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The 1895 Yiwei War and Its Impact on the National Identity of Taiwanese Han People: A Perspective from Chinese Documentary Sources

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Abstract

The Qing dynasty (now China). The Treaty of Shimonoseki (also known as the Treaty of Maguan), signed after the First Sino-Japanese war (the Jiawu war), marked a crucial turning point in Taiwan's transition from a regional identity tied to Fujian and Guangdong to one rooted in national, ethnic, and broader cultural recognition. The treaty highlights the contrasting attitudes of Qing dynasty and Japan towards international affairs during this period—Qing dynasty's passive stance versus Japan's active approach. Taiwan's governor, Tang Ching-sung, established the Republic of Taiwan in an effort to resist Japanese colonization, seeking the support of Western powers to prevent Taiwan's annexation by Japan. The Yiwei anti-Japanese war helped shape the collective consciousness of the Taiwanese Han people, reinforcing a shared identity based on the distinction between "us" (the Chinese) and "them" (the Japanese). This process of differentiation strengthened the Taiwanese Han people's connection to their ethnic and cultural identity.

Keywords: Yiwei war; Treaty of Shimonoseki; Sino-Japanese war; National identity; Colonial Taiwan

1. The sovereignty of Korea and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war

The Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895) was triggered by the issue of Korea's sovereignty. In 1884, reformists in Korea, with Japan's support, launched the Gapsin coup (甲申政變), while the

conservatives were backed by the Qing dynasty (now China), notably through the intervention of Yuan Shikai (袁世凱). After the coup, the pro-Japanese reformist Kim Ok-gyun (金玉鈞) was assassinated in Shanghai. To set an example, the Qing dynasty

returned both the body and the assassin to Korea. In retaliation, the Korean government mutilated Kim's body and publicly executed the assassin, rewarding those responsible. Despite this, Japan chose to remain silent and took no immediate action (Shi, 2017).

By the 1890s, Japan had grown powerful enough to support Korea's pro-Japanese faction. In 1894, the Dong-Xue party uprising (東學之亂) broke out in Korea. Unable to suppress the revolt, the Korean monarchy called on its suzerain, the Qing dynasty, for military assistance. The Qing sent troops to Korea, but, in accordance with prior agreements, requested Japan to withdraw its forces. Japan, however, ignored this request and continued to send reinforcements, resulting in a standoff between Qing and Japanese forces. Prior to the war, the Qing government still hoped to rely on diplomatic assistance from Britain and Russia to curb Japan's advances (Zhang, 2014).

With Russia's railway nearing completion in Siberia, and facing fierce criticism from Japan's opposition parties accusing the government of being too passive, Japan ultimately decided that, for its own security, it was necessary to secure Korea's independence from the Qing dynasty and later colonize it. Japan then used military force to swiftly seize the Korean peninsula, justifying its actions as a defense of Korea. In addition, Japan occupied the Liaodong peninsula, the Beijing-Tianjin area, and the Yellow sea. The Qing dynasty suffered a crushing defeat and sought British intervention, hoping for diplomatic mediation by the great powers to resolve the Sino-Japanese dispute. However, these efforts ended in failure. At this point, the Qing dynasty, on the condition of "recognizing Korea's independence," requested a ceasefire, but Japan rejected the offer (Zhang, 2017).

Before the battle, the international community had been optimistic about the Qing dynasty's prospects. However, the beiyang (北洋) fleet was decisively defeated by the Japanese navy, resulting in the complete destruction of the fleet (Chen & He, 2011). This defeat highlighted the failure of the Qing dynasty's self-strengthening movement, which had aimed to "learn from the advanced technologies of the West to resist the invasion of Western powers" but had yielded little success. Huang Zunxian (黃遵憲), deeply affected by the loss, lamented that the defeat was not due to insufficient military strength, but rather to the corruption and incompetence of the Qing government. He argued that the failure also stemmed from a foreign policy overly inclined toward peace and a leadership unable to keep pace with the times (Zhang, 2014).

