

and Kham) was “etched into the Tibetan imagination and part of common parlance well before the establishment of Communist Chinese rule” (p. 43) may be valid, but to assert that this proves the existence of an enduring idea of a Tibetan “nation” is dubious. There is a tendency towards dehistoricization here, in which the existence of signifiers such as “Tibet” and “the three provinces” in old texts is presented as evidence that a *concept* has been transferred, unaltered, from distant history to the present day. For a specific refutation of this point, we might point to Gray Tuttle’s work on the shifting nature of geographical conceptions in Amdo (see Gray Tuttle, ed., *Mapping the Modern in Tibet*, IITBS, 2011).

This focus on cultural nationalism leads to the curious absence of the actual nation-state in which all of this literature was produced. The book references no Chinese sources, and connections with major Chinese and transnational literary movements (scar literature, magical realism, misty poetry) are avoided in favour of emphasizing a purely “Tibetan” heritage, giving the impression that Tibetans needed no interaction with outside sources to create the texts under discussion. This is absolutely not to say that there is a Chinese cultural hegemony over Tibetan literature, but rather than rejecting outside influence, could we not consider instead how new concepts were translated, reinterpreted and reinvented by modern Tibetan intellectuals in combination with the pre-existing cultural heritage Lama Jabb investigates so well?

Despite these significant reservations, Lama Jabb’s achievement is to be highly praised. We can only hope that his work will inspire further advances in the field, and such an assertive standpoint – always argued with clarity and an assured grasp of the material – is certain to do just that. It will be essential for inclusion in any syllabus on modern Tibetan literature, but it should prove equally vital for modern Chinese literature courses that seek to be creative and to challenge our conventional understandings of the field. For scholars and students alike, Lama Jabb’s book provides expert guidance to a world too long overlooked by mainstream Chinese literary scholarship.

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The Living Dead of the Pacific: Contested Sovereignty and Racism in Genetic Research on Taiwan Aborigines

MARK MUNSTERHJELM

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In 2010, Jiwas Ali (Kao Chin Su-mei), an indigenous member of Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan, asked the Executive Yuan to stop the exploitation of indigenous genes for the medical benefit of the Han majority. The controversy on indigenous genetic studies reveals an inconvenient truth: scientific study of indigenous genes is considered a treasure of native nationalism, but the political status of the Taiwanese aboriginals remains marginalized. With fascinating cases and theoretical discussions, Mark Munsterhjelm’s book delves into the contested subjects of scientific agenda and ethnic politics in Taiwan.

Munsterhjelm’s first two chapters outline the historical backgrounds of settler and indigenous peoples, providing an overview of indigenous people’s status under Dutch,

Chinese and Japanese colonialism, and finally under the contemporary form of bio-colonialism. He uses Aihwa Ong's concept of "graduated sovereignty" as a platform to discuss "the interaction between the zones of transnational science, settler states, and aboriginal peoples in genetics research" (p. 44). The concept is rewarding for understanding the political contestation between aborigines and settlers. Based on the five stages of indigenous resistance – manipulation, commitment, performance, competence and sanction – Munsterhjelm delineates the ways that rights and authority over indigenous genes are reclaimed through actions by scientists, policy makers and indigenous subjects.

The third and fourth chapters carefully illustrate cases drawn from different scientific agendas. In order to identify and differentiate indigenous genes, these studies focused on the search for materialization of alcoholism and special blood types revealed by chromatin. Scientists, performing authoritative roles in constructing transnational knowledge, downplayed the sovereignty of the indigenous people and their right to proper informed consent. Quoting David Arnold and postcolonial science and technology studies (STS) critics, Munsterhjelm compares contemporary misconduct with colonial exploitation to show how indigenous groups are marginalized as "manifestations of the state of nature" (p. 86). Genetic scientists in Taiwan also attract criticism for the lack of informed consents and for over-determined claims based on illegally retrieved materials from indigenous Kavalan people. Munsterhjelm finely elaborates how scientific studies, which select the features of genes that are material, plastic, instrumental and have particular properties, resemble political exploitation in colonialism and native nationalism.

