

19th-century Anglo-American representations of Formosan peoples

One of the dominant threads in scholarship on zones of contact between cultures, and especially in colonial settings, is that of cultural identities, both self-identities and the perceptions of other cultures encountered. In Taiwan especially, the nineteenth century saw a plethora of cultural contact, between the aborigines and the Qing imperial administration, and Han settlers; between the Han Chinese and the European colonials; between the European colonials and the Taiwanese aborigines; and between the aborigines themselves, who were by no means homogeneous. Often, these interchanges pitted perceived cultural inferiors with real power differentials against each other.

The Chinese first migrated to Taiwan en masse in the seventeenth century, and after the Dutch were defeated in 1662, the Chinese administered the island and undertook a process of colonization of the land and inhabitants, until the Japanese occupation began in 1895. Adding complexity to the issue, however, is that in the middle of the nineteenth century, following several military defeats against superior European navies, European powers concluded a series of treaties with China, and other East Asian countries, known as the Unequal Treaties, which opened designated ports in China to foreign trade. In addition, as a result of the treaties' terms, European powers were granted extraterritorial jurisdictions in the treaty ports themselves, so that Europeans were obligated to abide by their own legal system and would only be tried by their own consular officials; they also allowed Christians including Chinese converts to practice their faith, and gave protections to Christian missionaries. The new European arrivals in these treaty ports included consuls and merchants, missionaries, explorers, naturalists, soldiers, and others. The European colonial literature that is a product of this era forms a valuable part of Taiwan's historical record, and may provide useful sources for understanding the events of the time period. However, the writings of Westerners' visitors in Taiwan in the nineteenth

century, especially their writings on their encounters with other peoples there, also inform us about their personal world view, and, more generally, about the audience to which they are writing.

We cannot discount the writer's historical context when conducting an analysis of his words, and indeed, we should not assume that these writers must necessarily be useful in telling us anything insightful about Taiwan at all. Here I will be taking the case of George Leslie Mackay as a study in the necessity of contextual analysis. A missionary like George L. Mackay, who lived in Taiwan from 1872 until his death in 1901, would have been writing for his audience of Presbyterian countrymen back home first, and for the rest of the civilized Christian world as well. In much of postcolonial discourse, there is the recognition that depictions of the Orient, and other Western “Others,” including scholarly writing and ethnography, had a practical purpose in the service of imperialism. Knowledge is power, and, as Edward Said argues, “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.”¹ It would be a simplistic approach that does not take into account the role of writers like Mackay in assisting in propagating a colonial Empire—whether it be a formal political one, or economic and cultural domination, as in Taiwan—in coordinating the control of colonial subjects through providing intimate knowledge of their culture and existing social structures.

Indeed, incorporating the contributions of Said and others, we should recognize that Mackay might be describing Formosa, and especially its people, only insofar as he could include specific types of information that he thought would be particularly useful to future missionaries to Formosa, or to the field of missionizing in general. For instance, we cannot discount the fact that comments like the following come from the mouth of a missionary, in describing the aborigines' current religious practice: “very many of the people hate the new order of things. Idolatry does not suit the average Pe-po-hoan, and it is of necessity that he submits to even the formal observance of its rites and ceremonies. It is

political rather than religious, and to the majority it is meaningless, except as a reminder of their enslavement to an alien race.”² This comment is also quite revealing because it gives us a clue as to how Mackay might view aboriginal conversions. That the Pe-po-hoan would convert to Chinese religious practices out of political necessity gives further evidence to the possibility that their Christian conversions were of a similar nature, especially since it would offer more compelling political rewards. It is very likely he was aware of the political, and not religious, reasons that aborigines would have had to become Christians; besides offering an opportunity to avoid Chinese religious control, conversion also afforded the aborigines more protections under Chinese treaties with Christian nations. This is clearly useful information for future missionaries that might seek to find ways to capture the aborigines' trust and conversion. As well, such commentary on the feasibility of conversion might also serve to encourage, or reassure, Mackay's constituency back home about the work he is undertaking.

Mackay treats the Chinese religious practice with a similar eye towards conversion. In his description above, Mackay seems singularly hostile towards Chinese religion, and is often dismissive, or even condemnatory, of its so-called superstitions and idolatry. However, he does admit that “There are some things that appeal to human nature in this ancestral idolatry. Its motive may be fear, but its basis is filial piety.”³ This is not just the idle musing of a foreign visitor, but also the shrewd observation of a missionary looking for methods of conversion of the notoriously anti-Christian Chinese. Of course, we know that the practice of ancestral worship was one of the strongest deterrents barring Chinese from conversion: giving up the idolatry so decried by the Christians would mean the deterioration and dishonor of their ancestors who are dependent upon the sacrifices their descendants make in order to sustain themselves. Mackay recognizes the strength of this cultural value though, and cleverly uses it to his (occasional) advantage in his proselytization of the Chinese. Mackay recognizes the power of filial piety and plays on it to establish a common ground between himself and the

2 *From Far Formosa*, 208

3 Mackay, George Leslie. *From Far Formosa*. Ed. Rev. J. A. MacDonald. 3rd ed. Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1991 (originally, London and Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1896). Page 132.