Although the Qing dynasty sought to strengthen its military by adopting Western naval technology, the entrenched feudal and conservative mindset obstructed the meaningful integration of Western naval strategies. The defeat led to a dramatic decline in the Qing dynasty's international standing, with Western powers looking down on it and ultimately deciding to carve up its territories. Zheng, in his work, commented: "Li Hongzhang's subordinates in this war displayed the traits of 'civil officials who were greedy for wealth and military officers who feared death!'" (Zheng, 1977).

Li Hongzhang (李鴻章) adhered to the Qing dynasty's diplomatic policy of prioritizing "the imperial clan and state over the frontier," focusing on protecting core territories while deeming borderlands less critical. Japan demanded the cession of the Liaodong peninsula and a reparations payment of 200 million taels from China, in exchange for the return of Weihaiwei (Beasley, 2000). However, the Qing dynasty ultimately agreed to the cession of Taiwan, the

Penghu islands, and surrounding islets, which were considered the "southeastern gateway." Japan's demands for reparations and the cession of the Liaodong peninsula were understandable, as the peninsula was near Korea, which Japan controlled, and Japan had long viewed Liaodong as a critical outpost for a potential invasion of Qing territories. However, Russia saw the cession of the Liaodong peninsula as a threat to its own interests in Manchuria. With the support of France, Germany, and other nations, Russia demanded that Japan abandon its claims to the peninsula, threatening war if Japan refused (Barnhart, 1995).

Due to the lack of support from Britain and the United States, Japan had no choice but to yield to the intervention of Russia, France, and Germany (Kerr, 1974). Japan agreed to allow the Qing dynasty to pay an additional 30 million taels to redeem the Liaodong peninsula. The total amount (200 million taels + 30 million taels) was roughly equivalent to half of Japan's national income in 1893, or four times the total value of the country's imports that year. This became a crucial source of capital for Japan's development of its textile and steel industries, contributing to the establishment of the Yahata Ironworks (now "Nippon Steel Corporation") (Lin, 2014).

2. The Strategic Importance of Taiwan's Location for Japan

In 1895, Japan's expansion abroad significantly impacted the geopolitical landscape of East Asia. Geographically, if one were traveling from Southeast Asia to Japan, or to Korea, passing through the provinces north of Fujian and Guangdong, there were only two viable maritime routes, the Taiwan Strait and the Bashi Strait. Taiwan's position lies between these two critical sea lanes, making it strategically significant. Taiwan had been in contact with Western civilization for nearly four centuries, and there are specific reasons for this:

The first reason was the Dutch East India Company's (also known as the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie, VOC) occupation of Tayouan (大員) (now Tainan, Taiwan) during the Ming and Qing dynasties. During this time, the Qing dynasty imposed maritime trade restrictions and Japan's Tokugawa shogunate pursued a policy of isolation. The VOC used Taiwan as a key location for transshipment trade between China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and Europe. Without this strategic location, direct trade between Japan and China would have been possible, but Taiwan's role was crucial in facilitating broader international trade.

Secondly, during the Sino-French war, France occupied Keelung (now Jilong), Huwei (now Tamsui), and the Penghu islands, blockading the Taiwan Strait to assert its influence in the region.

Thirdly, Britain was interested in Taiwan due to its steamship routes, requiring a location for mid-route transshipment and resupply.

Fourthly, as a global superpower, the United States sought to establish so-called bases in Taiwan to expand its strategic reach (Cai, 2009). Therefore, Taiwan's geographical location held immense significance for the great powers.

Japan's demand for the cession of Taiwan from the Qing dynasty in the Treaty of Shimonoseki (also known as the Treaty of Maguan) was driven by its strategic interests. Initially, when drafting the treaty, Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文) and foreign minister Mutsu Munemitsu (陸奥宗光) did not insist strongly on the cession of Taiwan. However, Japanese

ministers involved in the Mudanshe incident argued that the cession of Taiwan was a necessary condition. Geographically, Taiwan not only controls vital maritime routes in the Yellow sea, the sea of Japan, and the Korean sea but also serves as a gateway to East Asia. Kantarou Nakamura (中村純九郎) strongly urged Kabayama Sukenori (樺山資紀) that Japan should permanently possess Taiwan. As the strategic chokepoint of the South China sea, Taiwan was seen as essential for Japan to incorporate into its territory (Zhang, 2017).

