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Title	J. Bruce Jacobs and Peter Kang (eds.) (2018) Changing Taiwanese Identities. Oxford: Routledge. 132 pages, £105 (hb), isbn: 978-1138636781. [Book Review]
Type	Article
URL	https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/id/eprint/28797/
DOI	https://doi.org/10.1163/24688800-00201009
Date	2019
Citation	Alsford, Niki Joseph paul (2019) J. Bruce Jacobs and Peter Kang (eds.) (2018) Changing Taiwanese Identities. Oxford: Routledge. 132 pages, £105 (hb), isbn: 978-1138636781. [Book Review]. International Journal of Taiwan Studies, 2 (1). pp. 177-179. ISSN 2468-8797
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It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/24688800-00201009>

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Jacobs, J. Bruce, and Peter Kang (eds.) *Changing Taiwanese Identities*, 2018, Oxon, Routledge, 132 pp. £105 (hb)

‘The fact of being who or what a person or thing is.’ This, a standard dictionary definition of the word ‘identity’, fails in many ways to truly grasp the multiple layers of nuance that sit behind how a person views themselves. I personally feel a stronger connection to the place I was born and was raised, a place where my family and ancestors are from; a local identity. I don’t generally observe myself as having a strong national identity; this, I feel, tends to be associated with the far-right, in particular in the case of the UK. Yet when England plays in the World Cup, I yell like a hooligan. For me there is not one single identity, but many identities.

Benedict Anderson uses the definition of national identity as being one that is formed by an imagined political community. For him, concepts of community are both limited and sovereign and are central to the problems that are posed by nationalism. A nation is imagined as a community because a nation is always conceived as being something deeply rooted in the past. Anderson uses the death of many millions who willingly died over the past two centuries in the name of this ‘community’ in spite of its known inequalities and exploitation. It is sovereign because the nation was created during an age of Enlightenment and/or through revolution. It destroyed the hierarchal dynastic orders and the divinely ordained entity that had previously governed it. Finally a nation is limited because even the members of the ‘smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.’ Moreover, it is limited because no nation has ever imagined itself as being conterminous with mankind. For Anderson, identity gains a self-awareness when pitted against, or matched with, others through the exercise of imagining.

As such, there is a fluidity in how one identifies. It changes. Personal circumstances, age, gender, kinds of occupation all impact on how people see themselves, as do many other factors. *Changing Identities*, edited by J. Bruce Jacobs and Peter Kang, seeks to explore this over eight chapters. For Taiwan, changes in identities have played, and continue to play, a pivotal role in concepts of nation building. Similar to other settler societies, they no longer view themselves as being part of the society whence they came. True, they may share the same language and belief systems, they may cook similar food, and occupy their leisure time in similar ways, but the fundamentals are different. To understand these changes, Jacobs, in the introductory chapter, argues that first we have to understand this history as components of three periods (or stages, as he refers to them). The first began 6,000 years ago and continued until 1624 when the Dutch invaded and colonised parts of the island. This second stage, an age of colonisation, ended, according to Jacobs, in 1988 with the death of President Chiang Ching-kuo. The third stage began on 13 January 1988 when Lee Teng-hui became the first Taiwanese President. I would perhaps have argued for a fourth stage that began in 18 March 2014 during the Sunflower Movement when we can see shifts in identities from ethnic forms of nationalism to more civic forms. I understand, however, that this wasn’t necessary in this edited volume as the editors were seeking to understand the development toward a ‘Taiwanese Taiwan’ as opposed to a ‘Chinese Taiwan’; one that they correctly note was gradual.

An important ‘change of identity’ as outlined in chapter 2 by Jolan Hsieh is that of the Plains Indigenous Peoples. Their changes, although occurring at similar stages to their settler counterparts, must be understood in their own context. The Declaration of Taiwan’s Plains Indigenous Peoples in 2001 reinforces this imagining: ‘[t]oday we stand up and speak out, solemnly telling the people and government of Taiwan that we are Taiwan’s indigenous peoples and that we have not disappeared!

We were forced to conceal ourselves'. As such, their self-awareness is one that is pitted against the majority settler communities to instead 'match with' others (recognised indigenous peoples) through this exercise. This idea of identity separation, or the 'we savages didn't bind feet' as argued by Melissa Brown in *Is Taiwan Chinese?*, is further discussed by Hsieh, who shows that legal processes of recognition and categorisation are important in the confirmation of identity.

The colonisation of language, or linguistic imperialism, is an important transfer of power. The reconstruction of structural and socio-cultural inequalities tends to follow as new languages become dominant. Wi-Vun Taiffalo Chiung in this volume addresses this throughout the different 'stages' in Taiwan's past by identifying the periods in which 'Taiwanese' became the peoples' language despite the colonial *lingua franca*. This imperial enforcement of language tends to begin in education; the indoctrination of language and social concept. Tanguy Lepesant picks this up in the chapter on the understanding of Taiwanese youth and national identity during the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou.

The social construct of identity (and its changes) within the concept of linguistic imperialism becomes particularly interesting when observed in cyberspace. The marginalisation of languages in cyberspace, rather than avert notions of identities, has instead provided a useful platform for Taiwanese to pit their identity against a continually evolving 'other'. Chien-Jung Hsu discusses this in the penultimate chapter by arguing that the bulletin board system (BBS), through the dimensions of culture, history, and language, has sought to aid in the constructions of national identities and thought. The connections between social movements, social media, and this shift toward civic identity is important. What is more it is the evolution of the internet that has clearly shaped 'the changing identities' of the Taiwanese. I believe it will continue to do so.

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