



## Taiwanese Skin, Chinese Masks: A Rhizomatic Study of the Identity Crisis in Taiwan

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Nowadays, a far graver mistake is made: race is confused with nation and a sovereignty analogous to that of really existing peoples is attributed to ethnographic or, rather linguistic groups.

Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" (Note 1)

### Abstract

Viewed from some postcolonial/postmodern perspectives by employing mostly the micropolitics of Homi Bhabha's and Gilles Deleuze (and other theorists who hold similar conceptions), whose major common interest lies in dismantling the myth of establishing an imagined community by retrieving a shared national history/culture and assuming ethnic purity, this paper seeks to explore the paradoxical aspects of Taiwan's quest in her decolonizing progress for a "collective" national/cultural identity. Besides, this paper compares mostly Taiwan's decolonization process with South Korea's because of their similarity in territorial division due to some civil wars and the intervention of external powers (e.g., the former Soviet Union and U.S.A.). By so doing, this paper aims to propose some solution to Taiwanese's dilemma in constructing a "collective" national /cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Bhabha, Deleuze, Decolonization, Postcolonial, Postmodern, Taiwan, Cultural/national identity

### 1. Introduction: The Decolonization of Post-colonial Taiwan

In the process of decolonization, among the nations that are suffering from the turbulence caused by conflicts among different races, ethnicities, religions, or localities within their territories, no *state* is experiencing the identity crisis like Taiwan, who is not even recognized as a *nation* by most countries in the world. In the postcolonial era, most colonized areas have gained independence of their colonizers. Unlike most once-colonized countries, Taiwan's status in the international community is always disputed. Legally speaking, Taiwan is not recognized as an independent country, but in reality, it is treated as such (including the U.S., who explicitly declares in *Taiwan Relation Act* that Taiwan is not a sovereign state), for all the Taiwanese tourists and businessmen traveling around the world are holding the passports issued by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is very different from the situation of Tibet, Macau, or Hong Kong, which are currently under the Chinese rule. ***Above all, even South Korea (the only region or country that shares the most similar political situation with Taiwan) has gradually established their national/cultural identity after suffering for a long time from the colonization by different imperial powers (the U.S. included) and internal ethnic conflicts.*** Moreover, many well-known colonial/postcolonial discourses that are good for interpreting the situations of many Third World nations are mostly inadequate to analyze Taiwan's identity problems generated by the conflicts among different ethnic groups (e.g. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* and Spivak's idea of the subaltern, though some of their conceptions are also valid for exploring Taiwan's colonial experience). For in the past decades (1945-present), Taiwan, though previously having been a *colony* under the rule of several foreign regimes for centuries, was not enslaved or colonized by a different race or troubled by a binary white/black opposition that many Third World nations have experienced. Rather, the last and, undoubtedly, the most influential among the *colonizers* of Taiwan—China—exactly has the population that is ethnically akin to most Taiwanese and thus is the hegemonic power that haunts and

interferes in/with Taiwan's formation of a *unified* (Note 2) national/cultural identity.

Besides, we usually assume that the colonizer comes from abroad and only oppresses the colonized natives while indulging their citizens to enslave the natives or exploit the natural resources or property of the colony. Nevertheless, given the KMT's authoritarian Leninist-type and oppressive rule over Taiwan by treating the Taiwanese as subjects of a colony for about 50 years, in this paper I intend to treat the émigrés from China (the latest and largest group of immigrants in Taiwan's history), namely, the ruling party of Taiwan (1945-1994/2000) (Note 3) —the Kuomintang (KMT, or Nationalist) party-state—as one of the colonizers in Taiwan's colonial history (ironically, they came from the same fatherland with most early Taiwanese settlers). The KMT's oppressive rule over Taiwan is a form of *interior colonization*, just like the Chinese rule over Hong Kong, or the British rule over the Pilgrims, the early settlers in New England in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper I intend to explore the impact on Taiwan's identity crisis by focusing on analyzing the KMT's oppressive rule over Taiwanese. Besides, viewed from both socio-political and cultural perspectives, I desire to propose some solution to Taiwan's national /cultural identity crises by employing mainly the micropolitics (or rhizomatics in Deleuzian terms) of Renan, Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha and Deleuze, which aims to dismantle any racial/cultural fundamentalism for establishing an imagined community.

