Chinese regime and its people have various reasons to want to see the unification of China and Taiwan—regardless of what the Taiwanese think. Brown points out two reasons for the strong objection China has to Taiwanese independence: the nationalist sentiment of seeing Taiwan as a last piece of Chinese land lost to colonial invasion, and the fear of a domino effect if Taiwan were to become independent from China (pp. 2-3). I find myself in total agreement—yet none of these reasons has anything to do with Taiwan. The cross-Strait relationship is a matter of power, one that can hardly be expected to be resolved by understanding the changing perception among Taiwanese of what is or is not "Han." My last reservation with this book thus derives from the discrepancy between Brown's solid analyses of cases of identity change and the book's less-than-rigorous discussion of their supposed political implications.
Melissa Brown's book provides a plenitude of productive provocation. Overturning the settled stones of postulation about the relationship between the "Han" (漢族) and "Aboriginal" (原住民) on Taiwan, Brown's work exposes a myriad wriggling perplexities about identity. Each invites consideration, but this review pursues just two: what Brown's compelling ethnologic research elucidates about identity writ large and why the evidence she presents does not support her conclusion that the cross-Taiwan Strait dispute is ultimately about identity.

Is China Chinese?

The inquisitorial title of her volume—Is Taiwan Chinese?—reflects Brown's interest in the proposition that the island is entitled to independence because its culture is distinct from China's. Although a majority of those people in Taiwan who wish to sustain the island's autonomy may reject the claim of cultural distinction as a foundation for self-determination, this cultural issue is a persistent weed in Taiwan's political garden and therefore warrants scrutiny.

By tracing the intermingling of "Han" and "Aboriginal" identities on Taiwan, Brown's book implicates as folly the effort to reify any ethnic or cultural identity. Whether it be Han, Aboriginal, Taiwanese, or Chinese, Brown's work leaves in tatters the notion that any group is pure. If one digs deeply enough into the history of any ethnicity that a contemporary popu-
In her examination of Han and Aboriginal communities and the legacy that migration, intermarriage, and transitory cultural norms have left in contemporary ethnic identities (chapters 2-5), Brown argues persuasively that classifications are contingent and "based on social experience, not cultural ideas or ancestry" (pp. xi, 211). The dominant social group determines the hierarchy of ethnic classifications, the borders between its own identity—as it perceives and propagates it—and those of other groups, and establishes the rules that inform the social contexts from which identity emerges and is consolidated. She also makes clear that the identity of the dominant group is just as likely to be constructed, not demonstrable, as are the identities of the people who the dominant group classifies as "other."

Thus, Brown's research ends up eroding the utility of the very terms that are at the heart of her analysis, "Han" and "Aboriginal." While she does identify certain mortuary, inheritance, foot-binding, religious, consumptive, and architectural practices as well as metaphysical beliefs that are characteristic of each group, these markers are not definitive. Moreover, if the designation of a person or community as either "Han" or "Aboriginal" is, itself, contingent, shifting, and malleable, one is left to say about either ethnic category what U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said about obscenity: even though it cannot be defined precisely, "I know it when I see it."

Brown is to be commended for leading the reader to understand identity as a contingent outgrowth of social experience. However, having shaken the reader's confidence that the category "Han" has any enduring and well-bounded meaning, Brown makes the arresting assertion that "Han ethnic identity and Chinese national identity are conflated by people within China, both Han and non-Han, and by academics within and outside of China" (p. 22). One dearly wishes that Brown had validated her contention by reference to evidence. Still, by equating "Han" ethnic identity

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to Chinese national identity she prompts one to ask: how Chinese is China?

One Controversy, Separate Interpretations

Reviewing the history of China's territorial expansion since the Qin (秦朝) and especially both the ROC and PRC efforts to claim a considerable portion of the empire established by the Qing dynasty, it is self-evident that if being "Chinese" means being "Han," there are large swaths of China that are not inhabited by Chinese, but by ethnic groups whose territories have been subsumed by China. Preserving most of the lands annexed by the Qing empire while surmounting the idea that one has to be Han to be Chinese, seems to have been the objective of twentieth-century Chinese nationalists who advocated that China is a multi-ethnic nation. This formula was embraced by both the ROC and the PRC. While there may be people who conflate Han ethnic identity and Chinese national identity, Brown's book might have done more to explain why this equation is problematic. More significantly, Brown does little to differentiate ethnic and political identity.

Neglecting this distinction, Brown does not convincingly accomplish one objective she sets for herself, to "analyze political implications of identity in Taiwan and China in a fashion that can inform policy decisions about Taiwan's future relations with the PRC" (p. xii). Indeed, the first and last chapters in which Brown seeks to link her ethnological work with cross-Strait politics are not the book's best.

First, these chapters are punctuated by imprecision. For instance, the United States does not support the "one China" policy of the PRC (p. 1), but rather has its own version. Brown's assertion that "to date, Taiwan does not call itself a nation independent of China" (p. 4) begs for clarification.

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tion in light of her subsequent statement that Lee Teng-hui’s (李登輝) use of the term "Taiwan Guomindang" (臺灣國民黨) "implied Taiwan's status as a nation" (p. 4), to say nothing of Chen Shui-bian’s (陳水扁) rhetoric since 2000.\(^3\) One wonders to what Brown refers, writing that "Hong Kong and Macao have decided their own fates by referendum" (p. 5 n. 4), as the joint declarations signed by the PRC, Britain, and Portugal leave the impression that the "resumption by China of the exercise of sovereignty" was imposed.\(^4\) Long before Lee Teng-hui employed the term "new Taiwanese" in 1998, the concept had been used by others, including Chen Shui-bian, to mean that if one identified with Taiwan, one was Taiwanese regardless of when one's ancestors arrived on the island (p. 12).\(^5\) In addition, Taiwan offered to donate US$1 billion to fund international development efforts if admitted to the United Nations, not "several million" (p. 249).\(^6\)

Second, the opening and concluding chapters manifest little of the sensitivity to nuance that is more prevalent in Brown's presentation of ethnological findings. While Brown's interviews in Taiwan and Hubei offer abundant detail about the social construction of ethnic and cultural identities, she offers no comparable scope of evidence for the construction of political identities. Her contention that democratization "spurred identity change" on Taiwan (p. 239)—and not the other way round—is, at least, debatable.

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\(^3\)Chen Shui-bian is on record after his election as president stating in various ways, "Taiwan is an independent, sovereign country." For instance, see "Interview with Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian," The Washington Post, October 10, 2003, as reproduced at http://taiwansecurity.org/ WP/2003/ WP-101003.htm (accessed September 8, 2004).


\(^5\)As an example, by the late 1980s the effort to claim, or reclaim, an island-specific identity was the subject of the "New Taiwanese Collection," a series of books published by the Chien-wei Publishing House. For one record of Chen Shui-bian's views, see Alan M. Wachman, Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), 63.

Had Brown located concerns about identity into the broader panoply of issues that have given rise to the cross-Strait controversy—including questions of sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, liberty, and regime legitimacy, she might have avoided the puzzling and contestable assertion that the dispute between Beijing and Taipei “is one of identity—Han ethnic identity, Chinese national identity, and the relationship of both these identities to the new Taiwanese identity forged in the 1990s” (p. 1).

The new Taiwanese identity to which Brown refers does, as she suggests, flow from the common social experience of the people of Taiwan (p. 241). Brown is also correct that the PRC is increasingly unnerved by the disinterest Taiwan's populace displays in seeing itself as part of the Chinese state. However, that many in Taiwan view themselves as living apart from—and not as a part of—China is not principally a rejection of “the idea that if Taiwan’s people are culturally Han, they should be part of the nation of China” (p. 22). Resistance to unification emerges in part from the understanding that one "nation"—in the sense of one people—need not constitute only one political entity.

As Brown herself testifies, for Taiwan, this is now a matter of preserving the hard-won fruits of democracy. Taiwan has resisted the notion of "one China" more because of the implications of "one-ness" with the PRC than because of the implications of being part of "China." She writes, "Taiwan officials and ordinary citizens have said that the PRC would have to become a democracy before Taiwan will choose reunification.... Because people in Taiwan have experienced democracy, they are very unlikely to identify with an authoritarian regime" (p. 245).

