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This impressive anthology is about indigeneity and postcolonial reckonings; it is about the pain and intragenerational trauma due to the violence of imperialism. This book shows the kind of genocidal retribution an imperial power can wage against an Indigenous people who dared stand up against colonial suppression and the lasting reverberations that this violence can bring. The sixteen contributors to this volume do not romanticize Mona Rudao who led the Musha insurrection or the 300 Tdgaya Seediq people who joined him in fighting against their Japanese colonizers in 1930. [1] This uprising resulted in the massacre of 134 Japanese people, including women and children. The Japanese government’s response was brutal and swift, mobilizing over 1,300 troops and using modern artillery to find the insurgents. They recruited neighboring Indigenous villages to track down those involved, resulting in the capture and beheadings of many who participated in the uprising. To put into context the Japanese response to the uprising, consider the following: the population of these six villages, where the 300 individuals came from, initially stood at 1,200. After the Japanese hunted down the participants, the population of the six villages was halved to 644, with half of the deceased having committed suicide (p. 2).

Six months later, the survivors held in the detention centers were further culled by another Indigenous group—an attack believed to have been spurred on and incentivized by Japanese authorities and referred to as the Second Musha Incident. The remaining 293 survivors of the 1,200 population were then forcibly removed to Kawanakajima (川中島 Chuanzhongdao).

I start this review with a condensed explanation of what transpired on October 27, 1930, and in the months afterward in order to provide the reader with an inkling of the context, to show that the Musha Incident not only was an act of Indigenous resistance against Japanese oppressors but was also about how the Japanese authorities responded to this act of defiance with unfettered vengeance. Their use of other Indigenous groups to bring the rebels to the brink of extinction was not an exceptional tactic; it echoed earlier pro-
tocol that the Japanese colonial authorities had relied on in their attempt to “pacify” the Indigenous areas of Taiwan.

The utility of this book is manifold. First, for scholars of East Asia, this book will be indispensable in gaining an understanding of the complicated historical and political relationships between the peoples of Japan, Taiwan, and China from the early twentieth century until the present. Second, the anthology's publication makes it impossible for scholars of this vital region to ignore writing and teaching about Taiwan’s Indigenous peoples when discussing Taiwan or East Asia. What was once a niche field, English-language scholarship on the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan has flourished over the last thirty years in North America. There is an energy and boom in Taiwan studies of late, in both the number of publications and the diversity of topics being explored. This book represents the fruits of the labor and commitment of a generation of scholars and demonstrates a growing recognition that scholars of empire can no longer ignore Indigenous perspectives. Lastly, scholars of global empire and postcolonialism will find much in this book that will serve as inspiration for how to think about decolonization and decolonizing methodologies.

As Jinah Kim states in the first line of *Postcolonial Grief: The Afterlives of the Pacific Wars in the Americas*, her book “explores moments when the present is so bloated with dead bodies demanding mourning that their claims threaten to overtake life.”[2] Just as Kim sees the violence of US-Japanese complicity (in the Pacific region) emerging as “a bloated, palimpsestic haunting,” Michael Berry’s edited volume contains these hauntings of the dead that threaten to overtake life as well.[3] Kim’s vivid description helps us to imagine the task at hand for Berry, whose previous work, *A History of Pain: Trauma in Modern Chinese Literature and Film* (2011), perhaps explains the continued through line in this reader tying pain, trauma, and collective grief to the Musha Incident. Berry emphasizes this pain by quoting Dakis Pawan, an author who interviewed survivors from the uprising and who worked as a Seediq translator for Wei Te-sheng’s epic film, *Seediq Bale* (2011), about the Musa uprising: “It really doesn’t matter what methods you use to present the history of the Musa Incident that our ancestors experienced—it doesn’t matter if it is an essay, a graphic novel, a speech, a book or a critical study—as far as we are concerned, our wounds have already formed a thick scab; and yet each time someone scratches at the wound, it is certain that we will sometimes still feel the pain. As far as I am concerned, I can take the pain, but what I really hope—even though I do sometimes try to resist the pain—we must let people know about the history that transpired there” (epigraph, emphasis added).