Chinese. “Honor thy father and thy mother,” Mackay preaches to Chinese crowds, citing the fifth commandment, and in this way often gains one of the most crucial prerequisites for conversion: the attention and open mind of his Chinese listeners.

But besides reflecting his purpose in writing, and the audience to which he was writing, Mackay's words must also be scrutinized for the potential bias that he presents because of his personal background. Mackay's words also are a result of his upbringing in a Western Christian country in the midst of a strongly imperial era in its history, and the world view that entails. Mackay's writing reflects the cultural bigotry common in Western visitors of the time period. As Edward Said argues, “an Orientalist is but the particular specialist in the knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas technically put together by the dramatist.” It is important to evaluate a source from the time period to parse out the pieces that offer a perspective on the author's society more than, or as much as, the society of which he is writing.

Accordingly, Stevan Harrell notes the social evolutionist discourse with which missionaries of the nineteenth century coexisted and participated. Concepts like the noble savage and his idyllic utopia have a strong influence on writers of aboriginal culture in Formosa. Peripheral peoples were often judged by missionaries based on their supposed superiority of “honesty, simplicity, and hard work,” and “failure to practice certain Chinese customs that the missionaries found abhorrent (such as footbinding, infanticide, and arranged marriage).”⁴ But these differences represent Western cultural preferences that translate into either positive or negative value judgments passed on the Chinese and aborigines, and not necessarily truly useful generalizations. In defining the Western writers in China as participants in a “civilizing project,” Harrell also explores the work of the civilizers in defining their objects, which he notes, following Said, is essential for such civilizing projects. Harrell argues “The

4 Harrell, Stevan. “Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reactions to Them” in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. pg. 22

definitions produced must consist of two parts: a demonstration that the peoples in question are indeed inferior, and thus in need of civilization, and a certification that they can in fact be improved, civilized, if they are subjected to the project.”⁵ The essential point here is that *neither* of these features has any bearing on the actual culture being described. They are wholly a result of the defining party's world view, which demands that they be fitted to whatever inevitably inferior culture is encountered. This suggests that one way to go about identifying participants in a civilizing project is to look for such arguments in the narratives of witnesses writing for their home culture. Harrell accordingly goes on to give several examples of ways in which writers create definitions like these for their peripheral objects, by using metaphors that objectify peripheral people as women, children, or ancient. Such claims also serve to legitimize the moral, modern, masculine, educated claims to civilization of the civilizing center, be it Confucian, Christian, or Communist.⁶

Mackay fits this paradigm, and can be used as an exemplar of Western cultural portrayal of perceived inferiors. Mackay, as Harrell describes, uses a metaphor that emphasizes the uncivilized Otherness of the aborigines he encounters. Mackay refers to the savages as frozen in time, and therefore products of an ancient time, saying, “these savages in the mountains are to-day in life and manners what they were ten centuries ago.” It is, of course, impossible for Mackay to have known or verified what life was like in Formosa a thousand years previous. As a rhetorical device, though, he is placing the aborigines in a much more primitive stage in the evolutionist's breakdown of cultural history than the West, and promoting the accepted view of Western civilizational advancement. Mackay also writes that “these savages are singularly free from many moral and social vices common alike among civilized peoples.”⁷ Not surprisingly, especially for missionaries, it is often the case that, except where the influence of the Chinese has corrupted them, the savages refrain from opium-

5 Harrell, Stevan. “Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reactions to Them” in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Page 8.

6 Harrell, Stevan. “Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reactions to Them” in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Page 10-16.

7 Mackay, George Leslie. *From Far Formosa*. Ed. Rev. J. A. MacDonald. 3rd ed. Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1991 (originally, London and Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1896). Page 258.

smoking, as well as murder (amongst themselves), theft, polygamy, and other crimes that are common to the Chinese. Of course, the Chinese, much more resistant to Western religion and cultural domination, were frequently portrayed by Westerners, missionaries in particular as immoral, and the aborigines by contrast, with much more receptivity to Christianity, were often portrayed as their victims, and as their moral superiors, more honest, and generous. This is despite the unavoidable technological and institutional dominance of the Chinese over the aborigines. These portrayals reveal more about their writers' native sympathies and cultural biases, than they likely do about the actual moralities of Chinese or aborigines. If we extrapolate from these conclusions and compare George Mackay with other writers with similarities in their purpose for visiting Taiwan and for writing about it, their audience, and their personal background, and as well as with other writers with contrasting backgrounds, audiences, and purposes, we may be able to determine what factors set them apart in their writing.

On the broadest level, several important ways of describing and differentiating the peoples of Formosa common to many Westerners of the period include the abstract qualities, moral or personality traits, attributed to the whole group of people and the more concrete depiction, which may be characterized as a racist description, including physical features, customs, and seemingly “biological” traits like ethnic ancestry and relatedness to peoples. Additionally, other subjects of interest of the authors include the relationship to the Chinese of particular aboriginal groupings, both in terms of the level of “sinicization” of a group, and in terms of the group's relations, peaceful or not, with the Chinese administration. Authors' portrayals of particular people may not necessarily frequently disagree in any of these categories with each other in their descriptions of people, however the relative emphasis of any one method of description over another can be telling and may allow a typology of Western writers in Taiwan to be constructed, with the factors like background, purpose, and audience in mind. For reasons that will become clear later on, it will be most fruitful to focus our investigation on the first two modes of description, as a model for how the sources could be analyzed.

