

Remembering and Forgetting the Childhood in Colonial Taiwan: Colonial Memory and the Representation of Childhood in Tzeng Ching-Wen's Novel, *Yamatonadeshiko* (the Japanese Women)

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Abstract

This paper considers the literary representation of Taiwanese childhood from Japanese colonial era through postwar 1950s and 1960s, by examining the case of Tzeng Ching-wen (1932 - 2017)'s contemporary novel, *Yamatonadeshiko*, (大和撫子, literary means "the Japanese Women", 2005 and 2006). Staged both in the wartime-colonial and postwar Taiwan, Theng Ching-wen's medium-length novel is a narratological attempt at constructing/re-constructing the spatio-temporal identity of Taiwanese before and after aftermath of the traumatic war. As the Taiwanese scholar Huang Yingzhe remarked, the colonial history is a radical aporia for Taiwan. On the other hand, since the memory of the Japanese occupation was portrayed negatively under the pre-KMT autocracy, Taiwanese writers like Tzeng Ching-wen, who had their childhood during Japanese colonial era, had difficulties reconciling their memory with reality. Such conflicts were illustrated in *Yamatonadeshiko*, thorough the girl who tried to be fit into and to break out of female categories constructed by two nations, both Japanese Empire and pre-KMT autocracy. In the narrative, experiencing the cultural and political transformation of girlhood and womanhood, the protagonist's struggles on constructing its girls' figure are marginalized and fragmented amidst the hardships of the postwar life. The solitary death of the heroine at the climax can be read as an allegory of the (im)possible memorization of the colonial Taiwan. Such an epistemological confusion renders the protagonist's postwar reenactments of the wartime experience futile and even superfluous, leading to her troubled subjectivities and intersubjectivities following Japan's defeat. Reading the text against the backdrop of the legal, political, and social contexts in colonial and postcolonial Taiwan, this paper discusses the significance of Tzeng' Ching-wen's literary intervention in the formation of colonial memory and Taiwanese childhood in postwar Taiwan. It also examines the transformation and the representation of the national and self-identities of colonial Taiwan and post-colonial Taiwan. In doing so, it particularly analyses the temporal structure of the narrative, by means of which the author grappled with Taiwan's postwar reconstruction.

Keyword: postcolonialism, postwar memory, colonial Taiwan, self-identity, childhood, girlhood