Pawan’s words seem to indicate that there is no “postcolonial era” in Taiwan: people are still living with and coming to terms with the colonial past. This is in part a result of the shift to the new political government under the Kuomintang (KMT) after the war ended, which resulted in the silencing and repression of what transpired during the colonial period. In the 1980s, as martial law was lifted, events like the Musha Incident and White Terror began to be discussed. In many ways, the structure of the book illustrates Berry’s view that the Musha Incident as a historical event is less important than tracing how the reverberations of violence and trauma have resulted in numerous cultural reiterations—literary, visual, auditory—and showing that these iterations are a suitable window into Taiwan’s current and future colonial reckonings. The different contributors in this volume are divided about the future of the Indigenous Taiwanese in terms of whether they can gain control of their own narratives or if their narratives will continue to be appropriated by parties trying to use them for their own political aims for an independent Taiwan or one aligned with the Kuomintang.
It is striking that one violent event can open up such divergent modes of inquiry from scholars across various disciplines. The genesis of the book was an international conference devoted to the Musha Incident held in 2017 during which scholars from all over the world examined the incident from “different perspectives and disciplines, including anthropology, linguistics, translation studies, film studies, cultural studies, and history” (p. 6). The fourteen chapters are organized into four main parts, largely following disciplinary approaches: historical memories (part 1), literary memories (part 2), and visual and digital memories (part 3). Part 4, on cultural dialogue, features four conversations with leading Taiwanese figures who have represented the Musha Incident in film, literature, music, and television.

In part 1, the contributors lay out the historical circumstances prior to the 1930 rebellion that help contextualize the Japanese administration in the Indigenous territories, which held tenuous control over the populations. Both Paul Barclay’s and Kae Kitamura’s chapters stand out for their in-depth historical analyses, stoking new lines of historical inquiry. Although those in the metropole saw Musha as a “model Aborigine settlement” and living proof that “savages” could be civilized by the Japanese, Barclay shows that by 1930 Musha was “a foreigner-dominated enclave that isolated Japanese residents and tourists from a local population whose quiescence and loyalty was questionable at best” (p. 52). Thus, looking from “the advantage of 1895 going forward (instead of 1930 looking backward)” the “construction of a Japanese-inhabited tourist, administrative, and commercial center in the heart of Tdgaya country, which had only recently been shelled and embargoed into grudging submission, can be viewed as a provocation, if not a dare” (p. 53). By historicizing the complicated Tdgaya-Japanese relations (which reveal that the Japanese did not always have the upper hand) and illustrating how and why Musha became a purported Japanese stronghold prior to the uprising in 1930, Barclay reveals the on-the-ground dynamics that sowed seeds of discontent as well as the foolhardy policies of the Japanese who built their Japanese depot “among people who had been bombed, barricaded, and terrorized into submission” (p. 71).

Kitamura provides an alternative entry point into the incident by asking a different set of questions. She asks why certain Indigenous groups did not join the Tdgaya Seediq people in their rebellion against the Japanese. She argues that the reasons for certain groups’ disinclination to participate lay with the harsh polices that the Japanese previously enacted against their tribal groups, resulting in the deaths of the majority of men in certain villages, like the Paalan. She reveals the collateral damage of Japanese policies in the areas that pitted one village against another in the name of securing their own lives. Kitamura writes, “it is difficult to understand the horrific experience of being divided into categories like ‘enemy’ and ‘ally’ and then, based on which group you fell into, being recruited and forced to kill friends, acquaintances, relatives, and even members of your own family” (p. 89). She takes the discussion of “Indigenous peoples who have continually struggled to survive within the framework of a state or among states” into the postwar period and KMT rule not to see “which sovereign, the Taiwan sōtokufu or the KMT, was ‘less terrible’” for the Indigenous people but rather to show the continuity of Indigenous elites being forced to choose sides (p. 93). In the case of the KMT during the White Terror, many Indigenous elites (who were put into the category of collaborating with the Japanese) were executed.

In the second and most analytically divergent part of the book, the four contributors provide varying analytic lenses and interpretations to de-center, probe, and build on previous literary interpretations of the Musha Incident. Leo Ching’s “Musha Incident, Incidentally” and Ping-hui Liao’s “Satō Haruo on the Musha Incident” adopt contrasting but compatible modes of analysis, Ching
looking toward the future, Liao, to the past, but bound by their common interest in the hauntings of the dead. Engaging with Tsushima Yūko’s novel *Exceedingly Barbaric* (2008), Ching argues that the novel “imagines a futurity beyond the present struggle over recognition and redemption” (p. 123). He shows that Tsushima accomplishes this through her narrative style: “alternating between Miicha’s letters to Akihiko, her husband, her diaries, and Lily’s travelogue, it traverses two temporalities—the early 1930s and 2005—in order to narrate Miicha’s life in the colony, with Lily, often supplementing her aunt’s story with her own reflections. The two temporalities are mediated by aboriginal folklore, beliefs, and customs, and more important, the 1930 Musha Incident” (p. 127). Because Tsushima is not solely focused on past events of the rebellion but instead treats it “incidentally,” Ching argues that the novelist opens the possibility of a new narrative beyond the usual tropes of colonialism and the oppression of Indigenous people. To Ching, Tsushima’s work is about understanding colonial experience across intergenerational space and the way traumas and deaths converge into one memory, highlighting the “never-endingness” of decoloniality.