Being a resource-poor island nation, Japan relied on maritime shipping to import strategic materials such as oil and minerals from West Asia and Southeast Asia. Taiwan's location was therefore crucial as it controlled the maritime routes between Japan, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Europe. If Japan controlled Taiwan, it could effectively secure its access to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Europe via the South China sea. If Taiwan's maritime routes were blocked, Japan's lifeline would be severed (Yan, 2018).

Secondly, Taiwan, together with the Ryukyu islands and the Japanese archipelago, could form a semi-circular encirclement of the Qing dynasty. With footholds in Korea and Manchuria, Japan could secure its own safety and defend East Asia. Japan's influence could then be expanded toward the Qing dynasty's southeastern coastal provinces. In 1863, Shi Lang (施琅) argued in his memorial "stating the stakes of abandoning and retaining Taiwan" that retaining Taiwan would protect the four provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. Taiwan lies across the Taiwan strait from Fujian, faces the Ryukyu islands to the east, and controls the Bashi strait and the Philippines to the south. Taiwan's geographical position made it vital for Japan to demand its cession in order to establish a base for its southern expansion.

Thirdly, Japan believed that Taiwan had been developed relatively late and that the Qing dynasty's control over the island was weak. After a change of sovereignty, the Taiwanese Han Chinese would likely not resist too strongly, making it easier for Japan to take control. Although Japan encountered resistance during its takeover of Taiwan, many Taiwanese elites chose to cooperate with the Japanese, thereby reducing opposition and facilitating the process. This highlights Japan's strategic insight into the situation in Taiwan.

Lastly, Taiwan's natural resources and market value, including tea, sugar, and camphor, were significant. After Japan opened its ports, the import of sugar increased rapidly, with most of the sugar coming from Taiwan. Following colonization, these goods, which had previously been part of international trade, became integral to Japan's domestic market.

3. The Cession of Taiwan and the Penghu islands: Relieving Pressure on the Capital

In April 1895, the Qing dynasty and Japan signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which came into effect on May 8 of the same year. Under the terms of the treaty, Taiwan, the Penghu islands, and all associated islands were legally ceded to Japan, making Taiwan Japan's first colony. This resulted in the Qing dynasty losing its sovereignty over the island. For Japan, the cession marked a significant achievement of the Meiji restoration and signified the beginning of its pursuit of regional hegemony in East Asia.

Though the Sino-Japanese war was fought more than 2,000 kilometers away from Taiwan, one might question why the Treaty of Shimonoseki resulted in the permanent cession of Taiwan, the Penghu, and their associated islands to Japan rather than another region. Taiwan had long been a deeply entrenched concern for the Qing dynasty's Manchu rulers, who did not understand or prioritize maritime matters. They viewed Taiwan as a troublesome, lawless island inhabited by pirates, smugglers, refugees, outlaws, and head-hunting natives. Additionally, the island was plagued by malaria and other diseases. For the Qing rulers, ceding Taiwan to Japan was akin to handing over a "hot potato"—an action that Japan would eventually come to regret.

Chen (1995) offers an alternative perspective, suggesting that some scholars argue the cession of Taiwan was not a result of "deliberate abandonment," but rather a decision "forced by circumstances." The reason Japan was able to demand and secure Taiwan was closely tied to the island's geographical isolation from the Qing dynasty and the historical distance between Taiwan and the imperial capital. Zhang (2017) cites Li Hongzhang's explanation to Lin Weirang (林維讓) regarding his decision to cede Taiwan:

