Images of anti-Japanese resistance and identity in Taiwanese novels

The occupation of Taiwan by the Imperial Japanese forces and the resistance to the oppressor can be seen as one initial factor for the emergence of a Taiwanese national consciousness and identity. Resistance then is not merely a more or less aggressive act aiming at liberating the country but a cultural form to gain and defend identity. This culturalism of resistance plays a crucial part in novels dealing with the respective time in Taiwanese history. However, important is not the mere fact of connecting oppression to identity, but the way in which images of resistance are constructed within the narrative structure of novels.

The essay will concentrate on Li Qiao’s (李喬, b. 1934) extensive trilogy *Wintry Nights* (寒夜三部曲, Han ye san bu qu, 1981)¹ and on *Record of Confinement* (獄中記, Yu zhong ji 1966)² by Ye Shitao (葉石濤, b. 1925). Comparing the novels elucidates differences in the construction of resistance as a historical / contemporary act and as a cultural symbol, and reveals the way in which meaning and identity are inscribed into the text. These differences can only partly be explained by the different time of writing. In fact, alternative concepts of Taiwanese identity, of the meaning of fighting, of living, and of suffering etc. are underlying the differences in description.

Aspects of Resistance

Since Edward Said’s *Imperialism and Culture*, the phenomenon of “resistance” has become a topic being widely dealt with. In fact, it seems reasonable to talk of a fashion of “resistance related studies”, especially within the field of “cultural studies”. Nonetheless the term “resistance” proves to be extremely heterogeneous, poorly defined and mostly referring to a moral basis that often lacks a proper definition as well. Therefore it seems necessary and useful to give some explanatory remarks on the use of the term within this essay.

¹ Li, Qiao, *Hanye san bu qu* (3 Bde: *Hanye 寒夜, Huangcun 荒村, Gudeng 孤燈). Taibei: Yuanjing chuban shiye youxian gongsi. 2001. (Taiwan wenxue congshu 2–4). The novel has been translated as Li, Qiao, *Wintry Night*. Transl. from the Chinese by Taotao Liu & John Balcom. New York: Columbia University Press 2001 (Modern Chinese Literature from Taiwan). Although this translation allows an easy access to the story it has been published for the western market. A lot of passages have been eliminated and the complete second volume of the trilogy has been omitted. The other two volumes have been abbreviated from approximately 1,000 pages in the Chinese text to little less than 300 in the translation.

Within the Chinese tradition, a right to resist can most obviously be connected to the thesis of tyrannicide. The crucial point lies in the deviancy to preserve the cosmologically determined role of the morally “good” and consequently legal emperor. This stance was prominently advocated by Mengzi and follows three major aspects: (1st) the historical example of the “bad” emperors Jie and Zhou, (2nd) the principle of Zhengming (zhengming rectification of names), and (3rd) the principle of benevolence including a proto-plebiscite element.

Mengzi argues that both the homicide of Jie by Tang and the warfare against Zhou led by Wu had been inevitable reactions to the lack of proper governance and to the cruelty against the people. Both aspects are turning the “emperor” (wang) into a “tyrant” (ba), whose abuse of power violates the mandate of heaven. Following the ethically influenced principle of Zhengming, the victim of the homicide consequently is not an “emperor” but — in cosmological understanding — a “normal” person, without a sacrosanct position.3 Mengzi as well as Xunzi both emphasise the importance of the people within this process: Although power is granted by heaven, it has no end in itself but has to serve the people (benevolence) and it has, vice versa, to be supported by them. Accordingly, displeasure or resistance by the people can be taken as a sign of tyranny. However, within the hierarchical Confucian concept of the state it is not the task of the people to legally withdraw power. Opinions on this aspect vary immensely, yet, the occurrence of celestial signs, like floods, earthquakes, lunar eclipses etc, were held to be the necessary manifestation of heavenly will that the mandate of heaven is taken from the tyrant.

A similar ambivalence can be seen in the concept of xiao (filial piety). The relation between parents and children, primarily fathers and sons, reflects the relationship between emperor and subject. Accordingly, piety is connected to proper behaviour by the parents, although most Chinese philosophers and legislators hesitated to put any emphasis on the aspect of mutuality. Yet, filial piety included a kind of moral attention towards the parents’ actions, urging sons to protect the parents’ moral integrity by any possible means, which in its extreme would also call for resistance against parental orders.4 Within the legal reality especially of the Qing-Dynasty, this principle of mutuality and active “protection” was almost neglected and parents and children were handled with the utmost inequality. In fact, parental rights were seen as being so important

---


that even attempts to prevent parental criminality, accidents in which parents were unwillingly hurt by their children, or mere misunderstandings which led parents to feel insulted, resulted in a capital punishment for the children. Obviously, both concepts – tyrannicide and filial resistance – comprise substantial practical difficulties resulting from the inequality in ranking and hierarchy of the persons involved.