If valid, Brown’s assessment means that Taiwan's populace—regardless of its ethnicity—is unwilling to sacrifice the liberty it enjoys on Taiwan for an association with the PRC, even if that means relief from the insecurity that Beijing's belligerency entails. This is a statement of political identity tied to a perception of different regime types. This assessment may also suggest that the people of Taiwan understand themselves to be inhabiting a state, not a part of some larger state, and are not interested in giving up the autonomy they enjoy, regardless of the cultural or ethnic commonality that may exist between them and the people of the PRC. Whether the
amalgam of Han and Aboriginal ethnicities has given rise on Taiwan to a variant of Han culture that is distinct to Taiwan is secondary to these more prominent reasons for opposing unification. The evolution of Han cultural identity on Taiwan is less significant to the cross-Strait controversy than is the evolution of a new political identity. While people may identify themselves as ethnically Han, Aboriginal, Chinese, or Taiwanese, they may still see Taiwan as the state they call home. Collective political identity—built on common historical experience—and not a newly inclusive Han identity is what gave rise to the notion of "new Taiwanese."

As for the PRC, Beijing cares little about the ethnic composition of the people of Taiwan. Common ethnic identity is not the bedrock of Beijing's claim to the island. The PRC's stance stems, in part, from a perception of entitlement flowing from past sovereignty by China over Taiwan. In claiming sovereignty, it makes little difference to Beijing whether the territory is uninhabited (as are the Spratly Islands [南沙群島] that the PRC also claims), inhabited by a population dominated by an ethnic group other than "Han" (as is Tibet 西藏), or inhabited by an ethnic population that once was the majority but is now only a large minority in a mixture of Han and non-Han (as is Xinjiang 新疆). Differences between how the population of Taiwan identifies its ethnicity and how Beijing may identify it is not the issue that drives the cross-Strait dispute.

The PRC has been motivated to extend its sovereignty over Taiwan in part because the island's autonomy undermines Beijing's credibility as the champion of anti-imperialist nationalism. Moreover, protected as it is by the United States, Taiwan presents what Beijing perceives as a threat to its security. That is to say, from Beijing's vantage the cross-Strait dispute is a territorial dispute, not a dispute about ethnic identity. The crux of the matter does not center on the people who inhabit Taiwan, but on the territorial integrity of the state—as Beijing defines it.

It is true, as Brown notes, that the PRC's White Paper of 1993, "The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China," takes up the rhetoric of Chinese cultural cohesion, as do other pronouncements by the PRC. That Beijing entreats its brethren in Taiwan to view themselves as having the same flesh and blood as their cousins across the Taiwan Strait is a tactical
ploy—a means, not the ends.

Brown herself makes the point that the PRC casts the cross-Strait dispute as an outgrowth of its own national "narrative of unfolding" in which "Taiwan is portrayed as the last piece of China ripped away by foreign imperialists . . ." (p. 244). After decades both of declaring the island to be a part of China and of accusing the United States of imperialism or hegemony for interfering in the internal affairs of China by supporting Taiwan, Beijing's focus is on reclaiming territory it sees to be rightfully China's. The evolution of identity on Taiwan may mean that few people on the island favor what the PRC calls the reunification of China—a fact that may prompt a shift in Beijing's tactics. Unwelcome though that complication may be, it does not alter the fundamental nature of the cross-Strait controversy as being one about territory, not identity.
Identity of Mixed People and People of Mixed Identities—A Field Trip with Melissa Brown

KUANGCHUN LI

What is identity? Does identity change and, if so, how? What are the sociopolitical, economic, and demographic circumstances under which identity is labeled or relabeled? These are the intriguing questions that interest scholars and students of race and ethnicity. These questions pose theoretical challenges, and the answers to which often have far-reaching social and political implications. Moreover, Taiwan provides a great social lab in which to test the various theories of identity. Melissa Brown's book, Is Taiwan Chinese?—The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities, is certainly one of the first-rate scholarly works on the subject. This review begins by highlighting what I personally like about this book, which is then followed by a discussion of some arguments in the book which readers may find less convincing. The review closes with some reflections on a few key issues raised by Brown's work.

Three Potent Thinking Tools: Fluidity, Changeability, and Variability

Migration mixes people, intermarriage changes culture, but politics defines identity. This is the leading theoretical thread that I took from

KUANGCHUN LI (李廣均) received his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1997, and is currently Assistant Professor at the Center for General Education and Graduate Institute of Social and Cultural Studies at National Central University (國立中央大學). His dissertation is a study of the identity experiences of Taiwan’s mainlanders (waishengren). His recent research interests include ethnicity, multiculturalism, and cultural sociology. He is currently working to complete a study on "Names and Naming—A Sociological Perspective.” Dr. Li can be reached at <kcli@cc.ncu.edu.tw>.
Brown's book. By using three case studies—two from the plains Aborigines in southwestern Taiwan (short-route Han in the seventeenth century and long-route Han in the twentieth century) and one from the Tujia in Enshi (Hubei, China), the author provides a well-orchestrated theoretical synthesis to analyze the identity experiences of these select mixed populations, which she supports with rich materials from both field interviews and historical documents.

Some of my favorite passages are those on fluidity, changeability, and variability (pp. 13-19). Fluidity refers to the involuntary relabeling of identity. As the book suggests, identity borders often shift around individuals and groups, regardless of the change of cultural content. More importantly, a shifting of borders can result from such sociopolitical intervention as regime change, which is an essential part in the author's theoretical model on the process of identity change. Changeability refers to the ability of individuals or groups to change their identity label. Although the border remains fixed, individuals can cross the border with selective use of cultural materials (such as surnames or food consumption) in order to negotiate a desirable identity. In other words, individuals may use identity as a strategy to maximize his or her personal benefit. Variability refers to changes in the content of individual or group identity, modifications which may be brought on by economic development, intermarriage, or drastic political change (such as the Cultural Revolution). As a result, it is crucial to find out why and which social, cultural, or physical characteristics are selectively claimed as part of a particular identity. Also important is to discern how regional or internal variation is tolerated in order to maintain a specific cultural or ethnic identity.

What is Chinese Identity?

How do we tell if a person is Chinese or not? By skin color or ancestry (patrilineal descent)? Or by cultural practice such as food consumption or ancestor worship? This question brings forth the second reason that I enjoyed reading this book: its analysis of the nature and complexity of "Chinese identity." For example, giving credit to the author, we can use ancestry and culture to create a 2 x 2 diagram (see below) to examine the
Identity of mixed people such as exogamous Hakka or mainlanders (外省人, waishengren) (pp. 22-29). The author also attempts to distinguish the Han perspective from the Confucian-culturalism perspective. In agreement with this approach, I would also add that the former, by emphasizing patrilineal descent, tends to be an uneducated perspective; the latter perspective, by emphasizing cultural practice, is an educated one. Furthermore, Confucian intellectuals tend to use cultivation (such as mastery of calligraphy) as a class-boundary marker. In other words, ancestry, cultural practice, and cultivation work together in a hierarchical way to define who is "Chinese."

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Identity of Mixed People</th>
<th>Ancestry +</th>
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<td>Culture +</td>
<td>Second-generation mainlanders with exogamous parents</td>
<td>Long-route Han, Second-generation mainlanders with endogamous parents</td>
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<td>Culture –</td>
<td>Short-route Han, American-born Chinese</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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A Risk of Mixing Local Identity and National Identity

With regard to the book subtitle—"The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities," the author has done well in illustrating the complex nature of identity and the far-reaching implications of identity politics. As for the book title—"Is Taiwan Chinese?", however, more evidence may be needed to convince the reader to accept the answer that the book provides. One of my concerns is that the prospect of a new Taiwanese identity cannot be inferred from the three case studies in this book. While change of local identity is one thing, modification of national identity is quite another. How one negotiates an ethnic or cultural identity in the southwestern plains of Taiwan is different from whether or not an ascending national identity can be secured. The future of a Taiwanese national identity has more to do with international politics, such as U.S. or Japanese foreign policy, than with the rate of intermarriage or the number of Han immigrants in the nineteenth century. During the years of the Cold War, the answer to "Is Taiwan Chinese?" would have been an unambiguous
"yes," owing to the fact that Taiwan stood for a model of "Free China" in opposition to the "Red China" across the Strait. Under the more recent "war on terrorism," however, the U.S. attitude about a new Taiwanese national identity is now likely to be much more ambiguous.

Identity Change before Regime Change?