"The issue of ceding Taiwan was repeatedly discussed during the negotiations at Shimonoseki. Japan's desire for Taiwan was very strong. They would not accept refusal and were prepared to use military force to take it. The Penghu islands had already been devastated, and Taiwan's defenses were too weak to be sustained any longer. Rather than allowing the situation to worsen and still being unable to defend the island, it was better to abandon it in order to preserve the Qing dynasty's sovereignty and relieve the pressure on the capital. In this case, we chose the lesser of two evils, as there was no other choice. Therefore, we were forced to consider ceding Taiwan." "Though Taiwan is heavy, it is lighter than the capital. If Japan, having gained momentum, were to directly attack Beijing, the capital would be in imminent danger. Moreover, Taiwan is isolated overseas, and the Qing dynasty was unable to provide long-term protection for the island. Therefore, we agreed to cede Taiwan and the Penghu to Japan in order to eliminate the threat posed by the Japanese military to the capital" (Luo, n.d.).

Japan's initial proposal in the Treaty of Shimonoseki called not only for the cession of Taiwan and the Penghu islands but also for the annexation of the Liaodong peninsula. However, due to the intervention of three countries—Russia, France, and Germany—acting in defense of their own interests in the Qing dynasty, Japan was prevented from taking the Liaodong peninsula, thus sparing the Qing dynasty's strategic base from further risk.

During the negotiations at Shimonoseki in March 1895, Japan discovered that the Qing dynasty was secretly seeking the intervention of Russia, Germany, and France. The Qing had even proposed temporarily transferring the Penghu islands to France. In order to secure Taiwan—vital to East Asia's maritime routes and a coveted prize among the great powers—Japan sought to assert its power. Since Taiwan could not be immediately taken by force, Itō Hirobumi sent the navy to first attack the Penghu islands to prevent any further international interference. The Qing dynasty Navy stationed at the Penghu was defeated (Hong, n.d.). Japan deliberately sent troops to attack the Penghu before the negotiations, using it as leverage to force the Qing dynasty to cede Taiwan (Wu, 2014; Zhang, 2017).

Li (1995) argues that the Treaty of Shimonoseki resulted from the Qing dynasty's Central Plains-oriented mindset, which viewed Taiwan as a troublesome, lawless borderland plagued by disease. For the Central Plains-based rulers, ceding Taiwan was seen as shedding a heavy burden, all in the interest of protecting the capital. Xu (1995) also noted that Li Hongzhang, who had been granted authority to negotiate and cede territory, stated that the Liaodong peninsula—being the heart of Manchuria—could never be relinquished. This suggests that the Qing dynasty had already decided to abandon Taiwan.

However, these scholars overlook Li Hongzhang's focus on "naval defense (to counter Japan) over land defense (to counter Russia)" and the proactive infrastructure development in Taiwan under the first Taiwan governor, Liu Mingchuan (劉銘傳). Unlike the Qing dynasty's traditional land-based defense mentality, which was shaped by its historical reliance on cavalry, modern maritime powers such as Europe, America, and Japan viewed Taiwan as an island of strategic importance, with an ideal geographic location.

4. The Country that Covertly Assisted Japan Behind the Scenes

The 1874 *Mudanshe incident*, the 1883–85 *Sino-French war*, and the 1894–95 *Sino-Japanese war* all involved issues related to tributary relations. However, starting in 1874, the tributary system that had supported the concept of the celestial empire, the Sino-barbarian hierarchy, and the tribute system began to collapse, signaling to other nations that the Qing dynasty was no longer a formidable power. Textbooks in Taiwan often teach that the Qing dynasty's downfall was due to its lack of a "maritime defense" mentality within the imperial court, which prioritized land-based "border defense" over naval power. This, combined with weak resolve and inconsistent policies, contributed to its decline. Additionally, empress dowager Cixi's (慈禧太后) diversion of naval funds to build the summer palace is considered one of the key factors behind the collapse of the beiyang navy.