This kind of resistance is basically legitimated by the misbehaviour of rulers or parents in cosmological sense and therefore has an ethical basis. Instead of stating a Chinese conceptual lack in comparison to Western philosophical ideas of resistance as they can be seen i.e. in John Locke’s (1632–1704) reference to natural law, one has to keep in mind that resistance against a ruler was an ethical concept in Europe as well. By the laws of a German medieval and highly influential customary code, the Sachsenspiegel (Mirror of the Saxons between 1220 and 1235), misbehaviour and default of a ruler towards his vassals is treated as a reason for the abolition of feudal duty. However, it has to be stated that European medieval law defined power as being transferred to the ruler and legitimated by the people. In this strictly legal sense the people were already thought of as the “sovereign”, different from their function in Imperial China, where the people’s benevolence was the aim of governance, but the true sovereign in a pseudo-legal sense was still heaven (天 tian).

However, the right to resist to bad rule is transculturally connected to the people as subjects, although in different manners. Within the European tradition, this aspect was strongly emphasised by John Locke and his followers and has found its way even into contemporary constitutions. Locke locates “the authority to resist with the body of the people even with any single man, if deprived of their right”.

References:

5 Ch’ü, T’ung-tsu, Law and Society in Traditional China. Westport: Hyperion Press 1961, p. 22–29, 41–64. Ch’ü emphasises that since Han-times the government tried to enforce a monoply in the use of capital punishments (p. 22–23), yet a number of cited lawsuits are exemplifying to what extent parental force and violence was protected by the government. Law manuals are giving additional examples, i.e. the Zheyu guijian 折獄龜鑒. Comp. by Zheng Ke 鄭克, in: Wen Yuange siku quanshu. Vol. 729 Zibu sanwu, fajia lei. 文淵閣四庫全書。729 子部三五, 法家類. Taipe, Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan n.y., p. 861–968. The legal ambivalence of this matter is manifest in the range of cases. Despite cases being solved conventioally (i.e. Cao Shu, p. 864, or Ren Bu, p. 963), there are lawsuits emphasising mercy as an judicial and parental ideal (Xue Kui, p. 963, plus two furhter cases added to Xue Kui), ande cases showing the possiblity of parental misuse of the law (Chen Fenggu, p. 903; Li Jic, p. 910; An Zhongrong, p. 911; Ge Yuan, p. 924 [Added to the case of Guo Yuan]).


8 It has to be stated that legal convictions are contrary to religious beliefs, connecting legitimate rule to the grace of God.

resistance, yet, it simultaneously limits it, since any action of resistance has an obligation to temporal closeness and appropriateness.\textsuperscript{10}

Throughout Chinese history, common forms of resistance have been upheavals and rebellions, mainly due to two reasons that – for the sake of analysis – can strictly be differentiated but were often mixed up in the historical course: On one hand these are local tax- and rent-rebellions.\textsuperscript{11} On the other hand rebellions were motivated by religious, mostly daoist utopian ideals cultivated in secret societies and used to legitimate violent uprisings like the White Lotus -, the Taiping -, or at last the Boxer-Rebellion.\textsuperscript{12} The rising number of rebellions and the status of the Qing-Dynasty as a foreign power was possibly one of the reasons to increase the punishments for rebellion within the Qing-Code in comparison to earlier dynasties.\textsuperscript{13}

A right to resist or even a duty to resist to foreign enemies or conquerors – as it could result from aspects of natural law\textsuperscript{14} – was not formulated within Chinese philosophy or law codes. Obviously, the right to resist occupation was never doubted, possibly due to its different ethical status, lacking the moral dilemma of a resistance to native rule. Nonetheless, the same categories of justifying resistance can be implemented in this course, since a foreign rule can easily be identified with tyranny. A shortcoming of any resistance relying on the concept of tyranny – no matter whether native or foreign rule is resisted – lies in the forms of translating it into reality. Even the historical example of Wu’s campaign against Zhou elucidates, that tyrannicide is not necessarily a heroic or noble assassination, but is aiming at soldiers, officers, policemen or other more or less clearly identified representatives of the tyrant, a practice that is morally much more ambivalent.

\textsuperscript{10} Hopkins, Stuart, Locke’s Theory of Resistance, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{14} It could be argued though that natural law is merely a different form of ethically based norms, since it sets positive law into opposition to an order given by nature. This order either refers to the essence of human beings, a divine or cosmological creation, or to human rationality. The exact content and aim of this order is therefore determined by the assumed term of nature. See Rehflus, Wulff D. (ed.), Handzüchterbuch Philosophie. Görlitzing: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht 2003, p. 483–485, Lexikon des Mittelalters, vol. 6, p. 1050–1054 und Mickel, Wolfgang W., Handlexikon zur Politikwissenschaft. München: Ehrenwirth 1996. (Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 237), p. 559–562.
Both the ethical justification of resistance limited to the element of tyranny and the moral dilemma resulting from this are applicable to the novels at hand. While the Japanese occupation of the Chinese mainland could easily be labelled as illegitimate and tyrannical – acknowledgeable by various forms of oppression –, the judgement according to the situation in Taiwan after the treaty of Shimonoseki is more difficult. In terms of international law the legitimacy of the Japanese propriety and government of the island is hardly doubtful. The “Republic of Taiwan” – announced shortly before the arrival of the Japanese Imperial forces – was never recognized by the international community and was meant to be reintegrated into the Qing-Empire as soon as possible. Yet, in terms of oppression of the Taiwanese people and the deprivation of indigenous rights and elementary forms of self-determination it seems adequate to speak of tyranny and to justify resistance to the Japanese occupation.