One valuable contribution is this book's theoretical model on the process of identity change. As the author explains, the process by which identity change occurred in her three case studies was intermarriage followed at some point by a social intervention, and enacted by a new political regime which differed culturally from its predecessor (p. 162). The author stresses that the circumstances of migration and intermarriage were not sufficient to spark identity change—political intervention was the necessary condition. In terms of Brown's theoretical synthesis, changes in the political regime were necessary to create a window of opportunity for identity change to occur (p. 160). My concern here, however, is that before we can further specify the process of identity change, the causes and implications of sociopolitical intervention need to be examined in more detail. Regime change can be caused by a variety of factors, each of which can have a different impact on identity change. For example, Japanese colonial rule cannot be viewed the same as the regime change of political liberalization/democratization which has occurred in Taiwan since the late 1980s. As chapter 3 demonstrates, the identity change of long-route Han was mainly induced by a policy ban on foot-binding, an edict which the Japanese officials strongly enforced despite local objection. By comparison, Taiwan's regime change in the 1990s claims its legitimacy from the will of the people. No government action—let alone the implementation of a government policy to change people's identity—will now be favored if there is no popular support.

A consideration of the nature and origins of regime change illuminates the possibility that identity change may in fact come before regime change. The sociopolitical changes that occurred in Taiwan in the 1990s were actually a result of the identity change of many people on the island. Even for the mainlanders, although most might be unhappy with or even
not willing to accept the election outcomes in 1996 and 2000, they might have developed a Taiwanese identity long before these events occurred. For instance, many first-generation mainlanders began visiting their hometowns on the mainland since the early 1980s, though the official lifting of the ban on mainland visit did not occur until 1987. After returning from these trips, most of the mainlanders have decided to remain in Taiwan instead of moving back to China. In fact, mainland visits might serve well to facilitate the consolidation of their Taiwanese identity, which is not necessarily the equivalent of abandoning their Chinese identity. They are thus now people of mixed identities. Such events as the deaths of both Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) in 1975 and Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) in 1988 might also have triggered the process of identity change, which takes time to unfold.

Loopholes in the Narratives of National Unfolding: Taiwan and China

According to Brown, people in positions of social power deliberately attempt to further a political agenda that maintains or advances their own position by manipulating the cultural meanings of past and present social and political events and cultural ideas (p. 235). However, nationalistic historiography/manipulation always has loopholes. The nationalistic narratives in both Taiwan and China are no exception.

The significance of the plains Aborigines to the narrative of Taiwanese national unfolding can never be stressed too much. Moreover, this new narrative prefers short-route Han to long-route Han. Antiquity associated with short-route Han helps to convey the message that being Taiwanese is inevitably different from being Chinese. However, this emphasis on antiquity might backfire in terms of ethnic relations on the island. Emphasizing the racial and cultural blending of Aborigines and Han immigrants, the new narrative of unfolding singles out the late 1940s immigrants

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1 The formation of a Taiwanese identity on the part of mainlanders mainly came about due to the reasons Brown mentioned in her book, i.e., the labeling of all Taiwanese as "Tai-bao" (台胞), and the loss of traditional Confucian values due to the Cultural Revolution.
of mainlanders and their descendants, leaving them with a non-Taiwanese identity. A challenging task that remains is to incorporate both plains Aborigines and mainlanders (also Hakka) into the new narrative of Taiwanese national unfolding.

And what of the loophole in the PRC’s nationalistic narrative? As mentioned by the author, given that the locals in Enshi were relabeled as non-Han under the state classification project after the 1950s, the PRC thus contradicts itself by claiming Taiwanese as Han, ignoring the long-term intermarriages between plains Aborigines and Han immigrants. What concerns me more, however, is not the manipulation itself but the reaction people will have. The reason for this discrepancy is what the author recognizes as the distance between the rhetorically claimed basis of identity and the actual basis of identity. The crux of the matter lies in the authoritarian nature of a political regime. Identity relabeling in Enshi is a top-down imposition, which is arbitrary, though common, in an authoritarian society such as the PRC. The process of identity change in Taiwan since the 1990s has, however, had a momentum of its own. Democracy or the maturing of a civil society is what separates the identity experiences in Taiwan and China. The author repeatedly mentions the refrain of official ethnologists in the PRC: "We tell them what they are, and after a while they get used to it" (p. 209). I doubt if that attitude would work in Taiwan today.

Identity of Mixed People and People of Mixed Identities

Is Taiwan Chinese? This is a bold question to ask, but a difficult one to answer. Imagine how complicated and controversial the issue would be if the title chosen for the book was "Are Taiwanese Chinese?" However, as for the subtitle—"The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities," the author has provided informative field data and an original theoretical synthesis to support her argument of the process of identity change. I highly recommend this book for those interested in identity issues in general and in Taiwanese/Chinese politics in particular.

Mixed people have presented a challenge to the study of identity issues. Politicians like to see the identity of mixed people along a fixed line. Such is hardly the case in reality, however. The process of identity
change—either by an individual or by a group—does not occur overnight. Identity change takes time, usually a very long time, to complete. In real life, we are more likely to meet people of mixed identities, the consideration of which should certainly help to develop a fertile model of identity change.

Identity and the Mannheim Paradox

SHIAW-CHIAN FONG

Brown's recent book comes with a sensational title—*Is Taiwan Chinese?* Toward the end of the book, however, the question she asks is actually "is unification possible?" While she does not provide a straight "yes" or "no" answer to either of the questions, I gather that she means to say "no" to both, given that ultimately "the problem [of China-Taiwan relations] is one of identity" (p. 1). What convinces her to come to such a conclusion is both the social experience of Taiwanese, especially in the 1990s, and their emerging ideology of Taiwanese identity—what Brown terms as "the narrative of unfolding." However, while the social experience informed by long-term intermarriage (culture), regime change (power), and migration does confer a new sense of Taiwanese identity, she is less convinced by the new narrative of unfolding, which is based on a strategy of culturally distancing Taiwanese from Han-Chinese (p. 33). Let me summarize this social experience and the distancing strategy before I pose "the Karl Mannheim paradox" for Brown's analysis of ideology.

SHIAW-CHIAN FONG (方孝謙) is Professor at the Department of Journalism, National Cheng-chi University, Taiwan. His current interests include the identity problems of Taiwanese businesspersons in China, Taiwan's modernity and nationalism in the global age, and communication theories. He can be reached <scfan@nccu.edu.tw>.
In a Nutshell

At the core of Brown's book, she delineates the three-time (de-) Sinicization experience of plains Aborigines (平埔族, Pingpu zu) in the southwest coast of Taiwan over the past four centuries. It was in the interest of the plains Aborigines to adopt Han identity during and immediately after the regime of Koxinga (鄭成功, 1661-83), who took Taiwan over from the hand of the Dutch but whose grandson subsequently lost it to the Manchurians. This is because, under a Chinese regime (be it Koxinga's family or the Qing court), clinging to a Han status based on the inter-marriage between migrant Chinese soldiers and Aborigine women apparently shielded the aborigine natives from both discrimination and exploitation. This was "the short route to Han" according to Brown, because the natives expediently adopted Han-surnames from their fathers' side without changing much of their indigenous culture to fit a Han model (p. 134).

For the rest of plains Aborigines who did not become Han, they were nevertheless identified as such by the Japanese colonial regime in 1915, when it gave the order to forbid the foot-binding of Han women. With the implementation of this new policy, there was no more visible cultural marker to separate the Aborigines from Han locally. This situation is termed "the long route to Han" since, by 1915, the Aborigine culture was Sinicized to the extent that it adopted wholesale Han-style agriculture, language, mortuary practices, marriage form, and virilocal residence, surname, and property inheritance (pp. 75-81). Yet in the early 1990s an unexpected "short route to non-Han" (my term) occurred. This time it was the youngsters who were eager to reaffirm their plains Aborigine origin, apparently under the influence of both the current narrative of unfolding, which repeatedly claims the Aborigines as quintessential Taiwanese, and the media and scholars that fashioned and put in vogue the very term "plains Aborigines" (pp. 124-30).

This three-time (de-)Sinicization experience serves to confirm Brown's position that "identity is based on social experience [including economic and political experience], not cultural ideas or ancestry" (pp. xi, 2). This statement implies that people adopt a new identity strategically;
identity-changing is more an economic and political expedience than a heart-felt sense of belonging. This statement is, moreover, meant to be widely applicable. Thus Brown gives us another example of "the short route to non-Han": the invention, by the state power in the 1980s, of a non-Han minority—the Tujia (土家族; meaning "locals")—in Hubei, China. In this area, migrant Han and local tribes have intermarried for almost three centuries and the locals all still identify themselves as Han. And yet, local officials, in accord with a national policy and in hope of tapping into "affirmative action benefits," have eagerly classified 37 percent of the population as Tujia, using their invented criteria of "surname, the identity of a family's local ancestral place, and the timing of migration to the local ancestral place" (p. 172).