Cai (2017) argues that the root cause of the Qing dynasty's decline lies in its feudal thinking and practices. Although the Qing understood the benefits of modernization, it did not fully embrace this understanding at its core. The entire nation, from top to bottom, was shaped by this conservative mindset and its supporting feudal political system, which helped solidify Cixi's position. This, in part, contributed to the Qing dynasty's defeat in the *Sino-Japanese war* (1894–95). It is also worth noting that, in 1885, when Taiwan was established as a province, the first governor, Liu Mingchuan, actively laid the foundations for Taiwan's modernization, particularly in terms of "naval defense." However, due to opposition from conservative feudal forces, Liu was eventually forced to retire and return to his hometown.

Wang (2003) argues that Confucianism, as a feudal ideology of statecraft, has fundamental flaws. It places excessive emphasis on tradition, reinforces class-based suppression of change, and fails to adapt to the rapidly evolving demands of modern society. This is particularly evident within the bureaucratic system. After the Manchu conquest of the Ming dynasty and their entry into the central plains, they recognized the significant role that Confucian teachings and the ethics of ruler and subject played in consolidating their rule. Their support for Confucianism was primarily driven by the need to quell Han Chinese anti-Qing sentiments and by political motives aimed at marginalizing the ideologies of the Manchu rulers (Feng, 1982).

Since the Ming-Qing transition, Han Chinese scholars have often invoked the concept of "the distinction between Chinese and barbarians" (華夷之辨) to challenge the legitimacy of Qing rule. In response, the Qing dynasty adopted Confucianism as its ideological foundation, promoting principles such as "revering Confucianism and valuing the Dao" (崇儒重道), alongside universal moral values like "the world is one family" (天下一家) and "the great righteousness between ruler and subject" (君臣大義)—principles intended to be universally applicable. In practice, these were aimed at fostering a national identity that transcended the distinction between "Han Chinese" and "barbarians" (Feng, 2014; Peng & Wu, 2003).

Luo and Cai (2014) point out that the entire course of the Sino-Japanese war was influenced by the United States. The Qing government enlisted John Watson Foster, the legal advisor to the United States embassy in China at the time, to mediate the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In January 1895, peace envoys Zhang Yinhan (張蔭桓) and Shao Youlian (邵友濂) traveled to Hiroshima, Japan (Anonymous, n.d.). However, Japan's plenipotentiary ministers, Itō Hirobumi and Mutsu Munemitsu, refused to negotiate, citing the insufficient authority of Zhang and Shao. Through the United States, Japan communicated that the envoys must include plenipotentiary ministers with full authority to cede territory, specifically naming Prince Gong (恭親王) or Li Hongzhang. Throughout the process, United States adviser Foster actively promoted and assisted Japan in securing Taiwan (Xu, 1995).

As early as the 1874 *Mudanshe incident*, United States consul in Xiamen Charles W. Le Gendre persuaded Japanese statesman Soejima Taneomi (副島種臣) to justify Japan's military intervention in Taiwan (Xia, 2021). The Meiji restoration in Japan, which took place between 1860 and 1880, was influenced by the 1853 *black ship* incident, when United States Navy Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry led a fleet into Edo Bay and forced the Tokugawa shogunate to sign the Treaty of Kanagawa, effectively ending Japan's 200-year-long policy of isolation. From the 1853 *black ship* incident to the present, USA-Japan cooperation and alliance have been ongoing, and Japan has never truly escaped the shadow of the United States, which has acted as a kind of agent. The opening of Japan's isolationist policy by Commodore Perry in 1853 marked the beginning of this enduring relationship.

5. The Yiwei War and Its Impact on the National Identity of the Taiwanese Han People

5.1. The Treaty of Shimonoseki Ceded Taiwan, the Penghu Islands, and Their Associated Islets

The Taiwan Yiwei anti-Japanese war (May 29, 1895–November 18, 1895) was the largest anti-Japanese military campaign in Taiwan's history, led by the Qing government. "Yiwei" refers to the Yiwei year in the traditional Chinese calendar. The war is also known by various names, including the "Yiwei war," "battle of Yiwei," "Yiwei campaign against the Japanese," and the "Yiwei incident." On the Japanese side, it is referred to as the "Taiwan pacification campaign," the "Taiwan expedition," or simply "Taiwan pacification" (Li, 2015). This anti-Japanese conflict underscored the "national identity" and "identity" of the Han people in Taiwan.

