Memories of the Future

By Ann Heylen

Inspired by theories of collective and national identity, the editor and contributors explore the intricacies of national identity in Taiwan. The work is divided into three parts: ‘Historical Roots’, ‘The Transition of National Identity’, and ‘National Identity and the Taiwanese National Movement’. Each part presents a comprehensive examination of the complex interplay between national identity and the socio-political context of Taiwan.

The Haunting Fetus: Abortion, Sexuality, and the Spirit World in Taiwan

By Evelyne Micillic

It is common belief in contemporary Taiwan that an aborted fetus may come back to haunt its family, and the ritual practices to appease it. According to this belief, the aborted fetus appears in the spirit world of the living as a fetus-ghost (yinping). Fetus-ghosts provoke disorder affecting the family, such as disease, injury, or death, while fetus-demons seek vengeance through evil acts: to appease the fetus-ghost, the family performs a ritual. While fetus-ghosts are associated with guilt and redemption, fetus-demons concern social issues, such as politics and the aboriginals.

The book offers an insight into the process of reshaping the spirit world through a pragmatic adaptation to the social issues raised in a society in transition, such as abortion and its meaning, women’s changing roles, and gender issues. It is a valuable work for anyone interested in the cultural dynamics of Taiwan.

References

1. On the evening of 27 February 1947, six agents of the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau assaulted a female street peddler selling contraband cigarettes and managed to beat her to death. The incident led to weeks of violence throughout the island and imitable repression by the KMT nationalistic forces.

2. Tim includes several pro-independence organizations active in North America, Canada, Europe, and Japan. Its membership comprises Han-Taiwanese islanders who have been blacklisted or excluded by KMT policies from the late 1970s onwards.

3. Bensheng refers to the Han-Taiwanese islanders while waisheng refers to the Mainlander population that came to Taiwan following the reoccupation (between 1945 and 1949). The usage of the two terms shows the distinction between Han-Taiwanese islanders (bensheng) and those born in other Chinese provinces (waisheng, lit. ‘outer province’) and is politically loaded.

Notes

1. On the evening of 27 February 1947, six agents of the Taiwan Tobacco and Wine Monopoly Bureau assaulted a female street peddler selling contraband cigarettes and managed to beat her to death. The incident led to weeks of violence throughout the island and imitable repression by the KMT nationalistic forces. In the decades to come, public discussion of the incident was outlawed and became an ethically divisive memory on the part of the Han-Taiwanese islanders (bensheng) and those born in other Chinese provinces (waisheng, lit. ‘outer province’) and is politically loaded.

2. Tim includes several pro-independence organizations active in North America, Canada, Europe, and Japan. Its membership comprises Han-Taiwanese islanders who have been blacklisted or excluded by KMT policies from the late 1970s onwards.

3. Bensheng refers to the Han-Taiwanese islanders while waisheng refers to the Mainlander population that came to Taiwan following the reoccupation (between 1945 and 1949). The usage of the two terms shows the distinction between Han-Taiwanese islanders (bensheng) and those born in other Chinese provinces (waisheng, lit. ‘outer province’) and is politically loaded.

By Ann Heylen

Dr Evelyne Micillic is an associate lecturer at the University of Provence and an associate research fellow at IRSEE, the ‘Institute for Research on Southeast Asia’, Marseilles, France. Evelyne.Micillic@univ-mrs.fr