What does the social experience of both plains Aborigines and Tujia have to do with the new Taiwanese narrative of unfolding based on a distancing strategy? For one thing, this emerging narrative, just like its counterpart in China, absorbs Confucian culturalism that "a person or group can be considered Han as a result of their cultural practices regardless of their ancestry," and takes it to its logical conclusion that those who do not practice Han culture are not Han (pp. 24-28). Moreover, the narrative recognizes that Aborigines as quintessential Taiwanese have brought in their customs and practices into Han culture and changed the latter. For another thing, this narrative, again, is similar to the ideology of the view of the People's Republic that Han culture is linked to Chinese national identity. However, since what Taiwanese now have is a tenuous Han culture, its link to a national identity of one China is, the narrative implies, even more tenuous.

The Mannheim Paradox

To Brown's credit, she points out the tacitly shared ideology of Sinicization (漢化, hanhua) behind both Taiwanese and Chinese narratives. Since both narratives share Confucian culturalism as a key element of Sinicization, it is no wonder that the Taiwanese version stresses non-Han, plains Aborigines' cultural impact on the mainstream Taiwanese society today so that it could distance Taiwanese from a Chinese identity. Also to
her credit, Brown, on the one hand, shows that the so-called non-Han cultural impact was far less serious than the Taiwanese narrative portraits (pp. 67, 123). On the other hand, she cites the case of Tujia to demonstrate that the Chinese government has been inconsistent when treating Tujia and Taiwanese. That is, "officials in Hubei concluded that intermarriage between Han patrilineal ancestors and non-Han matrilineal ancestors led to de-Sinicization... yet the PRC denies that such de-Sinicization occurred in Taiwan" (p. 168). So far, Brown presents a fair judgment on the strengths and weaknesses of the current Taiwanese ideology of origin. However, can her *modus operandi* in analyzing this specific ideology of identity be immune from the Mannheim paradox? This paradox holds that when the categories and concepts used by researchers are themselves part of the very ideology that they want to analyze, the objectivity of their analysis is in question since they have already assumed part of what they want to explain.

In a sense, the answer to this question of immunity is affirmative. Brown has used the *comparative* cases of Tujia and plains Aborigines to demonstrate the cross-Strait existence of "the short route to Han." Thus, given that the name of identity changes well before significant changes of original culture occur, she effectively criticizes the ideology of Confucian culturalism with all its logical implications. In another sense, however, the answer remains negative because she views identity as being informed by public representations and as negotiable due to "rational" human cognition (pp. 13-14).

With her casuistry of Taiwanese narrative of unfolding, Brown nevertheless recognizes the motivating power of this ideology because the "closer ideological narratives are to actual identities—that is, identities actually experienced socially and politically by their members—the more powerfully these narratives can motivate people to act" (p. 243). And the Taiwanese ideology clearly reflects this actuality—or does it? On what ground can Brown claim that her fieldwork of both Tujia and plains Aborigines' public representations of their identities represents this actuality? The only logic that Brown mentions time and time again is the rational choice of social actors (pp. 44-46, 152-55, 228-31), although at the end of her book she states that choices "are influenced differentially by cultural
meaning, social power, the cognitive structure and operation of the brain, and demographic trends" (p. 228). With this combinational view of rationality—that it is both universal and historically contingent, her argument runs into trouble (p. 228). On the one hand, she wants us to believe that identity is based on social experience, not cultural ideas or ancestry. On the other, she also holds that human cognition mediates the influences of culture, power, and demographic conditions (on identity), and vice versa. (pp. xi, 228). If the relationships among cognition, culture, power, and demography are interactive, there is no way to exclude the role of cultural ideas, including that of ancestry, in influencing the formation of identity, and Brown explicitly admits so (p. 207); subsequently, there is no independent "actuality" on top of which Brown can judge the closeness of the Taiwanese ideology to this "actuality," because her own cognition, by the same token, is mediated by those interactive factors.

Instead of coming up with a theory of identity that will enable her to cross "the postmodernism-science divide" (p. xi), she ends up trapping herself in the Mannheim paradox that has long haunted the scientific study of ideology.
As many scholars have correctly pointed out, China as a nation-state is an incomplete project. One major issue that probably leads students to study China is the question regarding its national identity. There is no concept or term in the Chinese language that clearly distinguishes "national identity" from "ethnic identity." What many see as a multi-ethnic nation, China today is still under the scrutiny of interested observers—those who hold the ambition to invent analytical frameworks that might resolve the Chinese national question. In the circle of social science, anthropologists are among the most active members involved with the question of China's pursuit of nationhood. Some attempt to deconstruct the "Chinese-ness" of China, others choose to rewrite the history of specific ethnicities, and there are those who accept China as a meaningful

CHIH-YU SHIH (石之瑜) is National Chair Professor at the Graduate Institute of Political Science, National Taiwan University. He is author of State and Society in China's Political Economy (1995), Collective Democracy (1999), and Navigating Sovereignty (2003). He can be reached at <cyshih@ntu.edu.tw>.


The Taiwan separatist movement, which has joined the agenda of Chinese nation-building since the 1990s, has become the strongest challenge to Chinese nationalism—especially since the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took over the regime in Taiwan in 2000. For the first time, anthropologists have the opportunity to intervene in the process of Chinese nation-building through participation in reconstructing Taiwanese ethnicity and nationhood. Here, however, the same indistinguishable relationship between ethnicity and nationhood troubles both the pro-independence leadership and its sympathizers abroad.

Pro-independence leaders in Taiwan deliberately redraw ethnic boundaries and rewrite their histories in hopes of generating Taiwanese national consciousness. Experienced anthropologists such as Benedict Anderson, Stevan Harrell, or Melissa Brown are aware of the political motivations behind the rewriting. Brown is particularly shrewd in her comparison between the use of aboriginal ethnicity in Taiwan's nation-building and the use of indigenous ethnicity in China's nation-building. She finds politics as well as social-cultural forces at work in determining community identity. Accordingly, the timing of political intervention affects which of the kinship/blood relationships and cultural assimilation is more pertinent to an individual's choice of self-representation. She holds that the Chinese mentality is to define sub-national ethnicity by kinship/blood (which is a product of intermarriage), while defining the Chinese "nationhood" by cultural assimilation. If able to define "Taiwan-ness" on the grounds of cultural assimilation rather than kinship/blood, the pro-independence government can legitimately argue with Beijing regarding the issue of a separate statehood. Brown feels it is unfortunate that pro-independence leaders nonetheless rely on kinship/blood as the criterion to revive the already unnoticeable plains aboriginal identities. While the policy rationale for the revival of plains aboriginal identities is to demonstrate that Taiwan

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and China do not share ethnicity, this strategy corresponds to the Chinese denial of the relevance of cultural assimilation as the criteria for identifying sub-national ethnicity. Consequently, the use of this method may ironically result in reducing the Taiwanese identity to that of being one of the Chinese sub-national ethnicities, thereby hindering the discourse on independence.

Although Brown clearly understands that both kinship and assimilation are aspects of the Chinese identity, she does not cover the issue of discursive linkage between kinship and culture. I argue that the claim of ethnicity and nationhood in the case of both China and Taiwan often relies on the claimed sharing of culture, a factor that in actuality serves as an indicator of the presumed sharing of blood. This belief in shared blood/kinship, which is mostly a political construction, is what ultimately creates the sense of belonging. Brown correctly finds that the usefulness of culture as a criterion in judging individual ethnicity is not convincing. Sisters and brothers of a hybrid family could possess different ethnic identities. This can occur when one of the siblings chooses to identify him/herself by following the ethnicity of one of their parents, while another sibling chooses the ethnicity of the other. Once the identity is determined, one does not change his/her legal ethnicity in the future, no matter how assimilated into the mainstream social and cultural values he/she may become.