One of the most common ways authors use to describe people they meet is to ascribe abstract characteristics to them, on the basis of their observations or other evidence. In this category, I am grouping the descriptions of personality traits portrayed as common to whole groups of people (e.g. Swinhoe refers to the “politeness and affability common to the Chinese,” which he contrasts to the “natural thirst for blood” of the aborigines) along with the moral descriptions and value judgments of Taiwanese people by Western authors (Campbell writes of the aborigines, “My pity was deeply moved for these poor people. They are in many respects a fine race: all say they are truthful, chaste, and honest.”). Both of types of description are often overlapping and, moreover, usually accompany one another being both utilized by common authors. It is important that in this type of description, abstract traits are ascribed by authors not just to a single or few people, but to the entire grouping, whether it be a whole village, tribe, or race, however ambiguously the author uses the terms.

As noted, the primary example of an author who uses abstract descriptors as his main method of describing peoples is the Reverend William Campbell. Campbell was a Scottish Presbyterian missionary that visited the island for more than 45 years, between 1871 and 1917, and worked mostly in southern Taiwan, with his base in Tainan. Campbell makes very frequent use of descriptions that are concerned with the personality traits of his subjects. For example, in describing the Hakka Chinese in Ba-nih, Campbell writes, “Those settlers from the Canton Province are an intelligent, prosperous, and pushing race, and are found scattered all over the western side of the island.”⁸ Campbell gives us a sense of how the Hakka people appear to him while completely avoiding physical description. As he continues, his entire paragraph about the Hakka, the omission becomes even more glaring: “Their spoken language differs very considerable from that used by other Chinese emigrants to Formosa, and their women do not conform to the stupid practice of binding the feet—a seemingly unimportant matter, but one which exerts a most direct influence on their physical and social position.” Campbell

8 Campbell, William. *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*. Vol I + II. Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1996 (originally, London: Tübner & Co., 1889). Page 298.

similarly describes the Pi-po-hoan as “aborigines of Formosa who speak and dress as the Chinese on the western side of the island do... They seem to be an simple-minded race, and much less involved in idolatrous practices than their Chinese neighbors.”⁹ As with the Hakka, Campbell is here more concerned with the qualities of the Pi-po-hoan, than with the physical. Indeed, even the more concrete aspects of the descriptions of both people, the language and dress, are simply contrasted with the Han Chinese language and dress, not described outright. Even from what Campbell notes of the language and dress of these people we still have no real idea of what they actually sound and look like in physical terms. His only purpose in mentioning them seems to be to draw the comparison with the Han Chinese, an important concept that we will discuss later. Even the most careful reading of both Campbell's *Sketches from Formosa* and *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*, as well as his many articles in the *Presbyterian Messenger*, would give one only the vaguest sense of what any of the many peoples he encounters and discusses look like or dress like, or how they speak; such information simply is almost completely absent, and for any reader trying to gather an impression of those peoples, it is conspicuously so.

Another important point about Campbell's method of dealing in the abstract is that it allows him to differentiate between peoples on the basis of personality or morality, rather than solely concrete terms. One of the most common comparisons Campbell draws is between the greediness and unscrupulousness of the Han Chinese, and other similar negative traits, and the “simple-minded” honesty of the aborigines. Such contrasts take the form of criticisms of the Chinese relations with aborigines, which Campbell portrays as Chinese exploitation of the more sympathetic aborigines:

“Owing, however, to the thieving propensities of the Chinese in several small villages before entering Po-sia, the Sek-hoan of the plain very rarely make use of this shorter road, and this is just what the Chinese wish. There can be no doubt that they have an eye on Po-sia. The Sek-hoan having acted as the pioneers in opening up the region, the craftier Chinaman endeavours now, by every act of trickery and oppression, to dispossess them.”¹⁰

9 Campbell, William. *An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa*. Vol I + II. Taipei: SMC Publishing, Inc., 1996 (originally, London: Tübner & Co., 1889). Page 226-7.

10 Campbell, W. "Aboriginal savages of Formosa." *Ocean Highways: The Geographical Review*.s. 1 (1874): 410-

Here, the Chinese are negatively characterized by their use of deceptive practices to cheat the aborigines out of what they have produced themselves, while the aborigines are portrayed as less 'crafty' than the Chinese, and therefore susceptible to such tactics. Campbell's dichotomy between the intelligent—and often crafty and deceptive—Chinese, including the Hakka, and the simple—but often honest and exploited—aborigines, is one of the main lines of delineation he draws. Indeed, in stark contrast to the clever Chinese, Campbell writes after visiting the not-yet-sinicized Chey-hoan, who are suspicious of even his writing anything down, that “We tried repeatedly to impress on them some of the simplest truths, but their minds seemed incapable of receiving a single impression.” The aborigines, however, despite his portrayal of their lack of wit, clearly have Campbell's sympathy. Indeed, it is his explanation of their simple-mindedness and honesty leading to oppression that lends itself to sympathy for the aborigines. In discussing the relations between the Chinese and aborigines, Campbell uniformly treats the Chinese as exploiters of the aborigines, typically for having forced them off their native land in the west, into the more mountainous regions. Indeed, Campbell lays the blame for much of the moral state of the aborigines on the Chinese.