## 2. The Identity Crisis in Taiwan

### 2.1 Taiwan's colonial history—a land of hybrid cultures

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwanese people had been colonized for about four hundred years, by several foreign regimes, such as the Dutch (17<sup>th</sup> century), the Spanish (late 17<sup>th</sup> century), and the Japanese (1895-45), until recently, in the 1940s the Nationalists fleeing from China after being defeated by the Chinese Communists. The foreign influence is always haunting in the formation of the cultural/national identity of Taiwanese people, especially the Chinese influence. Hence, Taiwanese culture is extremely polyglot and heterogeneous. Moreover, each major ethnic group in Taiwan seeks to gain hegemony over others by claiming themselves as the *orthodox* Taiwanese, while the KMT regime is trying hard to proclaim to the world that it is the *orthodox* regime that has sovereignty over the whole Chinese territory. As a result, Taiwanese people have much difficulty in the formation of a *unified* identity. More importantly, there is not a single *nation* that has long been divided and ruled by different regimes (e.g. Korea and the former Germany before reunification) facing the dilemma of Taiwan—whether choose to desperately declare independence or seek reunification with mainland China despite China's warning and threatening that such act would lead to war. Strangely enough, despite the poor performance of the Chen Shui-bian Administration, many Taiwanese voters under their strong fear for the Chinese Communists finally chose to vote for Chen as their President in 2000 and 2004.

### 2.2 Taiwan in comparison with South Korea and other postcolonial regions or nations

In addition, no nation having been divided and ruled by different regimes is like Taiwan, which has so many activists, domestic or abroad, trying so hard to seek to formally terminate their legitimate relationship with the fatherland. And this happens to be the paradoxical aspect of Taiwan's quest for identity—to search for a shared past while denying some elements within it. In Deleuzian terms, the revolt is Taiwanese people's lines of flight or deterritorialization of China's hegemonic rule and culture. In addition, besides the early settlers from China—Minnan, Hakka (the supposedly Han Chinese, the majority ethnic group)—there are natives of mainly nine aboriginal tribes in Taiwan's population. With the influx of the late immigrants—the KMT officials and their adherents—the conflicts among different ethnic groups are sharpening.

The above-mentioned paradoxical aspects of Taiwan's identity crisis happen to share many similarities with Korea when it comes to the territorial division and the problematic attitude toward history of the two nations. After World War II (1945), which also marked the end of Japanese colonial rule of Korea, the Korean peninsula was divided into two nations under the intervention of the former Soviet Union and U.S.A. —the North and South Koreas—each of which claimed to be the legitimate Korean regime in the of hope of fulfilling Korean reunification, just like the division of China and Taiwan after the Chinese civil war ending in 1949. Nevertheless, there are some distinctive differences between the two national divisions: For China and Taiwan, the former is much stronger in many aspects (e.g., military power and territory) than Taiwan except in democratization. As for the two Koreas, they are much closer in either territory or military power except in economic development. Moreover, both Taiwan and Korea had been under Japanese colonial rule. Strange to say, the Koreans seldom have the problem of national/cultural identity as Koreans, though each side has different political system and objectives. Nevertheless, Taiwanese people suffer greatly from internal conflicts among different ethnic groups (such as the early immigrants and new immigrants from China). What is worse, many Taiwanese citizens refuse to recognize themselves as Taiwanese while holding the passports issued by Taiwanese government. In other words, many native Taiwanese citizens who are born in Taiwan and have nothing to do with China tend to recognize themselves as Chinese. As a result, nowadays, as the interaction between China and Taiwan is accelerating, Taiwan is facing a crisis in both identity and economy.