From the perspectives of both the mainstream literature and Chinese officials, becoming a Chinese in China today is primarily a matter of assimilation. On the other hand, becoming a member of an ethnic group remains a matter of association by kinship. Brown echoes these mainstream

5“Zhaohui qinshu xieyuan: Guizhou Huishui Buyizu zuowei xiangxiangde shequn” (Bringing blood nationality back in: Huishui's Buyi nationality as an imagined community), Zhongguo dalu yanjiu (Mainland China Studies) 46, no. 3 (May/June 2003): 115-29.

6For academic explanations of this cultural bias in determining "Chineseness," see Zhou Xing, Minzu xue xin lun (A new thesis on the studies of nationality) (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1992); Zhu Riyao, Cao Deben, and Sun Xiaochuen, Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi wenhua de xiandai sikao (Contemporary reflections on China's traditional political culture) (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1990), 29; Yu Yingshi, Wenhua pinglun yu Zhongguo qinghuai (Cultural reviews with feelings for China) (Taipei: Yunchen, 1988); and Chen Daluo, Zhonghua minzu ronghe guocheng kaoshu (A review of the process of fusion of the Chinese nation) (Taipei: Review Committee of the National Institute of Compilation and Translation, 1979).
perspectives in her discussion of the identity of an ethnic (i.e., non-Han) Chinese. However, if we examine kinship discourses and assimilation discourses, as well as read between the lines of the mainstream literature, we may discover that the division of function between kinship and assimilation is not as distinct as Brown assumes. Take, for example, the notion of "Hua-Xia" (華夏), a cultural value that is crucial to the Chinese identity. The term is pervasive in the literature that touches upon the topic of "Chinese-ness." However, another equally—if not more—popular self-reference of Chinese writers is "the Children of Emperors Yan and Huang" (炎黃子孫). This second term contains the implication that "Chinese" is at the same time about kinship. Accordingly, the Chinese is a hybrid nation with mix kinships, hence the nascent representation of Chinese as a group of people characterized by "multi-polar unity" (多元一體, duoyuan yiti) without pure blood.

The debate between the Westernization school and the Chinese culture school on the future of China has, for many years, reflected a deep concern about the meaning of "Chinese-ness." For the Chinese culture school, Westernization would destroy the Chinese identity. This school assumes that "Chinese-ness" is a matter of assimilation; Westernization, therefore, connotes assimilation into "non-Chinese-ness." In contrast, the Westernization school is obviously confident that "Chinese-ness" would not disappear even if China does become Westernized. Apparently, the latter's argument rests upon a kinship/blood premise. The continuous alarm that the Chinese nation may perish under modernization testifies to the cultural awareness of a Chinese identity. Of course, the same force is also responsible for triggering countless campaigns of cultural renaissance over the past one hundred years. In any case, we need further research to determine the discursive relationship between kinship and assimilation.

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7 Fei Xiaotong, "Zhonghua minzu de duoyuan yiti geju" (The multi-polar structure of the Chinese nation), Beijing daxue xuebao (Journal of Beijing University), 1989, no. 4:1-11.

8 See Liu Dengge and Zhou Yunfang, Xixue dong jian yu dongxue xi jian (The West coming to the Orient and the Orient moving toward the West) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000), 97-125.
Nevertheless, abundant examples seem to indicate that, rather than assimilation, kinship is the foundation of nationhood as well as ethnicity. Let me take the Buyi ethnic group (布依族) as an illustration.

The Society for Buyi Studies (布依研究學會, one of the many similar ethnic societies elsewhere in China) painstakingly traces the Buyi history at two levels. At one level, the task is to demonstrate that Buyi are indigenous people who kept detailed historical records about their travel route to Guizhou (貴州). These efforts serve to prove that there indeed is a component (or gene) in contemporary Buyi that belongs exclusively to Buyi. At the other level, the Society of Buyi Studies tells how the Buyi people and other ethnic groups mingle through intermarriage, thus demonstrating how Buyi blood has contributed to Chinese multi-polar unity. Nonetheless, field interviews carried out at many mountain sites in China taught me how local people can effectively use common cultural features as a tool to denote their shared ethnicity. If one takes their words seriously, these local narratives actually belong to Brown’s "long-route" (i.e., social-cultural) formation of identity. However, certain cultural features used to characterize the uniqueness of local ethnicity may not be as supportive as people believe. For example, from what I have witnessed during my field research, three different ethnic groups—Yao (瑤族) in Guilin (桂林), Shui (水族) in Yizhou (宜州), and Miao (苗族) in Guiyang (貴陽)—commonly conceive of the folk drama of "Ascending Knife Mountain" (上刀山) as a feature of their specific community. It became the Shui "feature" in Yizhou, because it was first designed and directed by a Shui cadre. In other words, this constructed cultural feature is not really a "feature"; rather, it is likely an indicator of kinship. People need some imagination of shared culture in order to distinguish in-group from out-groups, but the ultimate imagination lies in kinship. The losing of the belief in a shared culture

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9The Huishui County Society of Buyi, Huishui Buyizu (The Buyi nationality in Huishui) (Guiyang: Guizhou minzu chubanshe, 2001).
among those sharing the same ethnicity might incur the fear of a broken kinship. Once the government begins sorting members of the local community into ethnic groups, this act of categorization inevitably sensitizes ethnic consciousness. Thereafter, the pressure to demonstrate that ancestor-based shared cultural traits still exist falls upon the shoulders of those carrying the identity.\(^\text{11}\) In this case, long-route and backward assimilation into the local identity is instrumental to the construction of a shared ancestry.

Concepts encompassing shared cultural, social, and religious values such as Hua-Xia, and religions such as Islam and Daoism (道教), all may serve a similar function to the Knife Mountain drama. Learning these values provides useful clues regarding who shares kinship in the neighborhood, no matter how remote the relationship might be. The Knife Mountain drama helps members of local ethnic groups distinguish themselves from other people living in the same neighborhood. Likewise, Chinese cultural values allegedly shared by all Chinese are no more than a clue to the scope of the Chinese kinship.\(^\text{12}\) This is why commentators engrossed in the modern state system accuse contemporary China of having an imperalist mentality. They receive this impression from conventional semantic that assumes all overseas Chinese are still Chinese nationals, stressing that they live abroad "only for the time being."\(^\text{13}\) According to Brown, Taiwan separatists commit the same kinship fallacy when trying to prove that Taiwan is by itself a distinctive nationality. The identity strategy of the pro-independence forces ironically leaves an opening for the Chinese


\(^{12}\)For work that mentions this fundamental imagined kinship, see Liu Xiaomeng, "Zhonghua minzu zai jindai lishi zhong xingcheng" (The formation of the Chinese nation in modern history), in *Zhonghua minzu ningjuli xingcheng yu fazhan* (The formation and evolution of the force of fusion of the Chinese nation), ed. Ma Rong and Zhou Xing (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 116-19; and Wu Yiping, *Da Zhonghua minzu yu qi wenhua zhi guanxi shulue* (An introductory commentary on the relationship between the great Chinese nation and its culture) (Tainan: Daowen chubanshe, 1970).

government to continue expanding the Chinese kinship scope to include the Taiwan aboriginals; intermarriage with the Han—being the same nationality that hosts the Chinese nation across the Taiwan Strait—gives them such claim.

In fact, the pro-independence government has effectively rewritten the history of ethnic relations in Taiwan. In less than a decade's time, the ROC Constitution has separated the Taiwanese into four ethnic groups. One major classification criterion is the length of time since one's ancestor arrived in Taiwan. This criterion embraces Brown's short-route (i.e., kinship) strategy. However, it is the long route at the same time because neither the twelve aboriginals nor the mainlanders are a single kinship group; instead, they are grouped together for political and social-cultural reasons. On the one hand, this top-down criterion (which is strongly supported by the political regime) groups all the aboriginal groups into one category, disregarding their obviously divergent traits and ancestries. On the other hand, mainlanders arriving after 1949 are seen as one group, separated from the mainstream society composed of the Hakka and the Hoklo. The fact that these mainlanders contain a wide variety of ethnic ancestries has been all but unnoticed by the central authorities. The government also promotes multi-culturalism and civic nationalism, echoing Brown's preference for long-route assimilation. Brown, just like the pro-independence government, believes this could be achieved through democratization. The government relies on the short-route strategy in a peculiar way. The short-route construction of common ancestry (defined by the time of arrival in Taiwan) is what allows the government to separate mainlanders from the mainstream and group the mainlanders together into one, just like aboriginal ethnicity. The short-route strategy that divides Taiwan

14The most articulate Taiwan nationalist in this regard is Cheng-feng Shih (施正鋒). For one example of his numerous writings, see "Nationalism and Democratization: The Case of Taiwan," Gandhi Marg: Quarterly Journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation 25, no. 1 (2003): 55-65. Also see the award-winning book by Jiang Yi-hua, Ziyouzhuyi, minzuzhuyi yu guojia rentong (Liberalism, nationalism, and national identity) (Taipei: Yang-chih, 1998). Ironically, Qing Dynasty (清朝) similarly resorted to some kind of multi-culturalism, but this did not prevent the ethnic Man people (滿族) from cultural assimilation eventually. See Jonathan Spence, Treason by the Book (London: Penguin, 2002).
into four fabricated ethnicities helps the government prove that emergence of a civic nation in Taiwan is a long-route assimilation, hence supporting separation from China.