The Qing dynasty suffered a devastating defeat in the *Sino-Japanese war* and was forced to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Although Taiwan had not been directly involved in the conflict, it became one of the casualties of the war. During the *Sino-French war* (1883–85), Taiwan had been a battleground, with military engagements in areas such as Keelung, Tamsui, and the Penghu islands. However, following the *Sino-Japanese war*, which was triggered by Korea's tributary relationship with the Qing dynasty, Taiwan, the Penghu islands, and adjacent islets were ceded to Japan.

Zhang Zhidong (張之洞) once expressed his opposition to the cession of Taiwan to Li Hongzhang, the governor-general of Zhili and minister of Beiyang, and suggested granting Britain and Russia trading rights in Taiwan to counter Japan's demands (Xu 1995). Later, through the Chinese envoy in London, he attempted to use Taiwan as collateral to secure a loan from Britain, hoping to leverage British influence to prevent the cession; however, this was rejected by Britain (Yang, 2008).

Two days after the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Taiwan's governor-general, Tang Ching-sung (唐景崧), received a telegram from the capital, Beijing, informing him that Taiwan had been ceded to Japan and was no longer part of the Qing dynasty. The telegram instructed him to "issue a directive to all local gentry and people of Taiwan, urging them not to act out of temporary anger so as not to disrupt the overall situation." Tang quickly realized that it was futile to rely on the Qing court to negotiate with Japan to retain Taiwan. As a result, he proposed alternative solutions, such as making Taiwan a leased territory or using it as collateral, and sought to involve third-party powers like Britain, France, and Germany to protect Taiwan. Unfortunately, all these efforts failed (Wu, 1996). As governor-general, Tang was deeply concerned about Taiwan's future. The island's officials, gentry, and people continuously protested the cession, insisting that they would never submit to Japan's imperialism.

Later, Chen Jitong (陳季同), a former diplomat to France, arrived in Taiwan to meet with Tang Ching-sung and discuss strategies to save Taiwan. On May 19, a French admiral dispatched a warship to Taiwan. The Qing government, prioritizing the defense of the capital (Beijing) over Taiwan, sent a telegram on May 20 instructing Tang Ching-sung to comply with imperial orders: "You must immediately return to China to resume your duties and proceed to Beijing to meet with the emperor. All civil and military officials in Taiwan are to gradually return to China" (Wang n.d.).

On May 22, the French general remarked, "reclaiming land for the Qing dynasty is difficult, but protecting Taiwan is easier. Taiwan must stand on its own and have the right to self-govern... only if Taiwan is self-reliant can France have a legitimate reason to protect it" (Wang, 1970). These words greatly boosted the morale of Tang Ching-sung and other officials. On May 23, they issued the Taiwan democracy nation declaration of autonomy, declaring, in the name of "all the gentry and people of Taiwan," their intention to establish self-governance and resist Japanese rule. The telegram sent to the Qing court read:

"The people of Taiwan will not submit to Japan. We wish to become an island nation, forever loyal to the holy Qing dynasty. Taiwan belongs to Japan, but the people refuse to submit. We repeatedly ask governor Tang (Tang Ching-sung) to present the situation of the people of Taiwan to the court. However, the matter is beyond redemption, like a child who has lost its parents. The

sorrow is beyond words! With deep regret, Taiwan has been abandoned by the court. The common people, left without support, can only endure, viewing the land as an island nation—distant yet still under the protection of the imperial spirit, serving as a shield for the South Seas. But someone must lead us. The consensus is to retain governor Tang to continue managing Taiwan, and to leave Liu Yongfu (劉永福) to defend Tainan. We request that all countries be informed and assist us in our efforts. The gentry and people of Taiwan do not accept the cession of land. This action is simply a demonstration of our loyalty to the Qing dynasty, to strengthen our defenses, and to await a change in circumstances" (Luo, n.d.).