Therefore, to solve the identity crises of Taiwan and re-position our relationship to China, I propose some tactics

respectively from the socio-political and cultural perspectives: (1) a proper definition of *nation* and, (2) a *repositioning* of cultural identity of Taiwan through the *reform* of cultural representation that transforms “historical identities” (Woodward, 1997, p.21) (Note 4); (3) to recognize, based on Deleuzian/Bhabha’s postcolonial conception of liminality (in-betweenness), the cultural/ethnic hybridity in the local people so that Taiwanese can escape the schizoid cultural/national identity or paranoia of ethnic purity and cultural orthodoxy while searching for Taiwanese cultural/national identity.

### 3. The haunting/hegemonic influence of the fatherland—China

Though another influential colonizer, Japan is not so dominant and haunting as the KMT in interfering with the formation of Taiwan’s identity, for most early Taiwanese settlers were from mainland China and thus their descendents form the majority of contemporary Taiwan’s population, whereas Japan is obviously a *foreign* regime with a *foreign* culture and language and had been expelled in 1945. Nowadays, many people in Taiwan still unconsciously utter expressions like “We Chinese are like this . . .” or “We are all Chinese . . . (when they mean the inhabitants in Taiwan as a whole)” without the awareness that some ethnic groups (i.e. the aboriginals or the offspring of the mixed marriage between aboriginals and Minnan/Hakka/mainlanders) have little to do with China proper.

On the other hand, nowadays, Japan’s influence over Taiwan now is mostly *economic*, just like that in many other regions of the world. Although many elderly citizens in Taiwan still have strong feeling toward Japanese culture or even identify themselves as *former Japanese citizens*, young people nowadays, unlike their grandparents or great-grandparents, do not understand Japanese (except those who take Japanese lessons) or identify themselves as Japanese. There are only many young fans of Japanese pop culture, just like those of the American pop culture around the world. Therefore, my focus of exploring Taiwan’s identity crisis is placed on the Chinese influence of the KMT’s Leninist party-state. Since its retreat to Taiwan, the KMT has been elaborately practicing Chinese-oriented cultural policies in education, mass media control or censorship of all publications; meanwhile, highly valuing the Chinese traditions and artistic works (labeling them as “national”—e.g. Mandarin as the national language; Pekingese opera, the national opera), while discouraging the development of the nativist literature and attacking those works (labeling them as “worker-peasant-soldier literature,” an allusion to the Communists’ literary history) (Gold, 1994, p. 61). Above all, the KMT even tried to rewrite/distort the recent history of China, especially the period of turbulence culminated in the 28 February 1947 massacre of the Taiwanese natives, the brutal suppression of a popular uprising in 1947 when many natives could no longer bear the discriminative policies of the mainlanders toward the natives, which was triggered by some corrupted KMT official’s confiscating a woman peddler’s supposedly “smuggled” cigarettes and beating her (Shih 219-224). Therefore, to restore the marginalized/distorted history of Taiwan is also essential to constructing Taiwan’s subjectivity.

### 4. What Is a Nation?

#### A schizoid national identity—Taiwanese skin, Chinese masks

Most Taiwanese people have a binary national identity (Chinese/Taiwanese) that is scarcely seen in the rest parts of the world. This is owing to the constant brainwashing propaganda that the KMT had been imposing on Taiwanese, wither at schools or on mass media. To solve this identity problem we’d better have a “proper” definition of “nation” and a review of the strategies of the KMT’s propaganda campaign.