Despite following Brown's advice, the pro-independence government nonetheless suffers from the dragging force of ancestor consciousness. Not only does a significant portion of the Hoklo and Hakka population follow the mainlander practice of identifying who they are through both Chinese cultural and kinship lenses, but the aboriginal population has also become increasingly aware of their own distinctive ancestry. Even worse (in Brown's view) is that the pro-independence advocates themselves resort to short-route imagination by arguing that historical intermarriage between the Hoklo and the aboriginal has biologically excluded the Hoklo from the category of Han. Gene studies of this sort attract the attention of the separatists.15

Brown's problems are not about scholarship. First, she mistakenly believed that her scientific knowledge of identity formation could allow her to intervene in the process, forgetting that her own argument stressing that the cognition concerning identities constrains one's options. Obviously, the cognition of both the Taiwanese government and the intellectuals is related to the long-established ancestor consciousness under Confucianism. Ancestry, ethnicity, nationhood, and even state are not yet discrete cognitive concepts. In summary, for the sake of cognitive expediency, the long route is the indicator of the short route. However, when Brown speaks of short route or ancestry, at times she speaks as if they are something real and scientifically detectable. Under Confucianism, which has been prevalent in both China and Taiwan, both short-route and long-route assimilation are sheer constructions.

Second, Brown could benefit from an enhanced anthropological sensitivity toward the local meanings of election in Taiwan. She should avoid

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jumping to an early conclusion that a new democratic culture has been formed as a long-route process, which helps to separate Taiwan from China. Since Brown shows no difficulty in associating ballot casting with democracy elsewhere in the world, she should not be faulted for not being able to realize that this is not the case in Taiwan. This topic merits another book for someone of her intelligence.

Is Social Theory Useful?—Reflections on Melissa J. Brown's *Is Taiwan Chinese?*

TIMOTHY CHEEK

Melissa Brown begins her book by thanking two middle school teachers for introducing her to "how to think about social theory and about science" (p. i). The reader of *Is Taiwan Chinese?* should take warning from this epigram: this book is mostly about social theory, and only secondarily about identity change in Taiwan and China. In my view the work addresses both topics usefully. Brown additionally claims that this study will throw light on the compelling contemporary political problem of Taiwan independence and the possibility it raises of war with China. On this last account, I found that her conclusions—while sane and sensible—were not meaningfully improved by all her preceding empirical and theoretical exercises.

TIMOTHY CHEEK is Louis Cha Chair of Chinese Research at the Institute of Asian Research, University of British Columbia. He can be reached at <t.cheek@ubc.ca>. 
Based on her own fieldwork and archival research, Brown uses three ethnographic cases in Taiwan and central China as the empirical core for this study of identity change. Her conclusion that the mechanisms of identity change are built around intermarriage (as a vehicle for cultural transmission), regime change (a vehicle for changes in social power), and migration (a vehicle for changing "adaptive rationality" of actors) is persuasively argued for these cases. She then contrasts this identity based on social experience with the "narratives of unfolding" (nationalist ideologies) that have been put forth by the PRC government and Taiwan popular press over the past decade. Here, too, she is persuasive in showing not only the distorting nature of such political ideologies and their distance from actual experience, but also their insidious ability to direct public action toward confrontation. Brown writes clearly, providing examples after nearly every theoretical proposition.

The fundamental political advice Brown delivers is that more "ordinary contacts [between people in China and Taiwan] can change Chinese public opinion" (p. 249) and thus bridge the gap between PRC and Taiwan narratives of unfolding that currently seems so antagonistic. This is sane advice, and is consonant with her data; alas, this conclusion is hardly rocket science and certainly did not require 250 pages of dense anthropological study to discover. To focus on this aspect of the book (which, to be fair, Brown herself emphasizes in her introduction) is to miss the volume's major contributions.

Brown's book has two major contributions for readers of *Issues & Studies*, whom I take to be political scientists and those interested in contemporary East Asian affairs. First, it offers an empirically grounded and theoretically sophisticated challenge to simple assumptions about cultural and national identity, particularly those based on ancestry or current cultural practices. *Is Taiwan Chinese* also provides a useful explanation—based on an articulated model of social experience—of why PRC and Taiwan perspectives on the question of identity, and therefore on sovereignty, differ so radically. One may not agree with Brown's conclusions or her (many) neologisms, but an honest scholar cannot dismiss the considerable work represented in this book without engaging it in some detail.
This point speaks to the book's second contribution as a worthwhile exercise in reviewing and testing our own methodological assumptions on not only the question of identity but also on international politics and social theory more generally. Brown's extended discussions of theory and her frequent synthetic coinages (for example, "narratives of unfolding" where I would say, per Anderson, "imagined communities" or "cultural models" for what has been called "hegemonic culture") forced me to articulate and reconsider my own assumptions—and have prompted that second-highest form of compliment: some syntheses of my own. As such, this dense, highly theoretical, empirically detailed but clearly written book is a worthy candidate for graduate training seminars in any discipline interested in questions of the politics of identity and how social theory can help us think about such issues.

Using Brown's book in this way faces some problems, however, at least for historians. As a historian of modern China I find the methodological and policy claims of this study simply breathtaking. Pages 212-13 could well stop many a historian—used as we are to wringing our hands, shuffling our feet, and mumbling something about our hopes that our research "might throw some light on" a particular time and place. Brown confidently pronounces: "I propose a new synthesis that distinguishes analytically between the influences of cultural meaning, social power, demographic conditions, and human cognitive structures upon human choices" (p. 213). Therein lie shades of Talcott Parsons (who is not in the bibliography) in the form of a new general theory of action. Nor does Brown shy away from current policy: "Failure to understand this contrast—that is, failure to understand in theoretical terms the actual basis of identity formation as opposed to ideological rhetoric about identity formation—has brought us to the point where the issue of Taiwan's political future impinges on world peace" (p. 212).

This discomfort with Brown's theoretical audacity reflects differences, I suspect, of academic aesthetics, or genre expectations. Reading a few other recent anthropological books (and chatting with my colleagues in anthropology), I have discovered that such profound claims, especially of theory building, are not out of place (or at least are not rare) in Anglo-
phone anthropological writing. While I found some of the extended theory discussions in Brown's work to be more tinkering with the carburetor than I needed to get my car going, I must admit that, for instance, my colleagues in literature are similarly distracted by "all that plumbing at the bottom of the page" (that is, historians' beloved footnotes containing source citations and source criticism central to our discipline) when they read academic histories. Clearly, to use Brown's study productively (or any major study outside our own discipline) requires a liberal tolerance of different academic styles, a sort of Canadian multiculturalism in the classroom. This open-mindedness extends not only to different styles of truth claims, but also to a suspension of the urge to declare some discipline's questions irrelevant, redundant, or ill-taken. Our motto as scholars has to be that there are no stupid questions—at least not until they have had their day in court.