Campbell, of course, has a more complex set of categories than simply Chinese and aborigines; just as he distinguishes the Hakka from the Chinese on the basis of non-physical traits, so too he differentiates between the “civilized” aborigines, including the Sek-hoan and the Pe-po-hoan, and the “uncivilized” aborigines, which he calls the Chey-hoan. On entering Chey-hoan territory, Campbell notes, “Here a small armed party requires to be taken as an escort through the territory of the Chay-hoan, or uncivilized aborigines.” The major difference that Campbell sees between the civilized and uncivilized aborigines is their violence. Campbell writes, “I believe that many of the Chey-hoan are cannibals” and he further explains “Murder is the most common of their many sins. Human life is regarded as of very little value; and they delight in hacking the bodies of those from whom they have

received any real or fancied wrong.” His explanation of this phenomenon, however, is particularly enlightening and demonstrative of Campbell's point of view: “The poor Chey-hoan,” he says, “sees his certain fall in the face of the encroachments of the swarming Chinese, and in his sullen despair his hand is against every man.” The brutality of the Chey-hoan, therefore a result of Chinese aggression at the same time that it is characteristic of the lack of civilization of the Chey-hoan.

In contrast to the abstract descriptions we have seen employed by William Campbell, several authors favor the use of physical characteristics. Just as we have seen that the abstract lends itself to categories on the basis of perceived personality differences across whole peoples, especially when the author imbues them with value judgments, so too can physical descriptions lend themselves to categories, often based on the racial conclusions the authors draw from them. For example, Joseph Steere describes the Tsui-hwans, or Water Savages, with the following image of their physical appearance: “They were very small in stature, but with finer features and without the oblique eyes and inverted lids of the Chinese. Their color was much the same as that of the Malays and Javanese and American Indians.” Writers that favor physical descriptions focus on traits like overall appearance, and especially facial features and skin color, and customs like dress and tattoos, methods of housebuilding, language, and so on. As well, as seen from the passage from Steere's writing above, these descriptions often take the form of comparisons with other people. Additionally, just as abstract descriptions often led to dichotomies on the basis of ascribed moral characteristics, physical descriptions seem to be more likely to accompany a dichotomy on the basis of racial categories, tied up with nineteenth-century Western theories of racial hierarchies.

Steere's previous comparison of the skin color of certain aborigines to that of Malays and Javanese is significant, as it is part of a general trend that several of the authors share. Steere goes on to discuss another custom of the “uncivilized” aborigines—or Chewhwans, as he renders the name—headhunting: “This head-hunting propensity of the Chewhwans has no doubt been increased by a desire for revenge upon the Chinese, who are continually driving them from their more fertile lands into the

wilder and more sterile parts of the islands. But the custom is an old one which they hold in common with many other branches of the Malay race, the Dyaks of Borneo, and the savages of the interior parts of Luzon and other of the Philippine islands being notable examples.”¹¹ Swinhoe, a naturalist like Steere, shares many of these same methods in describing people. In his portrayal of the Tai-lo-kok, a different member of the more “savage” group of aborigines, Swinhoe writes that they are “armed with spears and sabres in a sheath, stuck through the girdle and hanging behind. Their hair was short and fringed on the forehead; behind it hung loose. They had a good deal of the Malayan cast of countenance, but were much fairer than the Malays and slightly fairer than the Chinese, who were with them.”¹² These wild savages are contrasted with the so-called “domesticated savages”

Some of the men had loose hair, but not a few of the younger among them had their heads shaved in the Chinese fashion. They were a shade or so darker than the Chinese, with a Malayan cast of countenance. Of the women, some were brown, others nearly fair; while many, with European physiognomies, exhibited nothing of the slanting eye. A few wore coats or something thrown over the shoulders; but the majority had no other covering than a wrapper round the loins, secured with a cloth girdle.

Several aspects of this description are shared with Steere's: Swinhoe, like Steere, introduces peoples on the basis of physical appearance, including how they wear their weapons and hair, facial features, and skin color, and he also uses these traits to draw comparisons with other races. Swinhoe contrasts the savage Formosan skin tone with the darker Chinese and Malays, but notes their similarity in facial features of both the wild and domesticated savages to the Malays. This propensity for making cross-racial comparisons is not only mode of depiction, but is also one of the ways that writers use to draw racially-based conclusions about their subjects of inquiry. Through appearance, language, and customs, the writers that favor physical description form opinions on the biological ancestry of categories of people, and their relatedness to other people. Swinhoe, after all, refers to all of the people of Formosa as “two races of men—the wild aborigines and their descendants, of apparently the Malay type, and the

11 Steere, Joseph Beele. *Formosa and Its Inhabitants*. Ed. Paul Jen-kuei Li. Institute of Taiwan History (Preparatory Office), Academia Sinica, 2002. Page 58

12 “Narrative of a visit to the Island of Formosa,” 1858, 152

commercially-civilized Chinese colonists of the Mongol type.”¹³ Swinhoe and other authors suggest that the aborigines of Formosa are racially related to Malaysians because of many of these commonalities that they see between the cultures and appearances.