As mentioned above, the topic of resistance as a reaction to colonial oppression has found its way into a multitude of studies, especially in the aftermath of Edward Said. One important problem in this discourse is the way resistance can develop. Despite Said’s extensive analysis of resistance in the 3rd chapter of *Culture and Imperialism* it remains problematic to epistemologically ground resistance within a nearly hermetic system of representations, as he himself formulated it in his concept of orientalism. In fact, Said simply states a remaining authentic way of developing cultural meaning which has not been (and possibly cannot be) eliminated by the coloniser.

A similar problem of power and control vs. resistance was formulated by Michel Foucault (1926–1984): How can an alternative or “deviant” position be achieved within a system of dominant cultural representation? One possible answer is to reject the dialectical stance, which defines resistance in the tradition of Louis Althusser (1918–1990) or Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) in a marxist way as developing from an antagonistic angle and insofar from outside of the power it opposes. Instead, resistance was defined as developing from within, being an inherent phenomenon of power itself. This idea is i.e. obviously the basis of the conception of “lines of flight” as a metaphor for an everyday resistance, developed by Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Félix Guattari (1930–2992). The fact that resistance within a hegemonic dominant cultural representation is obviously possible was elucidated in studies on reception of American TV-series. Different groups developed quite different readings of the programmes’ meanings. Instead

of assuming an ideologically and culturally almost passive audience, as Said did in his orientalism-
thesis, the audience was thought of as being an “active audience” and the hegemonic production
of meaning was replaced by an aspect of polysemy.\(^{18}\)

However, these ideas of discursive forms of resistance should at least analytically be
differentiated from more direct, military or guerrilla forms of violent resistance, even though in
reality both forms often are inseparable. Consequently, historical novels on resistance may obtain
a range of possible styles of description: The mere description of forms of resistance within the
novel – may they be military or civil – unfolding a strong impact on the plot development, the re-
construction of assumed historical forms of discursive resistance, and of course the possibility of
the novel itself aiming to be a form of contemporary resistance, a style which strongly focuses on
aspects of reception and effects on audiences.

Resistance as an opposition to political, military, or cultural hegemony is connected to
situations of oppression and marginalisation and therefore consequently effects subjectivation
and identity.\(^{19}\) This is as well true for the novels at hand and the constructed images of the
Taiwanese society, especially its national identity.

One has to keep in mind that historicity is a decisive aspect in novels dealing with national
identity, especially if there is a gap between the time of writing and the time described. Images of
resistance and developing concepts of identities do not only construe a historical portrait but
unfold their meaning within a respective contemporary discourse.

**Li Qiao’s *Wintry Nights***

The first volume of *Wintry Nights* 寒夜 by the same title covers the years 1889 to 1896. It
describes the arrival of the settler family of Peng Aiqiang at Fanzai Wood, a remote area to be
newly cultivated and defended against tribal attacks.\(^{20}\) The family fights for the land, the harvest
and a new home. In the end, the settlers witness the arrival of the Japanese. A major part of the
book centres on the evolving love between Dengmei, the Peng’s foster daughter, and the guard
Liu Ahan. Starting from the second volume the scene changes settings, focusing on the newly

---


\(^{19}\) According to the topic of identity, it may here be enough to remind of the general consequences of modernity and post-
modernity, especially of the loss of epistemological certainty and the fragmentarisation of the world, which both are
underlying the quest for identity under the pressure of resistance as well.

\(^{20}\) On the situation of earlier settler families and the diverse difficulties they had to cope with, see Meskill, Johanna, *A Chinese
Pioneer Family. The Lin’s of Wu-feng, Taiwan, 1729–1895*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1979 and especially for the
legal condition of tenants Ch’en, Ch’iu-k’un, „From Aborigines to Landed Proprietors: Taiwan Aboriginal Rights, 1690–
1850“, in: Herschetter, Gail, Honig, Emily, Lipman, Jonathan N. and Stross, Randall (eds.), *Remapping China. Fissures in
married couple and on the Liu family. Deserted Village 荒村 shows the Lius, namely Liu Ahan and his son Mingding, in their resistance to the occupying Japanese forces between the 4th year Taishō 大正 (1915) and the 3rd year Shōwa 昭和 (1928). It ends with the death of Ahan inflicted by a poisonous injection given to him when formally released from Japanese interrogation and torture. The last part, The Lone Lamp 孤燈, covering the span of time between 1943 (Shōwa 18) and 1945, describes the fate of Liu Ahans youngest son Mingji, who serves involuntarily in the Japanese army during World War II. A second strain shows the fate of his brothers and his mother Dengmei, who are still living in Fanzai Wood dealing with the Japanese rule and shortages in supply.