Initially, the KMT party-state is an overwhelmingly dominant émigré regime “with little or no base in Taiwanese society, autonomous from social pressures, presided over economic development and social change and then had to come to terms with the socio-political consequences of its own success” (Gold, 1994, p.48). To justify its claim to the sovereignty of the whole China and to highlight itself as the legitimate regime, the KMT styled itself “Free China” in contrast to “Communist China” or “Red China” (a label imposed by the KMT on the Chinese Communist Party, CCP). Besides, the KMT party-state still insisted on using the old official name of *China*—“The Republic of China” (ROC)—after its flight to Taiwan, while the Communist China changed the nation’s name into “People’s Republic of China” (PRC) in 1949 after they successfully defeated the KMT and got the control of Mainland China, the real “orthodox” regime recognized by almost every member of the United Nations, and she replaced the KMT’s membership in the U.N. in 1971 and then became one the five members of the U. N.’s Standing Committee of Security. Therefore, Taiwan, under the KMT’s rule, is officially named “The Republic of China” (R.O.C.) that excludes the essential word—*Taiwan*, which used to be taken as a *base* of the “Free China” to recover Mainland China, both of the two national names are always so confusing to foreigners not familiar with Taiwan’s situation. Taiwanese people, therefore, have been forced to adopt this confusing binary national identity. What is worse, the CCP has been also doing the same propaganda with the KMT domestically and abroad in order to justify its claim to the sovereignty of Taiwan. They also declare that Taiwanese people are also Chinese people and that Taiwan is “an inseparable province/part of China” in order to deny Taiwan’s status as an independent country in the world.

However, if we re-examine the term “nation” we would find that both the CCP and the KMT happen to conspire in

fooling Taiwanese by implanting them with a wrong conception of *nation*. But, what is a nation, anyway? In the opening of this essay I intend to mark a quotation from Ernest Renan's "What is a nation?"—which happens to pinpoint the ridiculous definition of nation that Taiwanese people have had on their minds: "race is confused with nation and a sovereignty analogous to that of really existing peoples is a ethnographic or, rather linguistic groups." Ethnically speaking, we are all Chinese (except the aborigines), for our ancestors came from Mainland China. However, it is a common-sense talk when we ask about someone's nationality, which is always politically/legally implicated, we are referring to the legitimate membership/citizenship of a *nation* that one holds. There is no room for ambiguity or ambivalence (e.g. Nobody could be both/either Chinese and/or American if s/he is ethnically Chinese but actually American in nationality. Under this circumstance, s/he should always proclaim that s/he is American instead of Chinese). However, anyone having multiple nationalities (legally having more than one passport) is a different issue and should not be mixed up when defining nationality.

Some politics scholars argue that people who have the *will* to found a nation should share kinships in some principles of nationality, namely, the similarities in such traits as race, territory, language, and religion. This concept would be easily refuted as a faulty belief; that is, reviewing man's history, we could find they are not indispensable to the founding of a modern nation. Ethnographic or geographic factors that both the CCP and the KMT have been emphasizing in justifying the legitimacy of the reunification of Taiwan and Mainland China are no more than a myth that could be easily refuted even when we just take a look at some developed modern nations: America is a country of immigrants; Singapore has only a much more smaller territory than Taiwan's; Japan, an economic power, has no large territory. However, both the CCP and the KMT have been propagandizing that the reunification of China and Taiwan would definitely make a new strong China, well-developed in all aspects. Renan (1882) has an insightful observation that helps unveil this myth:

It was we who founded the principle of nationality. But what is a nation? Why is Holland a nation, when Hanover, or the Grand Duchy of Parma, are not? How is it that France continues to be a nation, when the principle which created it has disappeared? How is it that Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogeneous, is not one? Why is Australia, a state and not a nation? In what ways does the principle of nationality differ from that of races? (Note 5) (12)