Swinhoe also uses language as evidence in creating dichotomies of people. The Komalans are inhabitants of the plains in the northeast while the Kalees are live in the mountains in the south, but Swinhoe suggests they are related: “In the small vocabulary I possess of their [the Komalans'] language, I can trace no similarity in their dialect (except in such general words as those for silver and tobacco) with that of their neighbors, the Kweiyung mountaineers; whereas their numerals are identical with those of the *Kalees* of the South, from whom they are now separated by a long range of high mountains...It is perhaps not improbable that they are the descendants of some Kalees that the Spaniards might have introduced from the South on their occupation.”¹⁴ In this case, Swinhoe's observations on the Komalan language are evidence for their biological relatedness to other aborigines from the south, rather than their immediate neighbors. In fact, this linguistic evidence even stands in contrast to the improbability of the historicity of the Spanish having transported aborigines from the south of Taiwan to the north.

Clearly then, while we can see that Swinhoe understands the aborigines as being Malayan in origin, in contrast to the Mongol origins he posits for the Chinese, he further subdivides the category of “savage.” Distinctions among tribes of aborigines follow the same pattern as distinctions among the top level categories—Chinese and aborigine. Swinhoe, like Steere, uses primarily descriptions of the physical in order to convey the image of the people in question, and also in order to form and support theories about their ancestry. Just as the Komalans are descendants of the Kalees on the basis of linguistic evidence, so too are the aborigines themselves all descended from the Malays, based on similar customs, physical features, and skin color.

13 Robert Swinhoe, “Notes on the Ethnology of Formosa,” 1863, 1

14 Robert Swinhoe, “Notes on the Ethnology of Formosa,” 1863, 11

Now that we have gone some way towards understanding the methods authors use to describe Formosan peoples, an analysis of the accounts of Formosan peoples by Westerners by combining that understanding with the contextual analysis used previously may provide useful insight. One of the most common themes of postcolonial scholarship is that scholars and officials, and other agents of colonialism, be they missionaries, merchants, or simply adventurers, must be viewed in light of the fact that their discourse exists within a structure that promotes knowledge for the sake of subjugation. reveal a detectable pattern in which writers have a propensity for which method. Put most simply by Edward Said, “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.”¹⁵ One of Said's most important contributions is his analysis of the practicality of Orientalism—ethnography and other direct interactions with peoples included—in the minds of Westerners for their colonial enterprise. Officials reported back to the home country on local cultures in an effort to better prepare colonial bureaucrats to follow them; ethnographers, linguists, anthropologists, and other scholars were also commonly employed for similar education and training of future colonials; missionary writing served to offer guidance to future missionaries of the area—the better informed an agent of imperialism was about the people they were working with, the better able they could be at governing them, controlling them, converting them, and so on. However, Said himself is not overly concerned with making distinctions within the Orientalist category, and tends to paint with a broad brush. We have already seen that there are distinctions in the methods that different authors employ to describe people in Formosa, however.

As Stevan Harrell and Margaret Byrne Swain both suggest, drawing dichotomies of Orientalist writers may provide a valuable insight, as will become clear. Margret Byrne Swain proposes that “a typology of Orientalists can be constructed by grouping occupational motivations which then correlate with distinct research agendas and results.” Whereas she examines Père Vial, who she refers to as a

“missionary-ethnographer,” she suggests it should be possible to demonstrate distinctions between missionary-ethnographers, and, say, merchant-ethnographers, diplomat-ethnographers, soldier-ethnographers, adventurer-ethnographers, and so on, as well as commonalities among the members of each group. Swain identifies four types of Orientalists: the colonial officials, motivated by politics and with a systemic bias favoring dominant local cultures; the missionaries, motivated by conversion and seeking to transform native identities; the adventurers or explorers, motivated by a desire for the exotic, and for publishing popular accounts; and the academics, “theoretically” motivated by the pursuit of knowledge. According to this typology, then, “there was variation in focus and results, as well as in degree of engagement in the colonial enterprise.” All four categories, however, operated within the Orientalist debate, and while the extent varies, all did participate in the colonial enterprise of their home countries.¹⁶

One particular category of Orientalist, the missionary, was typically not an agent of his home government, and, indeed, was often seen to be protecting their local minorities against Han colonial projects. Harrell argues that missionaries, in the social evolutionist discourse of the day, often recognized peripheral people as more civilized than the Han, on the basis of their supposed superiority of “honesty, simplicity, and hard work,” and “failure to practice certain Chinese customs that the missionaries found abhorrent (such as footbinding, infanticide, and arranged marriage).”¹⁷ We have already seen William Campbell's explicit mention of the custom of foot-binding, and his implicit preference for non-Han peoples who avoid the practice. In particular, peripheral people, already lacking the structural reasons including political power and social prestige, that strongly bound Han Chinese to Confucianism, were much more ready converts to Christianity, and were often championed by their missionaries as victims of heathen Han oppression. Missionary discourse, however, is not to be

16 Swain, Margaret Byrne. “Père Vial and the Gni-p'a: Orientalist Scholarship and the Christian Project ” in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Pages 133-134.