That said, I was struck by the lack of newness of several of Brown's syntheses, though I broadly agreed with them and will no doubt find myself using some of her felicitous and clearly defined terms. While I found Brown's theoretical discussion of "culture" and "social power" (pp. 213-23) engaging and thoughtful, I was struck by how much her emphasized conclusion that "cognitive perceptions ... guide and constrain individuals' interpretations of actual events and possible future actions" (p. 220) parallels—but shows no awareness of—a whole stream of research in conceptual history. For example, compare this statement to the following articulation by Reinhart Koselleck, a major scholar of the history of concepts (Begriffsgeschichte): "Social and political conflicts of the past must be interpreted and opened up via the medium of their contemporary conceptual limits and in terms of the mutually understood, past linguistic usage of participating agents."¹

Similarly, research on the cultural history of China has looked at "political cultures" in terms equally familiar to those theorized by Brown. Elizabeth Perry, for instance, favors neoculturalist approaches that "empha-

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size the importance of symbolism, language, and ritual” in the contest over social meanings in particular times and places.\footnote{Elizabeth Perry, “Introduction: Chinese Political Culture Revisited,” in \textit{Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China}, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth Perry (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992 and 1994), 5 ff.} Surely, other examples from other disciplines and based on other culture areas can be found that similarly address the social theory questions that Brown seeks to synthesize. One cannot reasonably require Brown, or any single author, to account for all the parallel (or divergent) trajectories of theorizing on related fundamental social theory questions across a dozen or more contemporary academic disciplines; we can, however, at least leave the door open, with a bit of methodological humility, through explicit reminders that our social theory is contingent and can benefit from further conversation. Such an open door is necessary, I believe, to increase "ordinary contacts" across our academic borders and thus to increase the chances that the social theory we propose will be useful.
Author's Response: Social Experience, Authenticity, and Theory

MELISSA J. BROWN

I would like to thank Professors Murray Rubinstein, Cal Clark, Fu-chang Wang, Alan Wachman, Kuangchun Li, Shiaw-Chian Fong, Chih-yu Shih, and Timothy Cheek for their thoughtful readings of my book and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to reply to the preceding reviews. There are three main things I was trying to do with *Is Taiwan Chinese?* First, I sought to argue that actual identities are based on social experience, not culture and/or ancestry as ideologies claim. Second, I wanted to suggest that this conclusion indicates that an actual Taiwan identity exists which is distinct from Chinese identity. Finally, I was trying to raise some empirically grounded, theoretical points about processes of social change. One of the main connections I see between these goals is that social theory can help us understand that the authenticity of Taiwan national identity motivates social actions and, for that reason, Taiwan identity must be taken into account in considerations of how to resolve the so-called Taiwan problem. It was good to see that all of these issues come out in the reviews.

Social Experience and Ideologies

If I understood the reviewers correctly, the ethnographic and historical case studies I discuss seemed to persuade most that actual identity

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MELISSA J. BROWN is Assistant Professor of Anthropological Sciences at Stanford University. She is author of *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Culture, Power, and Migration on Changing Identities* (University of California Press, 2004) and editor of *Negotiating Ethnicities in China and Taiwan* (Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1996) and *Explaining Culture Scientifically* (manuscript under review). She can be reached at <melissa.brown@stanford.edu>.
is based on social experience (Clark, Wang, Wachman, Li, and Cheek) and that the political motivations and rhetoric of ideologies should be separated from actual identities (Clark, Wang, Li, Fong, and Cheek). Nevertheless, these conclusions seem to sit uncomfortably, since reviewers' analyses often did not recognize or utilize these distinctions.

Rubinstein understands my distinctions, but suggests identity is a kind of psychological coping mechanism and/or an unfolding of cultural (Confucian) beliefs acquired early—though whether acquired early in an individual's lifetime or early in cultural history is unclear to me. He also suggests that my discussion of the degree of intermarriage in Taiwan's history suggests that Hoklo or Minnan Taiwanese are not Han by blood, even though my point is that blood is the rhetoric, not the reality, of identity. For reasons I discuss at length in the book, I suggest that viewing identity as being derived from culture and ancestry (or blood) actually unduly privileges ideological claims about identity—claims which are politically motivated and thus problematic with regard to their relation to people's actual identities. Thus, it seems that Rubinstein and I must agree to disagree.

Both Clark and Wachman suggest that identities are not useful or appropriate in considering the debate over Taiwan's political future either because political usage of national identities distorts historical and social reality (Clark) or because socially-based identities continue to change (Wachman). I think these positions suggest a discomfort with my conclusions about the separation of actual identities from ideologies and about the social basis of actual identities, respectively. Actual identities, unlike ideologies, do reflect current social reality and thus are subject to continuing change. Why should identities, viewed as changing, be any less reasonable a basis for decisions about political status than economy or political alliance or any of the other myriad reasons for irrevocable decisions (like election outcomes and invasions) based on constantly changing con-

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1 Given the large number of participants in this roundtable, I use author last names as an expedient.
ditions? Change is ubiquitous, so there will be no useful categories if we only credit utility to unchanging categories.

Despite his statement, "Brown argues persuasively that classifications are contingent and 'based on social experience, not cultural ideas or ancestry'," Wachman seems to take the position that ethnic identity is not political—even though I explicitly define political experience as part of social experience—and that ethnic identity is linked to culture and ancestry. For example, when he speaks of the Chinese "nation" or "people" and "Taiwan's populace—regardless of its ethnicity" being unwilling to associate with the PRC, he implies that Taiwan's ethnic identity is tied to its Chinese cultural and ancestral heritage. Also, he criticizes me for not providing evidence for the construction of "political identities" as I do for "cultural and ethnic identities." One of the major points of my book is that ethnic identities are political, so by providing evidence of the construction of ethnic identities I am providing evidence of the construction of political identities. (I do not use the term "cultural identities," which I consider problematic.) Shih similarly moves my category of social forces from the political to cultural side when he suggests that I find "politics as well as social-cultural forces at work in determining community identity."

Wang's discomfort with my usage of "ethnic" to refer to groups and identities before the 1960s also derives, in my opinion, from not distinguishing ideological rhetoric about identities from socially-based actual identities.2 I suggest that ethnic identity can be applied to seventeenth-century people because actual identities are based on social experience (p. 14). Thus, people in any century understand that the ways in which labels applied to them affect their social options. Because such experience leads to motivation to action and sentimental attachment to the labels (pp. 131-32, 150, 235, 243, 248), I disagree with Wang that seventeenth-century

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2Wang also views the feuding of frontier Taiwan as not being "ethnic" in character, but I think that earlier scholarship effectively suggests ethnic affiliation was indeed an important factor. See, for example: Harry Lamley, "Subethnic Rivalry in the Ch'ing Period," in The Anthropology of Taiwanese Society, ed. Emily M. Ahern and Hill Gates (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), 282-318; and Stevan Harrell, "From Xiedou to Yijun: The Decline of Ethnicity in Northern Taiwan, 1855-1895," Late Imperial China 11, no. 1 (1990): 99-127.
and early twentieth-century people probably felt no sentimental attachment to imposed labels and would not have been motivated to act on that basis. Fong similarly mistakes my point that social experience leads people to have a heart-felt sense of belonging to the identity labels affecting their lives when he interprets my work in a strict instrumentalist sense: "... people adopt a new identity strategically; identity-changing is more an economic and political expedience than a heart-felt sense of belonging."

Wang questions my argument that plains Aborigines "disappeared" during the Japanese period, holding that the category continues to appear in island-wide census materials through 1940 and was not officially removed until 1956. In southwest Taiwan, where I have used the Japanese-period household registers extensively, the category for "zhongzu," or race, stops being filled in for new records after 1915 or so. Moreover, the new forms, which were first introduced (as old forms were retired because heads of households die) in the 1920s, do not have a race category. Census materials during the Japanese period were based on household registers, so the figures in the later censuses may be based on older forms still "active" at the time of the census. It is also possible that, in other parts of Taiwan, the plains Aborigine category was still salient at the local level and still recorded on household registers to some later date. I am skeptical of the relevance continuing broadly throughout the Japanese period, however, because the centrally issued form changed, and the new form appears in northern areas of Taiwan (for which I have also seen records) as well as for southern ones. I agree with Wang that the census materials indicate that plains Aborigines did not completely disappear at the national level until the Nationalist period, and I thank him for pointing this out. However, because the changes in household register forms confirm what I found in interviews—that plains Aborigines disappeared at the local level during the Japanese period, I do not think that my conclusions about the local impact of foot-binding ban on identity need to be reconsidered.

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3Copies of Japanese-period household registers are stored at the Program for Historical Demography at Academia Sinica in Taiwan.
Taiwan National Identity

Building on my conclusions about the social basis of actual identities and the importance of distinguishing ideological rhetoric about identities from actual identities, I argue in my book that Taiwan national identity is authentic/real. Thus, I suggest that Taiwan national identity cannot simply be dismissed as a ploy of political leaders in Taiwan and that Taiwan national identity ought to be taken into account in consideration of Taiwan's future because of its ability to motivate action.