This remark is very applicable to Taiwan's claim for sovereignty. Though we have kinships in race, custom, language and territory, we do not necessarily have to be united as a big *nation*, not to mention the *becoming* of cultural differences between the two *political entities* after being separated by wars for several decades and the fact that Taiwan had always been neglected by her fatherland since the Ching Dynasty: ". . . a poor periphery of the Chinese empire in 1895, a heavily exploited colony of Japan in 1935 (because of the Ching Dynasty gave her away to Japan as a tribute after being defeated in the war), a territory partly destroyed by war and partly pillaged by Nationalist mismanagement in the late 1940s" (Harrell and Huang, 1994, p. 1). As a matter of fact, in the early period of the Nationalist's rule they just took Taiwan as a base for "recovering mainland China." But, because of its strategic value in the Far East, postwar U.S. started to play an active role in maintaining its power against China's invasion. This makes Taiwan's status more complex and problematic. That is to say, in her quest for identity, Taiwan has to struggle against China's interference and, at the same time, avoid becoming a puppet regime of the U.S.

## 5. Ethnicity versus nationality

To brainwash the Taiwanese who do not accept the émigré regime, after they were in power the KMT party-state started to exercise the ideological-political education for all the students from elementary schools to colleges with the notion of "Chineseness" and thus most young people born in post-war Taiwan naturally identify themselves as "Chinese" instead of "Taiwanese" or as "both Chinese and Taiwanese." In addition, the KMT party-state made some propaganda such as, "Taiwan is so small, Mainland China is so big. So our future prospect lies in the mainland." Or "China is our fatherland. So, we are all Chinese and never should we ignore the fact that our fellowmen are still suffering enormously under the communist rule. They are all anxiously awaiting our help. It is our holy duty as Chinese descendants to save our fellowmen away from the torturing of the Communists."

Moreover, the KMT tried every effort to suppress all kinds of oppositional groups or campaigns. Strengthened by its Leninism as well as the traditional Chinese authoritarianism originated in Confucianism, which emphasizes one's loyalty to his/her family and the monarch of the state, the KMT built a paternal/hierarchic society to control its subjects. Even though there was an emergence of a bourgeoisie in Taiwan in the 1950s, "economic and political-military power were joined at the top of the mainlander elite; Taiwanese were virtually excluded" (Gold, 1994, p.52). This phenomenon led to Taiwanese's subordination to the mainlanders both ideologically and financially. Having long been intimidated or brainwashed, most Taiwanese people naturally get to identify themselves as the citizens of the ROC, which still has the *claim* to the sovereignty of the mainland, despite the fact that foreigners outside Taiwan always identify the inhabitants in Taiwan as "Taiwanese," citizens of a sovereignty that is completely different from those of PRC. Not until recently, in the 2000 Presidential campaign in Taiwan, did the former President Lee Teng-hui, long accused as "the national enemy" by both the CCP and the Taiwanese who advocate reunification with China, propose a counter-strategy in reaction to the

CCP's marginalization of Taiwan as a local government—"a special state-to-state relations with China"—which was also condemned by his opponents as a "separatist" discourse that is intended for Taiwan's independence, the same label they have been imposing on the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual/political leader of Tibet.

Actually the core factor that hinders Taiwanese from forming a *unified* national identity lies in the deep-rooted Chinese tradition that lays great emphasis on ancestry, family and emotional attachment to one's homeland. This tradition emphasizes that one should never forget his/her ancestry even when s/he is away from home or abroad. It is that notion that makes Chinese always recognize their overseas fellowmen who have been naturalized in a foreign state as "Chinese," no matter how long those people have got their citizenship of those foreign nations. That is to say, the adherence to one's ancestry is deeply rooted in every Chinese's psyche wherever s/he goes or settles down in a foreign land. But it would be a great danger if any of those naturalized Chinese descendants dares show in a foreign land their emotional attachment to his/her homeland, especially in some nations where the natives have a growing fear toward the growing/overwhelming economic influence of the ethnic Chinese immigrants (e.g. Indonesia, where many Chinese Indonesians were attacked in the riots in reaction to the overseas Chinese people's hegemonic economic power). According to Renan (1990), this kind of compulsive adherence to one's ancestry *enslaves* man and is not fundamental to the founding of a nation:

Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation. (20)

That attitude toward the homeland and its culture well illustrates why Taiwanese nativist culture has been degraded as "local/folk" or "inferior" (a marginal culture in contrast to the *orthodox* Chinese culture, or, a hybrid culture *tainted* by Japanese influence), while Mandarin literature or songs are highly valued as "national." As a secondary culture, Taiwanese culture has never been valued side by side with Chinese culture, never equaled the juxtaposition of American culture with English culture. Moreover, the KMT echoed the CPP in claiming that Taiwan is always part of the territory of China and can never legitimately represent China as a whole (the ROC). Contradictorily, meanwhile, the KMT also declared that their regime in Taiwan is the *orthodox* government that had the claim to the territory of whole China. Stevan Harrell and Huang Chun-chien (1994, p.13) had an acute observation of this weird phenomenon:

there is no consensus, in state or society, over what Taiwan is—where it fits into an international scheme—or over what the constituent sub-units of the society ought to be. This problem is most acute in its political dimension, but the political dimension cannot be separated from the cultural, and the cultural sphere has both ethnic and literary aspects to it.

Therefore, to better solve this problem we also have turn to explore the complexities of Taiwanese nativist literature and languages, which had been marginalized and depreciated intentionally by the KMT.

## 6. Culture in Crisis: Identity and Representation

### 6.1 Reaction against cultural marginalization: Taiwan's quest for identity

In this section, I intend to apply Bhabha's conception of "counter-narrative" and Deleuze's "minor literature," both of which aim to deconstruct the hegemony of a dominant culture. And this micropolitics may offer some alternative for those Taiwanese who are seeking lines of flight from the Oedipalization of China/Chreinese culture and furthermore, to establish an cultural autonomy through a counter discourse (or minor writing) based on "creating a people who are missing," in Deleuzian terms.

To solidify "Chineseness" and to weaken "Taiwanese" in the inhabitants in Taiwan, the KMT proclaimed Mandarin the official language and at the same time, discouraged or suppressed the prevalence of Taiwanese dialects (Minnan, Hakka, and the aboriginal languages) in either education or mass media, along with the banning on the Japanese films/programs on TV. These cultural policies really weakened Taiwanese people's identification with the land and their past, and thus can hardly develop a sense of "Taiwanese," for their cultural identities can only be easily produced by those representational or signifying systems (e.g. mass media) in modern societies:

**Representation** includes the signifying practices and symbolic systems through which meanings are produced and which position us as subjects. Representations produce meanings through which we can make sense of our experience and of who we are. We could go further and suggest that these symbolic systems create the possibilities of what we are and what we can become. Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities and symbolic systems provide possible answers to the questions: who am I?; what could I be? Discourses and systems of representation construct places from which individuals can position themselves and from which they can speak. (Woodward, 1997, p.14)

Nowadays, many Taiwanese intellectuals have already tried to develop the sense of "Taiwanese" politically and culturally. For example, the former DPP-ruled government once was considering adding the word "Taiwan" onto the

cover of Taiwanese passports in response to the protests from the holders who keep complaining about being mixed up with Chinese citizens at the customs abroad and thus being inflicted with some unnecessary misunderstanding and trouble. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education had made some reforms in editing the textbooks of elementary schools and high schools by laying more emphasis on the introduction and exploration of Taiwan's culture, geography, and history, which had been marginalized, distorted, or even excluded by the KMT. In terms of Stuart Hall's perspective on cultural identity, this is a strategy to bring about a "production" of identity: "which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity,' lays claim" (1990, p.392).