17 Harrell, Stevan. “Introduction: Civilizing Projects and the Reactions to Them” in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. pg. 22

mistaken for anti-colonial, or even non-colonial discourse. In fact, that they expressed preferences for ready converts and ranked cultures on the basis of “Christian” measures of civilization shows missionaries participating in the same power relations with their objects as other colonial agents. On the issue of missionary writing, T.O. Beidelman discusses the contours of its Orientalist bias: “Missionaries seek to confirm the purpose and sincerity of their efforts, yet need to present a sufficiently grim picture of heathen conditions and the struggle of evangelization to promote more support from home—but always with enough glimmers of success to encourage enthusiasm.”¹⁸ Missionary writing, therefore, like other Orientalist literature, seeks to portray colonized or peripheral people as inferior and in need of civilization, to justify its project of Christianizing. It does this, however, in a different way and for different reasons than other types of Oriental discourse.

Harrell, in delineating the three civilizing projects he posits, identifies a typology of Orientalists like Swain, but his is the dichotomy between those with faith or science as their framework. Missionaries, he notes in “The History of the History of the Yi”, “tend to rely on native legends and cultural traits in tracing the origins of the people.” He cited Vial, again, and Lietard, who both generally agree that the Yi of Yunnan, based on perceived cultural similarities, were a Tibeto-Burman people, originating from an ancient kingdom west of Yunnan that was conquered by the Qin Dynasty. He points out that “very little about race or physical characteristics is used to explain the Yi history” by the missionary-ethnographers, while “in the accounts of scientists, natural and social, we find an explicitly racist paradigm, one that derives more from the scientific impulse of generalization and systematization than from the intimate knowledge and desire to describe accurately that seem to have motivated the missionaries.” The scientists, including Legendre and others, operate under the assumptions of a concept of racial purity, and the correlation between physical attributes and cultural traits. These Yi histories tended to see the Yi in terms of racial components (Polynesian, Mongloid-

¹⁸ Beidelman, T.O. *Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an East African Mission at the Grassroots*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Pg. Xviii.

Chinese, Europid, etc.) and Legendre even engages in cranial measurements. Moreover, Harrell suggests this behavior in relation to Western Yi scholarship was specific to the category of scientific inquiry across time, noting that even the two post-Boasians Feng and Shryock, one Chinese and the other American, actually continued Legendre's legacy of racial taxonomies.¹⁹

Following the suggestions of Swain and Harrell, I first applied the principle of differentiation of Orientalists on the basis of occupation, with particular attention to the position of missionaries, since that is the same clear category that exists most commonly in the scholarship. As can already be predicted from the representative examples given in the previous sections about the particular methods of representation, the relationships did form along lines similar to Harrell's suggestion. While the descriptions on the basis of the sinicization or peacefulness or a group of people (though not necessarily the moral judgments applied to them) are more or less constant among all types of Western writers on nineteenth-century Formosan people, there does appear to be a difference between the writers who primarily apply the abstract descriptions, and those that primarily apply the physical ones. Abstract generalizations about peoples, as shown by William Campbell's writings, which lent themselves to moral judgments and categories based on them, were a particularly strong preference of both missionaries analyzed; conversely, all other three writers, consuls and naturalists by occupation, primarily used physical descriptions of people, along with the racial categories that accompanied them.

What is more significant in the to the study of history as a discipline is the insight gained if we take this first level of analysis, the observations on writers on Formosa—that missionaries are more likely to make abstract judgments and judgments that lend themselves to moral categories, for example—and further contextualize them. The writing of the missionaries is particularly fruitful in this regard. In their studies of William Campbell and George Mackay, John Shepherd and James Rohrer respectively, each suggest that the propensity for aborigines to convert and be targets for conversion by

¹⁹ Harrell, Stevan. "The History of the History of the Yi" in *Cultural Encounters on China's Ethnic Frontiers*. Ed. Stevan Harrell. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Pages 69-72.

Christian missionaries in Formosa, as opposed to the ethnic Chinese population is explained by their structural position. Several historical development coalesced to provide the ideal setting for disproportionate aboriginal receptivity to Christianity. First, the Unequal Treaties, and particularly the Sino-French Treaty of Tianjin in 1860, meant both that Christian missionaries were finally allowed to proselytize in Taiwan, and that, as Christianity was a protected religion, native converts received special status under the law—and they maintained this position until through the remainder of Qing rule, often with backed by the specter of Western military force. Christian missionaries of all denominations were specifically placed under the protection of Chinese officials. As well, Formosan aborigines were in a marginal social position in Qing China, such that the special status of Christian converts had appeal. All Chinese subjects had the right to practice Christianity, these conditions simultaneously served to limit Chinese bureaucratic control over the missionaries and converts by instilling in local officials the fear of international incident and repercussions from superiors, while at the same time earning the missionaries an inextricable negative association, in the minds of ethnic Chinese, at least, with the colonial powers that had inflicted stinging defeats and harsh peace on China. Ethnic Chinese in Taiwan, in contrast to the aborigines, had societal constraints, like the social practice of ancestor worship, which was rejected by the Christians. In his essay “From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895,” John R. Shepherd writes that “marginal groups were known to convert en masse when it appeared that an alliance with the local mission station would bring some benefit vis-a-vis the local government, such as advantage over rival groups in litigation or protection from Chinese officials.”²⁰ Because of the apparent power differential often observed between Christian missionaries and Chinese officials as result of their special status, missionaries were often elevated to a high level of social prestige among the aborigines, particularly ones that opposed sinicization.

