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INTRODUCTION

Gunter Schubert

The Taiwan studies field has seen refreshing development since the early 2000s. The establishment of the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS) in London in 2004 kick-started a new wave of academic interest in the history, politics, society and culture of the little island republic that continuously faces 'the shadow of China'. Even though the international community of Taiwan scholars has always been very small – especially compared to the much bigger flock of China scholars – it has made itself noticed in various ways since the inauguration of EATS. First of all, *institutionalisation*: New centres of Taiwan studies have been established throughout Europe, most notably the China Studies Centre at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which started as a Taiwan Studies Programme in 1999, and the European Research Centre on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) at the University of Tübingen in Germany, established in 2008.¹ More centres and Taiwan-related programs were set up in Ljubljana, Lyon, Nottingham and Vienna, to name but a few. Second, *teaching and research*: Taiwan has become an object of inquiry for increasing numbers of young scholars working on their PhDs in Europe, and Taiwan-related courses are now integral components of China studies curricula in many European Universities.² There is also a book series on Taiwan published by Routledge, which has developed very well so far.³ Overall, it is fair to say that the Taiwan studies field is in good shape. Only the lack of teaching positions for Taiwan scholars, at least in terms of tenured faculty, is a problem that bespeaks a serious bottleneck for those emerging scholars who have chosen Taiwan as their focus of interest.⁴

Why could the Taiwan studies field develop this way? To my understanding, the most crucial reason grounds in the consequences of China's rise and Taiwan's multifaceted challenge to it, which has increasingly come to the fore in the recent past. Since the end of the Chinese Civil War, marked by Chiang Kai-shek's escape to Taiwan, Taiwan has been the persistent 'other' of China. It chose capitalism to develop its post-war economy when China embarked on socialism, even though that was changed to 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' after the end of Maoism in the late 1970s. It allied with the US, one of those 'imperialist countries' China declared its enemy, even though that label was changed to 'strategic competitor' after the end of the Cold War. It changed authoritarianism for 'Western' democracy when China postulated that 'Western' democracy would not suit the Chinese desire for stability and strong leadership and could never be a model for China. Democratic Taiwan, for its part, contested China's quest for unification and insisted on sovereignty for the Republic of China on Taiwan, if not

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TAIWAN IN LATE MING AND QING CHINA

Ann Heylen

Introduction: an assessment of early modern history and its periodization

The selected title for this chapter – ‘Taiwan in late Ming and Qing China’ – might strike a sensitive nerve with some academics and intellectuals, based on the argument that the connotation ‘late Ming’ especially implies that the Taiwan entity as we know it now was part of Ming China (1368–1644). This can be, and by some is being, interpreted as the basis for continuity of belonging to Greater China, even if there are no records that such was the case, as the island was not officially incorporated until 1684, by what was then Qing (Manchu) China. On the other hand, conveniently speaking, the periodization of late Ming and Qing offers a useful and workable metaphor for the advancement of historical scholarship.¹ A classification of Taiwan in the late Ming and Qing era is grounded in a national history written through a dynastic perspective, encompassing a geographical demarcation and a temporal outlook. This specific orientation has its origins in a tradition of Western historiography of Chinese history that parallels Chinese historiography.

The paradigm that underpins the scholarly discussion of Taiwan in late Ming and Qing brings together both the Chinese dynastic and Eurocentric vision of expansionism. Taiwan features where East meets West in a common understanding on how to write the incorporation of the island into the Chinese imperial (dynastic) and European expansionist history. European scholarship (Wills 1979, 1999; Knapp 1980) draws in the Han perspective, so it is clear from the start that the maritime tradition, in which Taiwan together with Manila features as a settlement outside the Chinese heartland, falls as a minor tradition. The frontier, as geographical demarcation, mirrors the periphery and retains China as the centre. Such did become the historical reality from 1684 onwards. Hence, the frontier allows one to see the continuity through to the next phase, from Ming into Qing up to 1895. Apart from the frontier explanation, which incorporates Taiwan into the Chinese expanding empire paradigm at the expense of the maritime tradition, the existing yet limited scholarly knowledge of the indigenous population and the etymology of the island’s name must also be acknowledged. Records of the Ming do not elaborate on Southern Fukienese settlements in great detail, hence material is lacking, and one needs to wait for substantial documentary evidence until the Dutch make their entrance via the Pescadores (Penghu islands).

One of the peculiarities that have shaped Taiwan historiography and Taiwan Studies is the seventeenth century presence of Dutch (1622–1661, 1664–1668) and Spanish powers (1626–1642) on the island. There was a brief settlement by the Portuguese but this was hardly