In Bhabha's and Deleuze's idea of counter/minor discursive strategies, they advocate the creation of a resistance literature, which is characteristic of postmodernism, for they "acknowledge late capitalism's play of simulacra, yet they find ample possibilities for creative transformations of social relations through political action in varying spheres of engagement. They reject all forms of foundationalism" (Bogue, 2002, p.103). Through minor writing, which is written in a minor language that is a deterritorialized form of a dominant language; namely, in Taiwan's case, to develop a *Taiwanese Chinese* that varies from the "**Standardized Chinese**" by adding some local Taiwanese colors in either diction or syntax without worrying about the minor language's linguistically being "impure" or "unorthodox"—"a minorization of this major language," just like what Kafka has done to German (1997, p.5). Deleuze and Guattari (1986) strongly advocate this form of "multiple deterritorialization with language" for immigrants like Taiwanese to embark on a nomad's quest for cultural identity:

How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature but also a problem for all of us: how to tear a minor literature away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path? How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language? Kafka answers: steal the bay from its crib, walk the tight rope. (19)

Given the above-mentioned, Taiwanese have to set up a minor practice of the major language Chinese so that they can define their "national literature" or marginal literature and thus establish a cultural sovereignty that is also essential to founding their national sovereignty.

### 7. Rootedness in this place/Taiwaneseness versus sinologization

After retreating to Taiwan, the KMT controlled the cultural production and it

prevented the publication and dissemination of works by leftist modern Chinese writers, and most others who remained behind. This effectively sealed Taiwan off from most of modern, that is post-May Fourth, Chinese culture. The few works by Taiwanese written in Japanese during the occupation were neglected. Mainlanders produced most of the new culture, and it concerned life on the mainland, heavily romanticized; there was virtually nothing about Taiwan. (Gold, 1994, p.60)

What was worse, many Taiwanese developed a kind of "inferiority complex" that Chineseness was superior to Taiwaneseness. To cope with this situation, Taiwanese have to continue the nativist movement of our predecessors who began to write in the mid-1970s some "sympathetic stories about the hitherto untouched subject of daily life of farmers, workers, prostitutes, small businessmen and soon. Much of the dialogue was written in Taiwanese dialect, replete with earthy profanities" (Gold, 1994, p.61). (Note 6) That is to say, in order to construct Taiwan's cultural identity we have to develop our own literature and other cultural products (e.g. films, pop songs) whose main concerns are the land, its people and its history (preferred but not limited to the use of Taiwanese dialects or *employing a deterritorialized version of Chinese that is mixed up with Taiwanese dialects*), not trying hard to reclaim our excluded past but to reposition our relations to Taiwan by open-heartedly valuing and exploring her as our "being" in the transformation process of cultural "becoming." For as Hall (1990) indicates, we can never recover the *origin* of our identities, which have been transformed by a long period of *diasporas*:

Cultural identity, in another sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (394)

Hall's conception of diasporas happens to correspond to Bhabha and Deleuze's anti-foundationalism and minor/counter writing.

Hence, if we are to construct Taiwan's cultural identity we should just ignore the Chinese influence, not to discard the tradition, but to utilize it in artistic creation, if necessary, so that we can constitute our national identity/subjectivity in the cultural production. First, we have to get rid of the "inferiority complex" that Taiwaneseness belongs to the tastes of "worker-peasant-soldier" classes, and never feel ashamed that we cannot speak like the mainlanders when speaking

Mandarin. The Taiwanese ascent/flavor happens to be our particularity that leads to the formation of our national/cultural identity.

Over the past fifty years, Taiwanese had been brainwashed by the KMT 's *essentialist* (Note 7) view of history and identity that they have a shared history and ancestry with the mainlanders and thus should identify ourselves as Chinese. Actually, China's population also consists of a variety of ethnic groups and its modern population is the outcome of the continuous hybridity of the mixed marriage of those ethnic groups. The chief ethnic group *Han* people is actually the offspring of this kind of racial evolution, let alone Taiwan's population, which has long been separated from the fatherland for a long while (diaspora), fused or fusing with the local aboriginals, and thus has its historical/ethnic uniqueness. In addition, some ethnologists even proved that inhabitants in Southeast China (Guangdong and Fokian Province), where the ancestors of the majority of Taiwanese came from, are not *Han* people. The essentialist view of history and ideological education can only block our participation in the international community and even create an inferiority complex in our psyche. To form Taiwan's national/cultural identity, we should try our best to *deconstruct* this evolutionary myth that Taiwanese and the mainlanders have "the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people'" (Hall 392), and to ridicule it if we are to have any further developments in either economic or diplomatic relations with other members of the international community.