Similar to Ching, Liao focuses on the hauntings of the dead from the Musha Incident, through an examination of Japanese writer Satō Haruo and his writings on Musha. Satō wrote about the Musha village prior to and after the uprising. Liao contextualizes and analyzes Satō’s sympathy for Taiwan’s Indigenous peoples, seeing the Musha Incident as not a singular event but in light of the “numerous monstrosities done to the Indigenous groups in Taiwan” prior to the uprising (p. 135). According to Liao, Satō’s writings embody an implicit critique of Japanese rule in Taiwan. He focuses on Satō’s writings about a riot that happened in Musha in 1920, which resulted in seven Japanese police officers and their families being slaughtered and decapitated by Indigenous people. Satō does not see this cruelty as an innate characteristic of the Indigenous Taiwanese character but instead something that was brought on due to the savageness of Japanese colonial rule directed toward them. “What kind of frenzied hatred and madness, Satō asked, should drive the Indigenous people to commit such a heinous crime?” (p. 141). “Satō’s answer was ‘neo-barbarism,’ done in response to the empire for its barbaric behavior” (p. 142). Satō’s writings show that “events in the past (such as Takaro and numerous crackdowns of the aborigines) help generate new monstrosities and complicate our interpretation as to who should be held responsible” (p. 143).

Despite Satō’s sympathy for the Indigenous people of Taiwan, Liao does not romanticize or mistake Satō and his place as a Japanese interlocutor in Taiwan. He came to Taiwan benefiting from the colonial government’s support of his visit and got to stay at a luxurious hotel and was aided throughout his travels. Liao aptly describes him as a “traveler and as a ‘comprador,’ who enjoyed all sorts of privilege on the one hand while entertaining a split, discrepant cosmopolitanism on the other” (p. 140). His narrative reveals a “complex mix of curiosity and anxiety”; he was sympathetic but still had an ambivalent stance toward the Indigenous peoples of Taiwan, as a Japanese colonizer and outsider (p. 141). Liao also sees in Satō’s writings an entry point to contemplate who can speak for the dead in a section called “Who Speaks for the Subaltern? Whose Justice?” Liao writes, “There are questions surrounding justice and rearticulation for the dead. The deceased have no voices, but who has the right and legitimacy to speak for them.... The spectral and eerie presence of the killers and the dead infant are also in the background, raising the question of who can speak for the dead, in addition to what happened in the first place? All these render suspect the authority of ethnographic writing and of the crime investigation. Instead of supplying an answer, Satō leads us to a critical and ghostly path of hermeneutics of suspicion and a kind of hauntology: Who knows what happened? The dead still linger” (pp. 144-45). For Liao, there is an unknowability to these past
events of violence, and he doubts the ability to access the dead's voices, pointing to a commonality with Holocaust studies and other studies of historical atrocities. In his conclusion, Liao sees Indigenous people perpetually under assault: “In spite of efforts to establish Indigenous autonomous territories and to reinvent their traditions, Indigenous homelands continue to lose ground to colonial and neocolonial regimes, not to mention earthquakes, typhoons, mudslides, and human catastrophes.” The only thing they can do, quoting Monangeng, is “Fight with your back to the mountain.” To Liao, this may be the “true legacy of Musha” (p. 147).

Perhaps as an answer to Liao’s question of who can speak for the dead, readers can contemplate Chien-heng Wu’s assessments in “Untimely Meditations: The Contemporary, the Philosophy of Walking, and Related Ethical Matters in Remains of Life.” Wu uses a philosophical approach looking to Theodor Adorno’s questioning: “how can writing transcend its own condition of possibility and effectively criticize the very culture from which it emerges?” Wu’s answer is complicated. Wu asks more of Wu He’s Yusheng (Remains of Life) (1999), wanting the author to have engaged more seriously with “responsibility and sociality as intrinsic elements of ethics.” It is not enough for Wu He to “expose the underlying mechanism of the structure of domination and then disengage oneself from participating in the oppressive structure.” For Wu, there is a possibility of change and perhaps changing how Indigenous people are treated but that requires an engagement with ethical matters, for that is the only way for the possibility of “engaging in the transformation of both the material conditions and the institutional framework that have continually contributed to the precarity of those living out the remains of their lives” (p. 172). So whereas Liao sees perhaps an intractability to Indigenous people’s positions, Wu sees a possibility beyond a never-ending colonial cyclical entrenchment. The onus however is on those of the present who engage in these issues to not simply address them and be done but to address these matters within an ethical framework. It would have been helpful to me had Wu provided an example of what this possible ethical engagement could look like.