In the following two chapters Munsterhjelm expands his argument from local studies to the connection with Pacific locales. The cases of "Maori's warrior gene" and of "patenting Taiwan's gift to the world" shed light on the competing networks of scientific-commercial interests and indigenous right advocates. Showing distinctive sovereign autonomy, Maori activists demonstrate how to mobilize strong networks against the relatively weak scientific network. On the contrary, Taiwan's state endeavours to build a neoliberal biotech island not only lead to a high rate of controversial patent applications in the US, but also to unethical conduct towards the Atayal indigenous group and Solomon Islanders. To conclude, Munsterhjelm discusses the idea of "living dead" in the narrative schemata of the genetic studies to show the multi-level conflicts between research agendas and indigenous resistance efforts, which reveal how the violation of ethical codes perpetrate epistemological and ontological violence to indigenous peoples.

This book provides rich material and discussions of the development of indigenous genetic studies in Taiwan as well as cases on Pacific islands. Munsterhjelm constructs a thorough argument along a trajectory that runs through transnational science, settler state and indigenous people. It provides a comparative framework for the social studies of biological research in Taiwan (for which, see also Jennifer Liu's 2010 chapter "Making Taiwanese (stem cells): identity, genetics, and purity" in *Asian Biotech*, edited by Aihwa Ong and Nancy Chen [Duke University Press] and Yu-Yueh Tsai's 2010 article "Geneticizing ethnicity: a study on the 'Taiwan Bio-Bank'" [*East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*, 4.3]), as well as indigenous rights on the track of self-government (for which, see Simon Scott and Awi Mona (Chih-Wei Tsai)'s 2012 chapter "Human rights and indigenous self-government: the Taiwanese experience" in *Human Rights and the Third World: Issues and Discourses*, edited by Subrata Bugchi and Arnab Das [Lexington Books]).

Notwithstanding Munsterhjelm's contributions, there are some shortcomings within his analytic approaches. First, he uses a Latourian framework for symmetric

discussion on aboriginal studies. Nevertheless, the chapters focus more on institutional debates among scientists rather than discussions motivated by indigenous political activists. Second, the cases are overwhelmingly about genes and tests on human subjects rather than broader examination of research and local knowledge within the indigenous territories, which may reinforce viewpoints based on nationalism or science-centrism. Finally, scientists, state and indigenous people are portrayed as mutually exclusive entities in Munsterhjelm's five-phased movement. However, the political arena of indigenous affairs is not clear cut; rather, there are substantially overlapping claims by the indigenous people as well as scientists. The case of legislator Jiwas Ali in the beginning of this review is a reminder of such intertwined interests. She considers herself an indigenous activist against Han exploitation in Taiwan but also lobbies for the connection between Taiwanese aborigines and mainland Chinese identity. Studies of indigenous political claims and research controversies deeply reflect the rhetoric of racism, a legacy from colonial Japanese biological research, intertwined with Taiwanese ethnic politics, post-war US scientific agendas and Pacific indigenous sovereignty. This book contributes to the comparative understanding of contemporary political identity and scientific nationalism in Taiwan, which is pertinent to theoretical reflection on the PRC counterparts. Furthermore, it reveals extensive connections among social studies on science and technology, property laws, indigenous research ethics and activist politics of the Pacific in general. Against all odds, Munsterhjelm provides a compass to sail through the contested ocean of indigenous genetic research.

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The Last Isle: Contemporary Film, Culture, and Trauma in Global Taiwan

SHENG-MEI MA

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Sheng-mei Ma explains the title of this collection of essays as a reference to both the sense that Taiwan has just been passed by, and that its survival is threatened. He locates the book as opening “from where Taiwan film scholarship has generally left off, interrogating relatively unknown contemporary filmmakers who are not likely to ever make it to the world stage...” (p. 3). Indeed, the island's recent film culture has been neglected, yet, as Ma observes, under globalization it exhibits new characteristics that merit analysis. More polemically, he observes that “In the rise of China in the twenty-first century, a crop of ‘New China Hands’ – naturalized Americans of Chinese descent and mainland affiliation – has exerted considerable control over Western discourse on China, Taiwan included. It is against this eliding of Taiwan, this continuous trauma of being undone, that Taiwan Studies should direct its energy” (p. 16). In its drive to fill a gap in Taiwan film studies and counter the “eliding of Taiwan” – whatever its origins – this collection is welcome.

However, as anyone familiar with Ma's previous writings might anticipate, this is not a systematic study of the film industry. Anyone hoping for statistical data or analyses of either market or genre trends will be disappointed. In fact, most essays towards the end of the book have little do with Taiwanese cinema or, in some