Li Qiao starts his trilogy (in fact every part of it) with a short creation myth describing the formation of the island Taiwan throughout the geological eras from the very beginning to the Neozoic age. It emphasises the importance of the Gaoshan salmon (鱒, zun), representing the love for the home, the eternal cycle of departure, “exile”, and return, and the estrangement and sorrows resulting from it. All aspects incorporated in the image of the salmon serve as a role model for the Taiwanese identity.

It could be argued that resistance in Li Qiao’s novel starts with Peng Aqiang’s fight for tenant rights against his landlord and Liu Ahan’s battles against the native tribes that are threatening the settlers at Fanzai Wood. In this sense any violent fight against hindrances towards a happy life could be labelled as a kind of resistance.21

Resistance in a more direct understanding evolves at the end of the 1st part, Hanye, with the arrival of the Japanese Imperial Forces in the aftermath of the treaty of Shimonoseki. Up to then identity is completely understood as Hakka-, settler- or frontier identity. It is limited by local perceptions of life and its meaning, and devoid of dynastic or Chinese, not to speak of Taiwanese, aspects. The arrival of the Japanese is described as a penetration of modernity into an agrarian pre-modern world. While bad omens in a very traditional manner are at first associated with the risk of floods, plague, or the native tribes going to war, they are then reinterpreted as a sign of China’s defeat in the Sino-Japanese war and the beginning occupation of Taiwan.22 In the very moment when the Chinese officials and troops fled for the mainland, the resistance of the remaining people was suddenly defined as Taiwanese resistance. Liu Ahan, who had fought against landlords and natives before, now battles the Japanese together with the natives. The

21 In fact, the various battles fought by the native tribes, defending their land against the cultivation processes brought forth by the Chinese migrants, are qualifying much more to be defined as resistance. Yet, the aspect of Chinese colonisation of Taiwan is no topic of the novel.
22 Li, Qiao, Hanye, p. 311–312, Wintry Night, p. 119–120.
dichotomy of colonisers (Chinese settlers) vs. colonised (natives) abruptly changes into a unity of subjects, jointly colonised by the Japanese. The self-awareness of being “Taiwanese” is obviously initiated by the Japanese oppression and follows the simple conviction of the unifying effect of an outer and common enemy. The representation of the mere appearance of an outer enemy as the catalyst for an evolving national consciousness is not striking as such. The suddenness of the development on the other hand is. It can be interpreted as an attempt to write a myth of foundation of Taiwanese nationality into the text, which has to be understood within the context of the evolving Taiwanese opposition movement in the 80s. Taiwaneseness soon becomes an important issue within the story.

During the early period, resistance is almost completely described as military action, partly guerrilla and partisan activities. All in all (and this follows historical reality of course) these attempts have no success whatsoever. Even more, the evolving Taiwanese consciousness is shattered by a traumatic beginning: Not only are the defenders defeated rapidly, but the fight is not even glorious and devoid of all heroism. The organisation of lines of defence is chaotic, and most of the time the Taiwanese soldiers are on the run, hiding and trying to escape death, deprived of any aspect of dignity.

Within the 2nd volume, the mode of description shifts, according to the changing character of the Japanese occupation, from military and mostly rural actions to urban activities of organised underground groups. Liu Ahan and especially his son Mingding are engaged in the Wenhua xiehui (文化協會, Cultural Association) and the Minzhongdang (民眾黨, Party of People’s Masses). Yet, this development is by no means homogenous, and therefore cannot solely be explained by political or power-indicated circumstances or by different levels of locality or regionality. Instead, a generational gap in the attitudes towards development can be stated.

The centre and legitimation of resistance as understood by Liu Ahan, who had experienced the period of land cultivation and the battles against the native tribes, remains a mythical connection of the terms land, mother, tradition and a kind of “taiwanised” Hakka-consciousness. In the beginning his way of resistance focuses on violent actions; he joins the Taiwanese defence forces and is afterwards engaged in guerrilla activities, like ambushing Japanese police forces, arson etc. Yet, his aims are strictly directed at local achievements, i.e. farmers’ rights or local sovereignty. Considering himself as being too old to continue violent fighting by the age of over 30, he starts to organise farmer demonstrations and other civilian forms of resistance, but his local focus and his acceptance and support of for violent forms of resistance remains. Participating in a joint assembly of the Cultural Association and the Party of People’s Masses demanding the
liberation of Taiwan and the freedom of assembly and resistance, he complains about Taiwan: “People of Taiwan, oh, people of Taiwan! You are a sinful child in the Eastern Sea! You have lost your mother! You are the lonely child of Asia! You have lost your father!” The politicisation and ideologisation of the increasingly urban-based struggle coming along with a higher degree of organisation remains alien to him and consequently results in an estrangement from his original identity. Still, his aim is to preserve a sovereign settler identity, which is “modernised” only by aspects of widening the scope from solely Hakka to Taiwanese consciousness. Yet, this seems to be merely a shift in labelling while lacking a corresponding shift in consciousness. An overall political concept of regaining Taiwanese sovereignty is an idea he supports and strongly desires on the surface only. In fact, for him it is a synonym for the retreat of the Japanese, but not an issue in its own to create or develop an independent rule. For him nationality is not so much a political concern as it is a label adopted to guarantee a traditional way of agrarian settler lifestyle, locally embedded and devoid of centralisation of power and modern alienation.