In part 3, the chapters are devoted to visual memories of the Musha Incident. In “The Face of the Inbetweener: The Image of Indigenous History Researchers as reflected in Seediq Bale,” Nakao Eki Pacidal explains the notion of an “inbetweener” (Indigenous history researcher—what Pacidal identifies as) in order to discuss Wei’s film Seediq Bale. She is interested in the various discussions Taiwanese anthropologists and Indigenous people have had about the representation of the Tkdaya Seediq who engaged in the rebellion as well as the Toda Seediq who worked with the Japanese to bring them down, including the Toda leader, Temu Walis. Pacidal’s analysis reveals what is at stake in the representation of both Indigenous groups and how the film director wanted to avoid depicting the Toda Seediq according to the Chinese Nationalist government’s view, as “despicable ‘pro-Japanese savages’” (p. 186). Wei consulted with Seediq people, including Pawan, about the depiction of Tkdaya-Toda relations in the film. Although Pawan acknowledges that the Toda helped the Japanese and fought the Tkdaya rebels, he opposes their conventional depiction as the “pro-Japanese savage,” instead saying, “What is promised is promised, the Seediq have to do it to the end” (p. 187). Pawan refuses to venerate one group of Seediq at the expense of the other. Interwoven with her analysis of how various Taiwanese have responded to Wei’s film, Pacidal is concerned with her own positionality as an Indigenous researcher, where among Indigenous communities “‘research’ is by nature colonial” (p. 194). And she is “constantly confronted by a scientific historical perspective that is distinctly European. Every step taken is underlain by a question: should I accept and observe the European idea of history? Or should I try to remain inbetween?” (pp. 194-95). Pacidal chooses to remain “inbetween” but concludes by suggesting that the “masked soft viol-
ence of civilization,” which justified and underlaid
the circumstances in which the Musha Incident
occurred, is still operating today where “the face
of the inbetweener is still denied by civilization”
(p. 196). Pacidal’s writings amplify the unsettled
tone that persists throughout the volume. Instead
of finding hope and uplift in the recent prolifera‐
tion of interest and representations of the Musha
Incident, her tone is self-aware and cautious, if not
wary.

Darryl Sterk shares similar concerns with Pa‐
cidal, but he arrives at an opposite revelation than
Pacidal. His chapter stands out for its optimism;
his focus is not on the event itself but the post‐
event and the future, primarily looking at the sto‐
ries and representations of the few Seediq who sur‐
vived the rebellion and Japanese reprisal. Sterk is
less concerned with whether Mona is a hero
(“Mona’s putative heroism lives on in nationalist
and capitalist appropriations of it”) than with
showing how contemporary Seediq can see them‐
selves as true heroes, or, as he writes, ”how to be a
seediq bale (a true man or woman)” (pp. 201, 215).
He arrives at this conclusion through his compara‐
tive analysis of Wu He’s novel Remains of Life
and Tang Shiang-Chu’s documentary Yusheng: Seediq Bale (2014). Sterk notes that Tang’s film has
received only a little attention, one Mandarin re‐
view, and argues that it deserves more considera‐
tion. Sterk states his argument upfront: “I argue
the following thesis: Although Tang’s document‐
ary, like Wu He’s novel, is about the contemporary
Seediq community living in the long shadow of the
Musha Incident, Tang, unlike Wu, portrays mem‐
bers of this community as heroic, taking up the
Seediq hero’s task of upholding a cultural tradition
that has sustained the people through the pain of
the past century. Wu He declares the current era
to be antiheroic, while Tang Shiang-Chu sees hero‐
ism in the story of Seediq survival from 1931 to
the present. This heroism, in turn, is the means by
which contemporary Seediq people might work