²⁰ John R. Shepherd, “From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895.” Pg. 120

Since aborigines stood to benefit in both tangible and intangible ways as a result of conversion to Christianity, we can see evidence from the historical sources that the relative success of missionizing is related to aboriginal desires to improve their lot, in addition to any spiritual motivations. When Father Fernando Sainz, the first Christian missionary since the ouster of the Dutch in the seventeenth century, paid a ransom to the Hakka bandits that had captured him to spite their Wanjin rivals, an account by one of his colleagues documents his flock's reaction: "Angrily, they remarked: 'Is this what Christianity is? Must everything be patience and silence and suffering... When their head was kidnapped they paid the bandits for kidnapping him... If we become Christians, and we are kidnapped, we will be tortured and put to death because we do not have the money to pay the bandits. If this is Christianity, we don't want it.'" ²¹ The reaction shows that a primary, and even overriding motivation for the aborigines in conversion was to increase power with respect to, or at least achieve protection from, their Chinese neighbors. Sainz and the other Dominicans had gained the support of the Wanjin aborigines by using their influence to represent their converts' interests to the local officials. ²² Moreover, when, in 1868, British gunboats responded to further attacks on missionaries by putting in troops at Anping and forcing the local officials to grant the missionaries recognition, protection under the law, and indemnities for their damages, enhancing the prestige and influence of the foreign missionaries, the Wanjin mission experienced "a surge in the villagers' enthusiasm for the religion of the foreigners," and the mission's fortunes reversed. Only two years later a large church with a regular congregation stood in Wanjin, and the Dominicans continued their defense of aborigine well-being, buying back aborigine land that seized by the Hakka in the 1870s.

Campbell himself, Shepherd argues, though typically upbeat about the aborigines in most respects, also offers evidence for the structural explanation of aboriginal conversions. In 1872,

21 John R. Shepherd, "From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895." pg. 125

22 John R. Shepherd, "From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895." pg. 124

Campbell complained that “It would almost seem as if the petty officials and older people of the place had taken the matter into consideration and decided in favour of Christianity because no loss, at any rate, could rise in following the advice of foreign teachers who were quite influential and far more sympathising than the Chinese around them. This theory would account for... the irrepressible desire for baptism by many who do not possess the slightest knowledge of its meaning.”²³ Shepherd argues that the act of conversion was necessarily imbued with the implications of legal protection under the treaty system and foreign intervention to enforce it; Campbell's observations about baptism show that “Baptism was sought not as an act of spiritual rebirth, but because it would make Pazeh worthy of foreign protection.”²⁴ Shepherd also notes that adoption of Christianity was not a straightforward matter of climbing the status ladder sinoocentric society: as Christians, aborigines remained barbarians in the prevalent Chinese world view, and indeed, they practiced rituals that now *differed* from the Chinese—especially the failure to practice ancestor worship. But instead the aborigines did actually manage to increase their prestige through conversion—as the conversion meant a conversion to a Christian world view as well. The change was from a paradigm that espoused Han centrality and aborigine savageness to one that reversed the roles, and was critical of uncivilized pagan Han customs. Of course, not all aborigines converted; the world view that came bundled up in Christianity may have been a limiting factor in some respects, as tribes that could not afford to sever their ties to the Chinese due to close networks and geography, or prior sinicization, found Christianity incompatible with their structural position.

In his examination of the Canadian Presbyterian missionary, George Leslie Mackay, James R. Rohrer also argues for a structural and not spiritual reason for early aboriginal conversion. The Protestant missionary George Leslie Mackay faced these problems since he chose to focus his efforts

23 John R. Shepherd, “From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895.” pg. 129

24 John R. Shepherd, “From Barbarians to Sinners: Collective Conversion Among Plains Aborigines in Qing Taiwan, 1859-1895.” pg. 129

on conversion of the Hokkien, and not the aborigines. Mackay, like others, found conversion of the aborigines to be a much easier endeavor. In Sin-kang and Ilan, he found eager aborigines, and converted more than 1100 in Ilan in four years. Indeed, the Kavulan in Ilan were even fairly sinicized already, having adopted Hakka language and folk religion, to an extent. However, Mackay claimed that their adoption of Han customs was not by their own choice and they remained hostile to the Han way of doing things: “Idolotry does not suit the average Pepohoan, and it is only of necessity that he submits to even the formal observance of its rites and ceremonies. It is political rather than religious, and to the large majority is meaningless except as a reminder of their enslavement to an alien race.”²⁵ As a consequence, they were easily won over to Christianity. Rohrer argues, like Shepherd, that the aboriginal converts had important worldly factors to adopt Christianity as well—strong socio-economic and political motivations—unconnected to the gospel that compelled conversion.