His son Mingding admires his father’s activities and wants to follow his example from early on, even if this means to ignore the warnings of his mother Dengmei. In the end he becomes one of the leading cadres in the underground organisation and develops an understanding of resistance that is by far more political, corporate, and sensible to structural necessities. Already his very first action does not follow any heroic stance but the ambivalent position of a spy, serving undercover in a Japanese police station in order to collect information for the resistance movement. After having some success within the organisation, he becomes a leader in demonstrations and a primary target of Japanese security agencies. Yet, despite his connection to the various political organisations like the Wenhua xiehui or Nongmin zhub (農民組合, Farmer’s Association) and their attempt to internationalise policies and personnel alike, he keeps a keen eye on local aspects and the needs of locally oriented farmers. He rejects attempts to shift the resistance into a socialist revolution or a general upheaval of the population. Different from his father he much more intellectual and gains some knowledge of ideological tendencies outside of Taiwan, but never commits himself totally to foreign influences and especially to none connected with the mainland. Rather he takes up some opinions advocated by underground cadres returning from Japan. The local attitude is not dismissed and remains the very basis of Mingdings struggle for national liberation and his worldview.

23 Li, Qiao, Huangcun, p. 488.
24 Li, Qiao, Huangcun, p. 227.
However, besides these two characters obviously engaged in resistance activities, Li Qiao’s novel reveals another underlying reading of an alternative meaning of resistance. A closer look at the other characters, namely Dengmei and Mingji, elucidates that their struggle for life can be understood as a form of resistance as well. Resistance adopts a very broad meaning here as a general attitude necessary for survival in the world. This understanding is by no means restricted to military occupation or battles against natives, but is connected to life itself. Li Qiao advocates an understanding of life characterised by suffering and sorrow (tongku 痛苦) and consequently by an unavoidable and eternal need for struggle in order to make a living. This concept of life is strongly attached to Buddhism, especially for the character Dengmei, while for others it is rather anthropologically determined and an aspect of fate and human destiny. Resistance as such becomes the answer to suffering and inevitably permanent. On has to keep in mind though that this understanding of resistance remains vague by its overall generality, and is more of a mirror image of a concept of the world that is near to the baroque vale of tears. In this sense, any effort to make a living and to survive automatically turns into an act of resistance. Although this might be part of Li Qiao’s description of Taiwanese life in Wintry Night, it has to be differentiatied from the main understanding of resistance within this paper. Nonetheless resistance against landlords, natives, or Japanese is closely linked with a pessimistic attitude towards life that turns “living” and “resisting” into almost identical terms and calls for everyday actions in the sense of the “lines of flight”.

Li Qiao constructs the encounter with the Japanese occupation on a quite local level. Most of the information on the overall situation in Taiwan, China or Japan is given by oral reports from characters travelling abroad or as news flashes. Main parts of the description are dealing with the village Fanzai Wood in Miaoli, even the resistance activities are mostly limited to Miaoli province and do not exceed distances further away than Taizhong. Only the third volume locates one string of the plot on the Philippines, focussing on Mingji serving involuntarily in the Japanese army. However, the main notion of his time on the Philippines is the topic of the “exile”, longing to escape death and to return home. Here the text strongly refers to the salmon motif introduced in the trilogy’s preface.

As an result of this encounter the image of the Japanese is predominantly pejorative. The majority of Japanese described in the novel are insulting Taiwanese in one or the other way and are seen as enemies. This is true for the soldiers occupying the island and obvious for the

members of the police forces. The scenes of torture contribute to an image of tyranny brought about by the Japanese government. Nonetheless, by taking a closer look, the image becomes more ambivalent. Liu Ahan gets to know some Japanese police officers for a longer time and an anachronistic relationship develops between them, expressing intimate knowledge of each other and – to some extend – even respect for the other. Yet, the inequality between them is suppressed only on the surface while, in fact, the relationship keeps being primarily determined by their different roles. A similar situation can be noticed in the 3rd volume when Mingji, serving in the Japanese Army on the Philippines, witnesses the defeat of the Imperial Army. Before the defeat the Taiwanese had at best been 2nd grade soldiers. The Japanese, officers as well as lower ranks, looked down upon them, calling them “imo” or “slaves of the qing”. However, when the order of the army collapsed and Japanese and Taiwanese refugees were likewise marauding and fighting for food and life, the hierarchy between both groups did not sustain any longer. Mingji finds himself on the run together with the Japanese soldier Nozawa. A strange comradeship evolves from the situation in which both men are dependent on each other in their attempts to hide and find food. Yet, their relation is enforced by the necessities of the situation and still no real friendship evolves. In the end and despite some further positive personal encounters, the Japanese are described as alien to the Taiwanese soul, incompatible by their status as colonisers, and by their role of agents of a tyrannical system, and by their pride and arrogance.