and Tang’s documentary as reaffirming it. In his
film, Tang interviews grandchildren of those who
survived and made it to Kawanakajima, the place
to where the remaining survivors of the Second
Musha Incident were exiled, after the Toda were
allowed to infiltrate the detention centers and kill
the rebels who were caught. Sterk states that in
the documentary, “the living are not so much
haunted by the dead as they are kept company” (p.
208). Here the dead give solace and comfort to the
survivors. Are these the same dead whose haunt‐
ings so drive Kim? Sterk notes that in the docu‐
mentary the survivors and contemporary Seediq
begin to ask: “Who am I? The answer they have ul‐
timately given is that they are the real people, the
seediq bale. Unlike in Wei’s epic film Seediq Bale,
in which a seediq (people) bale (real) seems like a
fossilized ideal, the ideas of a seediq bale in
Yusheng, which is subtitled Seediq Bale, is evolu‐
tionary, based on a contemporary reinterpretation
of cultural tradition. Cultural tradition here takes
a narrative form. And the various narratives in
the documentary share a master narrative—that
of a quest for roots” (p. 210).

Sterk in his critical engagement asks why and
how the Musha Incident keeps getting represented
and re-represented and constantly revisited. He
rejects the answer that trauma alone is the reason
for the revisitations. Those who are working
through the incident or discussing it are doing so
through with secondhand trauma—the descend‐
ants of the survivors. Sterk sees the revisitation
of the incident instead as a ritual important to con‐
necting to Seediq culture: “For them talking about
Musha is a necessary and productive part of a pro‐
ject of self-understanding because the key to un‐
derstanding Musha for them is Seediq culture. As
part of this project, they revisit Musha in the con‐
text of Seediq culture with such regularity that re‐
membering Musha could be described as ritual”
(p. 214). And here we get a final reference to the
hauntings of the dead: the rituals shown in Tang’s
documentary where the living are conducting
rituals to their ancestors as a way to share the
space with them. Sterk writes, “They do not conduct the ritual just for reconciliation, as if they are hag-ridden, haunted. In mdadahun, they are sharing the land with their ancestors and vice versa. The living and the dead are keeping each other company. It seems that a ‘sense of absence’ has been filled” (p. 215). Here, the dead are powerful and comfortably connected to the past as well as the present; their presence helps sustain the living.

Lastly, the book concludes with part 4, which includes four interviews: with Wu He, Freddy Lim, Wan Jen, and Wei Te-sheng. All of these conversations provide interesting insight into the production of their respective works but will probably hold more saliency to those who are already familiar with the TV shows, film, music, or novel these figures produced. This is also true for some of the chapters that are built primarily around literary analysis and interpretation. Although some chapters provide enough explanation of the main narratives of the literature or the plot of the film so an uninformed reader can follow the analysis, other chapters do not. This book would be extremely beneficial for graduate-level courses and may be effectively used in an undergraduate classroom with selective pairings, perhaps showing Seediq Bale or assigning parts of Remains of Life, alongside the relevant chapter/s in order for students to more fully grasp the significance of the analysis.

In conclusion, this volume demonstrates how we can engage with the event, whether as history, as “psychotherapy” (a term used by filmmaker Wei), or as a form of decolonization, or with a resignation that we are still caught in a form of neoimperialism replicating old power structures that allowed utter violence to be wreaked upon Indigenous peoples in the first place (p. 193). The complexities, nuances, and shades of interpretation that the contributors reveal in their analyses demonstrate how egregious the Musha Incident’s previous dismissal or erasure in most general narratives of Taiwan and Japan has been. The book is bold in its innovative scope—truly interdisciplinary. All the chapters stand on their own, with resonances between them but without any repetition. If I were to quibble with anything about the anthology it would be hoping for a larger part 1 on the historicity of the event: a closer focus on the leader, Mona, for example, or the Indigenous peoples’ recollections of the event itself, or more on how the Japanese mobilized and incentivized Indigenous groups like the Toda Seediq to go after the rebels.

I hope some reading this review will see a metaphorical gauntlet and consider incorporating some of the book’s chapters into their teaching syllabi. We need to constantly reevaluate the stories we tell ourselves and each other. This book on the Musha Incident provides the tools for intellectual discussion and debate about what it means to teach and write about imperialism and how Indigenous people survive the violence it wreaks upon them. After the empire collapses, what happens to the survivors and the legacies of violence? How long will the dead haunt the living?

Note

[1]. Different scholars in this volume spell it Tdgaya or Tksdaya. I use the spelling preferred by each author in each corresponding section.


[3]. Kim, Postcolonial Grief, 2.
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