Clark seems to question whether national identity is the crux of the "Taiwan problem" because of the political disadvantages of such an argument. Taking seriously both China's reasons for claiming Taiwan and Taiwan's reasons for claiming difference led me to the conclusion that identities—both national and ethnic—are crucial to the debate. Clark, however, suggests that viewing national identity as important gives legitimacy to China's claim to Taiwan. He refers to examples of other countries sharing a cultural and ancestral heritage without being currently politically unified (e.g., the United Kingdom and the United States, East and West Germany, and North and South Korea), examples he suggests could overturn the PRC's claim to Taiwan. I agree that these examples could potentially challenge the "one China" policy and that this course of challenge probably appeals to most Americans (p. 27). However, I disagree that these examples easily overturn the "one China" policy, because—despite common knowledge of these examples—the policy still exists and is taken seriously not only by the PRC but by other nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, Korea, and Germany.

Clark also points out the disadvantage that a Taiwanese national identity "can only inflame Chinese nationalism" and thus will not be accepted by Beijing. This position makes it sound like Taiwan has a choice about whether to create a Taiwanese identity and that if any such identity formation inflames Chinese nationalism it is Taiwan's fault—both points with which I disagree. As I discuss in my book (pp. 246-48), I recognize that the PRC government is going to have to deal with the Chinese nationalism it has itself stirred up for its own purposes, though I think that Beijing could successfully do so.
Wang and Wachman both suggest that the "Taiwan problem" is about regional power or control, not identity. Wang suggests that neither the Chinese government nor the Chinese people care about the terms in which Taiwan's claims to independence are made. In contrast, I suggest that, at the very least, Beijing wants the international community to see the PRC claim as legitimate. More importantly, however, my conversations with Chinese people suggest that identity is very important to their understanding of China's claim to Taiwan. For both these reasons, I think the terms of the debate do matter.

In my opinion, Wachman's persistence in distinguishing between "ethnic" and "political" (does he mean "national"?) identities leads to his dismissal of the relevance of identities to the cross-Strait controversy. The point that Taiwan's autonomy undermines the PRC's credibility as the champion of anti-imperialist nationalism is about ethnic identity, because Taiwan is largely populated by Han. For example, China's claim to Tibet—which was also subject to Western imperialist encroachment—is usually not made in terms of anti-imperialist nationalism. Concern that the support Taiwan receives from the United States is a potential security threat to China could also apply to South Korea, yet the PRC is not claiming sovereignty there, despite the fact that the Korean peninsula was once subject to China's dynastic control. Thus, control over territory and resources is indeed linked to identity in the case of Taiwan.

Wachman's specific criticisms of imprecision and lack of nuance in chapters 1 and 6, where I deal with the extension of my findings about identity to the national level, seem to me sufficiently minor as not to really impact my argument. Two points, however, warrant reply. First, my statement that Taiwan does not call itself a nation independent of China is meant to say that, while Taiwan has danced very close to declaring itself a separate state, it has not declared itself the Republic of Taiwan—a move for which the PRC has promised invasion (e.g., p. 240). Second, I think that con-

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4Taiwan has, though, certainly implied it many times (pp. 4, 63-65, 242-43), as in the example of the "Taiwan Guomindang" which Wachman cites.
fusion over whether identity change may have spurred democratization rather than the reverse lies in both the national identity and one ethnic identity referred to by the term "Taiwanese identity." I agree that ethnic Taiwanese identity—bensheng ren under martial law rule—contributed to the push for democratization. However, I discuss democratization as spurring the development of a "new, inclusive, and national Taiwanese identity" (p. 239, emphasis added), a different point.

Li also suggests that, due to the character of the regime, identity change may precede regime change. I think that Li and I do not disagree. The examples that Li gives occurred during the ten-year transition period to electoral democracy. Because I calculate the regime change as occurring at the beginning of the transition to democracy in 1986, I view the examples he gives as being indicative of regime change preceding identity change. I also think that Li's suggestion that the construction of national identity is more dependent on international politics than intermarriage or immigration results from our focusing on different points in the process of developing a national identity. I focused on the formation of an actual island-wide identity distinct from the PRC—and thus a de facto national identity—which I think is related to intermarriage, immigration, and regime change. I agree with Li about the subsequent phase—whether a Taiwan national identity can be successfully negotiated will depend strongly on international politics.

Shih's criticisms of my book are far too numerous for me to take up point by point. Most of them suggest to me that he did not understand my argument. There are two points, however, that require reply. First, Shih suggests that Confucian-derived beliefs about kinship and ancestry are what hold together Han and Chinese identities, categories in which he includes the people of Taiwan. I respect Shih's position, though I disagree with it for reasons explained in my book. Second, Shih portrays my work as a deliberate intervention in Taiwan's politics. My intention was to show

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5I also agree with Li that the character of regimes influences the social experiences of their citizens—certainly things that the PRC can impose, like ethnic labels, while Taiwan's democratic government cannot. However, I do not think that differences in the character of regimes modify the role of regime change in my theoretical position. I argue that shifts in regimes, not the regimes themselves, are what provide an opportunity for identity change.
that Taiwan national identity is real for many ordinary people on the island and to suggest that, because of this authenticity, policymakers need to take Taiwanese national identity into account in their decisions. I was neither attempting to dictate what those decisions should be nor advising political parties.

Social Theory

In addition to being an analysis of identity changes and a discussion of the political implications of these changes for the debate over Taiwan's future, the book is also, as Cheek notes, a case for the importance of social theory and an attempt to contribute to theory-building which can take the social sciences beyond the polemics of science vs. postmodernism. I suggest that considerations of the influence on human decisions and actions by culture, power, demographic factors, and cognitive processing are all important. Consideration of when and how these influences interact—sometimes competitively, sometimes complementarily—could prove particularly useful.

Fong approves of several important conclusions from my analysis of ideology, specifically those related to Sinicization, non-Han contributions, and inconsistency of treatment of different groups by the PRC government. However, he raises the Mannheim paradox to question my methods of analysis. To the extent that I use a comparative method, Fong suggests that I avoid the perils of being so influenced by the concepts I employ that I assume what I want to find. However, Fong thinks that I focus unduly on rational choice theory and thus fall prey to the paradox. He suggests that because culture, power, demography, and cognition are interactive, there is no independent actuality which I can use to judge my conclusions because my own cognition is also mediated by those interactive factors. This is a common postmodern position using reflexivity to criticize the possibility of knowing reality and/or doing science. Interestingly, where I do deal ex-

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6Some of what Fong construes as "rational choice" is surprising. For example, he refers to my discussion of the work of cognitive anthropologists on representations and meaning as rational choice (e.g., pp. 13-14, 228).
plicitly with the reflexivity problem (e.g., p. 207), Fong suggests that I negate my argument about the social basis of identities, and where I discuss multiple and interactive influences (e.g., pp. 152-55), Fong sees only rational choice explanation. This insistence on methods falling on one side or the other of the science-postmodernism divide runs counter to the synthetic method I used throughout my analysis for the book. If my methods are flawed, what explanation can Fong offer for my using them to arrive at important conclusions of which he approves?

Cheek offers a very different assessment and criticism of my presentation of social theory. I am most grateful for his evaluation that the book is useful for thinking about social theory, I acknowledge that my claims are not particularly new and do not adequately incorporate the work of other disciplines, and I feel duly chastised by his point that a little "methodological humility" would go a long way to improve dialogue across the disciplines. I would like to say that I only suggest there is some novelty in way I synthesize ideas, but I do not claim to have created the ideas themselves. By the same token, I do not claim to have sufficient knowledge of other disciplines, though Cheek is quite correct that I should have cited Talcott Parsons' *The Social System* (Free Press, 1951). With regard to my "theoretical audacity," I can only say by way of explanation that—beyond being influenced by Angophone anthropological writing styles—fifteen years of attempting to promote a theoretical synthesis in anthropology across the science-postmodern divide, and consequently being criticized simultaneously as a scientific fascist by one side and as a postmodern nihilist by the other, has led me to bolder phrasings of my points than is perhaps necessary. This style may have also contributed to Rubinstein's sense of standing on a chessboard battlefield. I do appreciate constructive dialogue on the topic (and I must say that I have found such dialogues more often with colleagues outside anthropology than within it) for reasons both of moral support and intellectual productivity. I do not think an adequate social theory will ever be constructed by a single individual, and while I hope to make a contribution, I do not presume to think I have a finished product. I would certainly look forward to further discussion with Cheek and any other interested individuals over how best to develop a synthesis.