Li Qiao unfolds a kaleidoscope of possible reactions to the Japanese occupation. Within the fast group of characters Li emphasises anti-Japanese resentment. Most characters do not cooperate voluntarily with the Japanese. The message inherited in this character structure is that “real” Taiwanese people did not collaborate. However, Li Qiao does not construct an image of a purely resistance-oriented population. He mentions Taiwanese serving within the police forces as well as traitors and active collaborators, who took a Japanese name. When Mingqing, Ahans oldest son, heard of the Japanese surrender, he comes across a Xie Tianxing, who by most people was only known as Umemoto, serving as the head of the Great Lake Committee for Japanisation and who now was dressed in traditional Chinese style completely unfamiliar to Mingqing and his friends. Collaborators as Umemoto are constructed as the stigmatised morally “other”, having

26 Sweet potato, a pejorative term used by the Japanese, which then was carried on and reinterpreted by the Taiwanese to be used positively as self description. The image of the sweet potato plays a crucial role in Li Qiao’s construction of a Taiwanese identity. Li, Qiao, Wintry Nights, p. 215-216, Gudeng, p. 175. The text gives the characters 伊漠, which are a Chinese phonetic translation of the Japanese imo (芋). The sweet potato was used as a symbol for Taiwan before. See Mengin, Françoise, “State and Identity”, p. 118-119, in Tsang, Steve, Tien, Hung-mao (eds.), Democratization in Taiwan. Implications for China. Hongkong: Hongkong University Press 1999, p. 116-129. Li Qiao uses the sweet potato in this way in the prescript to the novel himself.
lost their right to be part of the new Taiwanese society. Upon seeing him, Mingqing immediately felt sick to his stomach and ignores Umemoto completely.

However, the protagonists’ families Peng and Liu are not voluntarily involved with the Japanese. The family of Liu Ahan for example adopts various ways of dealing with the Japanese. While Ahan himself and his son Mingding are actively involved in the resistance movement, other sons are somewhat indifferent. The wife Dengmei even openly condemns Ahan’s actions since they are threatening her vision of a family. She blames Ahan for Mingdings participation in the movement and declares all resulting sorrows to be solely Ahan’s fault. Accordingly, the family faces some severe crises. Familial values – harmony, wealth, a peaceful life – are contrasted by national or ethical values of freedom. On this level, the need to resist appears to be a temporary necessity inflicted by the Japanese undermining an original identity based on a mythical relation to soil and family. On a national level however, this original identity serves as a basis for Taiwaneseness. Its effect is an urgent need of resistance in order to preserve this originality. Both aspects are signs of being “truly” Taiwanese. Likewise, being Taiwanese is not only linked but essentialised with resistance. They are constructed as the inseparable Janus-faced sides of one identity.

**Ye Shitao’s Record of Confinement**

The importance of comparing constructed images in historical novels with contemporary political or social needs lies in the vagueness of the meaning of history. Historicity can easily be (mis-)used and adopted for several aims.

How differently anti-Japanese resistance can be described in other contemporary circumstances can be seen i.e. in Ye Shitao’s *Record of Confinement*, telling the story of the Taiwanese Li Chun. The protagonist was born into a farmer’s family and lost his father in an encounter with Japanese soldiers. After being adopted by the local ward headman Lin Bin he received a good education and graduated from the medical department of Tokyo Imperial University. After returning to Taiwan he hoped to marry his stepsister, Yin’e, but has to learn that she was forced into a marriage with the son of a Japanese prefect. Li Chun then leaves Taiwan and enters the resistance movement on the mainland. When back again to collect intelligence he is arrested by the Japanese police and only released after the defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific War. The text is structured into three interrogation sessions, interrupted by flashbacks to his father and his love as well as descriptions of his imprisonment and release.

First of all, *Record of Confinement* differs strongly from *Wintry Night* in the stratum of society described. Although Li Chun originally is a tenant’s son, lacking all opportunities for a better life, he is adopted by a member of the local gentry and given a good education. He even benefits from the Japanese education programme, which allows him a university education in medicine in Tokyo. When coming back to Taiwan, Li Chun has become one of the island’s leading intellectuals. His foster father Lin Bin is in business with the Japanese and is forced to marry his daughter Yin’e off to the oldest son of Prefect Nishikawa. Li Chun’s opponent in the interrogation chamber is a former student colleague of him, the Japanese baron Kikuchi. Ye Shitao sets his story into a world of highly educated people at the top of society thereby giving the whole aspect of resistance an impact of mental work and political planning rather than of violent bodily actions. Consequently Li Chun’s task within the resistance movement is collecting intelligence and undercover work.