### 8. Conclusion

What is a nation? I would like to quote an insightful remark by Renan (1990) to conclude this essay, for it not only marks the function of founding a nation but foregrounds its impermanency, which underlies the law of Nature:

Man, with his desires and his needs. The secession, you will say to me, and, in the long term, the disintegration of nations will be the outcome of a system which places these old organisms at the mercy of wills which are often none too enlightened. It is clear that, in such matters, no principle must be pushed too far. . . . Human wills change, but what is there here below that does not change? The nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end. (20)

The Chinese Empire had been flourishing for about two thousand years. Meanwhile, it had subjugated several small neighboring states and the minority ethnic groups within or outside its territory, which made it a big empire, just like other empires (e.g. the Roman Empire) in the history of world civilization. But nowadays, where are those empires? They had been divided or re-divided and had developed into different modern nations in the process of socio-political transformation. The postwar Taiwan is just one of those nations that evolved from the disruption or dissemination of the old empires. Most Chinese rulers from the ancient times to the Ching Dynasty had neglected it as a peripheral island off Chinese coast. Taiwan's *diaspora* experiences and identities are what I intend to define/map, "not by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 397). Above all, since World War II, Taiwan has practically existed as an independent country, though not widely recognized as one, the population on this island, consequently, should have the claim to their national identity as Taiwanese (though always in the process of "becoming"), just like the citizens of any other modern nation in the world. For national identity is the most substantial and reliable shelter that man can take refuge in in the international community. Without it, Taiwanese are just like the miserable wandering Jews before they founded Israel.

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### Notes

Note 1. This is a lecture delivered at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882. “*Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?*”, *Oeuvres Completes* (Paris, 1947-61), vol. I, pp.887-907. It was translated and annotated by Martin Thom, and compiled in *Nation and Narration* (1990), edited by Homi K. Bhabha.

Note 2. In terms of Stuart Hall’s discourse on identity (1990), the identity is always in the process of *becoming*. However, here I am referring to the common definition of national identity that is legally/politically implicated, that is, the citizenship of a *nation*.

Note 3. Under the effort of the former President Lee Teng-Hui, Taiwanese citizens, for the very first time in history, chose their President through election in 1994. Formerly, only the members of the National Assembly had the right to vote in the Presidential campaign (there had been always ONE candidate under the special law added to Taiwan’s Constitution). So, some scholars tend to consider the year 1994 as the turning point of Taiwan’s quest for subjectivity/identity.

Note 4. Woodward argues that Hall’s of identity emphasizes “the fluidity of identity. In seeing identity as being concerned with ‘becoming,’ those laying claim to identity are not only positioned by identity, they are able to position themselves and are able to reconstruct and transform historical identities” (21).

Note 5. In Renan’s opinion, nations are “something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them; Egypt, China and Chaldea were in no way nations. They were flocks led by a Son of the Sun or by a Son of Heaven. Neither in Egypt nor in China were there citizens as such” (9, 1882).

Note 6. Here Gold is referring to the use of Minnan, a dialect of Fokien, which is located on the southeast coast of China, the *homeland* of the majority of contemporary Taiwan’s population.

Note 7. Kathryn Woodward (1997, p.11) argues that there is a tension between essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives on identity; the former suggests that there is “one clear, authentic set of characteristic which *all* Serbians share and which do not alter across time. A non-essentialist definition would focus on differences, as well as common or shared characteristics”.