Indeed, Mackay himself could not help but recognize the political motivations aaboriginal Christianization, just like the motivations for their sinicization; noting the increased efforts by Chinese to dispossess the aborigines, Rohrer notes that “Mackay acknowledged that many aboriginals looked to the missionaries as a course of protection against Chinese incursions, a reality that disturbed him. 'I was not altogether satisfied with the people,' he noted of one group of Pepohoan, 'They seemed to me too much concerned about the... missionaries coming as their protectors.’”²⁶ When the Kavulan converted, they destroyed all of their Chinese ancestral idols in bonfires to emphasize the point that their conversion was primarily a rejection of Chinese cultural domination.

One interesting note is that Rohrer argues that Mackay's rapid conversion of the Kavulan was unusual, and likely just as pragmatic a decision of his as was the aborigines'. Normal procedure dictated that candidates required substantial religious education before baptism and organization of

25 James R. Rohrer, “Mackay and the Aborigines: Reflections upon the Ambiguities of Taiwanese Aboriginal Christian History.” Pg. 271

26 Rohrer, James R. “Mackay and the Aborigines: Reflections upon the ambiguities of Taiwanese Aboriginal Christian History,” pg. 270

churches, however when the Dominicans visited Ilan in 1886, the Presbyterians, propelled by their anti-Catholic prejudices, sped up the process.²⁷ While the motivations and biases of the missionaries like these are of course important concerns, these analyses of aboriginal decision-making differs from other critiques of imperialism and Orientalism that look only at Western attitudes towards Orientals, and tend to portray an indigenous people that is acted upon, and does little acting of of its own. By contrast, it seems as likely that the missionaries were acted upon by the converts as that they acted upon the aborigines; each group approached their relations with an agenda, one seeking to win the local population to its religion, and one seeking to gain political profit in its relations with the dominant Chinese. Significantly, indigenous decisions to convert were based not just upon Western imperial coercion, but were reactions to their specific indigenous circumstances, especially their relations with the Qing authorities and local ethnic Chinese, and they cannot be fully explained without that context.

This context is important for our understanding of the Western sources, as well. There are several aspects of missionary writing in nineteenth century Formosa that distinguish it from other Western writing, including the abstract method of description, the moral judgments passed on whole groups of peoples, and the consequent hierarchies of people with sympathies given to the aborigines. This is a reflection of the historical circumstance of Formosa: if for Campbell the Chinese are the unscrupulous exploiters of the aborigines, this preference makes sense considering that the aborigines are his targets of missionary work, and the Chinese are largely the part of the obstructions he faces. But we can take this analysis one step further; that missionaries in Taiwan were primarily successful in converting aborigines and not the Chinese, as demonstrated by the sources, also contributes to our understanding of the historical situation of Formosa in the nineteenth century. The attractiveness of Christianity to aborigines can be supported by Campbell's writings, but this attractiveness, in turn, helps to reveal an image of the actual historical subject of inquiry—it corresponds to the respective

²⁷ Rohrer, James R. "Mackay and the Aborigines: Reflections upon the ambiguities of Taiwanese Aboriginal Christian History," pg. 272

social structures of the Chinese and aborigines of the time in Taiwan, as well as the relations between the two groups, and subgroups within them, specifically, the power relations between them which put the Chinese in a position of power and prestige, while the aborigines filled a lowered social position, relative to their level of assimilation to the Chinese. Campbell's text then, if analyzed for methodology and other attributes and historicized, can offer real insight into the period and serve as a useful historical source; this model applies to all the authors of the period in general, as well.

This point is not obvious. If we now return to the broader question that we asked asked to begin with—to what extent can we learn about Formosan peoples, the subject of inquiry of these Orientalist writers, as opposed to simply learning about the writers themselves and their own culture?—the answer seems now to be a hopeful one. In Said's construction, or at least the archetypal bleak argument we can infer from his reasoning, which is a useful foil whether or not he truly represents such a simplistic view, is that Orientalist discourse is the reflection of Western preconceived notions about itself and its opposites, in conjunction imperialist power relations. As historical sources, then, this corpus of writing on the Orient by the West is more revelatory of the West itself as an example of its cultural understandings, than of the Orient, which is a mirage projected by the authors. Having now excavated real historical insight from such sources though, the bleak view offered here cannot be entirely accurate. This analysis of Western sources on nineteenth-century Formosa, in addition to the more basic intent of understanding the context and methodology of these writers in order to use and interpret them as historical documents, may also offer a way forward on the more general problem. This is a basic problem that almost all areas of history face, and historians of cross-cultural contact and imperialism especially so. Of course, historians claim to know something about cultures for which few native literary sources survive, or ever existed, all the time—from Sparta to pre-Columbian Aztecs, to all sorts of colonial subjects contemporary to the Formosans of the nineteenth century. It is for the same reason that this study shows that we do know about the historical events of Formosa in the nineteenth century, as well as more subtle pieces of the puzzle, like the values, social structures, and relations

among the people native to the island. This argument suggests a theoretical framework for how we can we can attempt to answer some of the challenges to traditional historiography put forth by Orientalist and postcolonial critics, as well as offering a potential model for how to uncover historical knowledge about our subject of inquiry from a biased, foreign source.

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