Despite the differences in national and political convictions, Ye ascribes a unifying effect to the fact of belonging to same top level stratum of society. The cooperation of Lin Bin with the Japanese is not described as being morally indecent, nor is Li Chun’s benefiting from the Japanese educational system. Furthermore, this allows for an extremely dichotomised description of the Japanese characters. Kikuchi, being part of the leading stratum himself, treats his prisoner Li Chun as an enemy of the Japanese empire but as human being having some dignity. The time they spent together at Tokyo Imperial University is certainly one of the reasons for this. Although Kikuchi purposely uses this relationship as an interrogation technique, there is still an underlying impact of equality due to their common alma mater and their intellectuality. The shift in the description of Kikuchi during the 3rd interrogation is caused by the pressure of the near defeat and his personal despair. Only then he turns into “an intellectual who had lost his spirit of inquiry; in his [that is: Li Chun’s, C.S.] eyes, Kikuchi was no more than an ignorant banner waving fanatic”28. Yet, in the end Kikuchi commits suicide thereby taking responsibility for his actions, although even Li Chun denies that Kikuchi’s behaviour would justify his death. The honest Japanese gentry-member is a victim of the system as well.

Within this stratum of society a shared attitude towards life seems to overrule or at least soften national enmity. Ye Shitao thereby constructs a nobility of mind which operates as a common ground enabling the members to communicate and behave across national enmity. Of course, this nobility refers to the traditional Chinese belief of an idealised gentry, defined by success in

the imperial examinations and by a self-determination as the countries intellectual and political leaders.

This effects the description of the other Japanese as well. Although the warden Shimaki is described in quite a similar way as most of the Japanese in *Wintry Night* – he enjoys maltreating his prisoners and in the moment of defeat seeks forgiveness from Li Chun resembling Nozawa in *Gu deng* – the main notion is his inferiority to Li Chun in terms of education. In fact, being part of the nobility of mind, which proves to be the major discrimination of society, may momentarily be overruled by the political agenda. Nonetheless, it remains valid and the major discriminative category, after political convictions have changed.29

This vision of an anthropological Chineseness determining mentality and behaviour even in extreme situations of war and occupation is set forth in the formulation of identity patterns. Ye Shitao describes a harmonious world of Chinese civilisation that existed prior to the occupation and has been destroyed only by the Japanese. There are no tensions between tenants and landlords as described in *Wintry Night* and as historically provable as one of the major issues in Taiwanese governance. The landlord Lin Bin behaves on the ideal ground of Confucianism, urging him not only to take the role of a father literally by adopting Li Chun, but to enact benevolence towards his tenants. It is an innocent world that the Japanese occupy, defined by an idealised traditional Confucian Chineseness with its positive stance towards hierarchy and authority enabling social harmony. Accordingly, Lin Bin is constructed as a representative of Chinese rule, legitimised by obeying the mandate of heaven.

Consequently, Li Chun hardly feels as a Taiwanese; he is Chinese. This orientation towards Chineseness instead of Taiwanese becomes obvious when looking at Li Chun’s career in the resistance movement. First of all he joins the movement on the mainland and is trained in Chongqing making connections to the GMD secret services most likely. As such the text is in favour of GMD rule, which is identified as Chinese in character and outlook.

The opposition expressed in the interrogations with Crown counsel Kikuchi is Japanese vs. Chinese. An independent vision of Taiwanese never comes to Li Chun’s mind. The image of Chineseness construed here by Ye comprises of two major elements: a gentry position towards the country and the government and not to the local people as in

---

Wintry Night, and an orientation towards the familial values as filial piety and marriage.\(^{30}\) In the course of the occupation and the Pacific War this turns into a striking social–familial dichotomy. It is the familial level that causes Li Chun to join resistance: 1st the accidental death of his real father inflicted by Japanese soldiers acting arrogant and tyrannical, 2nd the forced marriage of his love and stepsister Yin’e to the son of a Japanese prefect that her father could not reject. “It was inevitable he would lose everything […]. At that moment, everything became clear and Li Chun came to the decision to leave in order to take part in the resistance movement.”\(^{31}\) The important aspect is surprisingly not so much the awareness of colonial or national deprivation, but of personal marginalisation. The marriage arrangement as such is rather traditional than colonial in character. Yet, Li Chun as a member of the elite feels personally insulted by the actions of the Japanese. Although he knows about the national effects of the occupation, the collaboration, the lack of aggression, and the deprivation of national dignity, it is only the loss of Yin’e which results in recognizing that “even as member of the Taiwanese elite, his life had lost its meaning.”\(^{32}\) It is the experience of instability in planning one’s own life according to traditional values that is inappropriate for a member of the gentry and that leads Li Chun into active resistance. Neglecting and marginalising Chinese culture is the crime of the Japanese that qualifies them to be illegal tyrants that have to be resisted to. Different from the Manchus, ruling before, they have not adopted Chinese culture during their occupation of the island.

Historical novels and contemporary backgrounds

Resistance as a basis of identity is in itself a negative definition. It unifies people in suffering, sorrows, and in being against something, while it tells nothing about positive outlooks or measures for actively creating the future. Both authors are responding differently to this problem. Li Qiao constructs an eternal and essential understanding of resistance, being the core of Taiwanese identity. Resistance to the Japanese was the initial cause for “Taiwanising” Hakka-identity, which grew into a pride based on sufferings inflicted by the tyrannical Japanese oppression and into Taiwaneseness for the younger generation. In a mythical sense it is the common experience of all Taiwanese, no matter when they lived. Nonetheless, the new Taiwaneseness is a shattered identity, oppressed and unable to freely unfold. The acts of


\(^{31}\) Ye, Shitao, Yu zhong ji, p. 37–38, Record of Confinement, p. 105.

\(^{32}\) Ye, Shitao, Yu zhong ji, p. 37, Record of Confinement, p. 105.
resistance are rather aiming at “regaining” a reconstructed sovereign way of life, than at a political body or a state.

The trilogy was published in 1981 but written during several years before. It can easy be seen, that the attempt to legitimise this construction of a Taiwanese identity by writing the main aspects of suffering and resisting back into history and mythology and thereby essentialising them, has to be interpreted in connection with the upcoming democratisation movement and the Dangwai opposition in the years from mainly 1977 on. The aspects of locality and the plea for a unique Taiwanese identity undermines the GMD rule, which then has to be seen as alien as well. It is striking that the resistance as described by Li has almost no links to mainland organisations, and the few described are rather connected to the CP than to the GMD at Chongqing. History is adopted as a means to legitimise a critical stance inscribed into the novel, advocating freedom not only from foreign but also centralised power, both neglecting the wishes and needs of the “true” Taiwanese people, whose eternal fate is to suffer and to resist.

The self-construction as categorical victims corresponds to an understanding of the Taiwanese as marginalized people, as it is emphasised in the novel by the epithet of the “orphan of Asia”. In this sense it is primarily oriented towards local needs, a locality that is described as almost independent from and unconnected to everything outside of Taiwan.

This surely meets a general notion in Taiwanese mentality, especially during the late seventies prior to the novel’s publication, when the international standing of Taiwan rapidly collapsed. The attempt to base identity on locality and a constructed mythology – which is legitimation in itself – is not surprising; nor that the legitimation of resistance is linked to ethical and essentialist aspects rather than to political ones. Even the notion of a Taiwanese nationality is not built on a political utopia or a specific form of a political body enforcing the will of the state and the people. Instead, Li Qiao inscribes an intensive dichotomy of ruling power vs. people wishing to live independently into the text.

In 1966, Ye Shitao describes resistance and identity completely different. Subscribing to a traditional ideal of gentry and intellectuality, he strongly advocates a Chinese identity instead of a specific Taiwaneseness. Although there is a short reference to suffering being an inevitable part of human life, this knowledge only derived from Kikuchi’s reading a Japanese poem. It is definitely not linked to Taiwanese destiny in particular, but to the condition of occupation only; consequently it can be overcome. Ye Shitao’s inclination to GMD-oriented resistance follows this conviction. Participating in resistance may be initiated by personal fate, but as an organised campaign is not legitimised by moral aspects only. The connection to the GMD and the focus on
the description of the years of the Pacific War reduces resistance from an overall Taiwanese struggle for sovereignty to an ongoing condition of defence. Resistance on Taiwan and elsewhere is part of the Chinese mainland’s battle against Japan and therefore strongly political.

The focus on the GMD and Chineseness could be explained as a necessity that Ye Shitao had to obey due to the Martial Law and anti-communist censorship. Yet, during the mid 60s the Republic of Taiwan saw a solemn shift in leadership towards younger and Taiwan-originated politicians and government employees as a first opportunity to counterbalance mainland hegemony, even if not up to the very top levels of state and party committees. In line with increasing hopes to reconquer the mainland and reinstall a unified Chinese nation, this could as well have influenced a more Chinese and state-oriented notion of resistance and identity.

The crucial time of gaining an idea of selfhood by suffering during the occupation has become a dominant issue in the Taiwanese intellectual discourse, visible i.e. in several projects aiming at republishing writings from the colonial period. \(^{33}\) It is a truism that the reconstruction of historical mentality by an author is strongly influenced by contemporary aspects important at the time of composing the novel, as well as the reception process is dependent on the time of reading. The differences in the construction of the phenomenon of resistance are therefore not surprising. Yet, it proves that resistance itself is a major category in shaping the self-consciousness and identity of the Taiwanese people.