5.2. France's Demand for Taiwan's Independence as a Prerequisite for Protection

The telegrams sent by Tang Ching-sung to the capital clearly indicated that the Taiwan republic, under the era name "Yongqing" (永清) — "eternal Qing dynasty" — did not initially seek full independence. Its declaration of independence was not an end in itself but rather a diplomatic strategy aimed at securing foreign assistance for self-preservation. As long as France was willing to intervene, Taiwan pursued independence as a means of preventing Japan from annexing or occupying the island, thereby providing a legitimate basis for French protection. This approach was essentially consistent with the nature of the Sino-French war (1883–85), during which France occupied Vietnam. In this context, Taiwan sought to avoid being ruled by Japan, rather than seeking full independence or challenging the Qing dynasty.

Lamley (1968), in his work *The 1895 Taiwan republic: A significant episode in modern Chinese history*, points out that the Taiwan republic was "neither revolutionary, nor independent, nor truly democratic." The main impetus behind the establishment of the Taiwan republic was the national humiliation caused by the Treaty of Shimonoseki and the anger over Japan's invasion. This situation stirred feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction among Taiwan's officials, gentry, and the public, prompting them to establish a government in line with French suggestions. The purpose of this government was not to challenge the Qing dynasty but rather to resist foreign rule.

Tang Ching-sung first sent a telegram to various Qing government offices, expressing the concepts of "occupying Taiwan," "distant yet still under the protection of the imperial spirit," and a "deep loyalty to the Qing dynasty." He clearly conveyed his intention to protect the Qing dynasty's interests in Taiwan.

At that time, Zhang Zhongxin (張仲忻), the surveillance commissioner of Jiangnan, raised the following question to the court: "now that the war has ceased, should Taiwan be independent or not? Since it is all part of the Qing dynasty, what difference is there between the north and south? From this, I understand that the officials advising the nation may have the intention of using Taiwan to appease and flatter the enemy... if the war is not yet over, does this mean the Japanese will seize and occupy Taiwan by force, using it to threaten the people of Taiwan and cover up the shame of the Qing dynasty's cession of Taiwan? moreover, one could then say, 'they brought it upon themselves; it was not us who gave it away'" (Anonymous, n.d.). Since Taiwan needed to continue resisting Japan but could not do so under the name of a Qing province — in order to avoid violating treaties — it was deemed necessary to adopt the status of independence.

Taiwan's anti-Japanese resistance efforts were heavily influenced by certain Qing officials, with Zhang Zhidong being the most prominent. Using his position and old connections, Zhang worked with Tang Ching-sung, Liu Yongfu, and others to organize the resistance against Japan. Lee (1995) argues that the Taiwan republic was part of the Qing dynasty's strategy to use Taiwan as a diplomatic card, encouraging foreign intervention to prevent Taiwan from being ceded to Japan. According to *Three records of the cession of Taiwan*, it is noted: "Tang Ching-sung and the officials and gentry, aware that Taiwan was isolated, urgently sought assistance from Britain. However, Britain adhered to a policy of non-interference and could not offer support. They also appealed to France, but France, preoccupied with its conflict in Madagascar, was unable to help. Russia, focused on the Liaodong peninsula and far from Taiwan, had no interest in providing protection" (Luo, n.d.).

To prevent France from harboring any hopes of intervening in Taiwan, Japan officially declared on July 19, 1895, that the Taiwan strait would be designated as an international public shipping route. This move satisfied France's strategic needs for defense in the South China sea and its broader economic interests in East Asia. Furthermore, France, distracted by its conflict in Madagascar, was unable to focus on Taiwan (Hong, n.d.).

5.3. The Fleeting Republic of Taiwan (150 Days)

On May 24, 1895, filled with optimism, the officials and gentry of Taiwan sent a "declaration of autonomy" to the foreign consuls in Taiwan. The Taiwan republic was officially established the following day, on May 25, with Tang Ching-sung declaring the founding of the nation and assuming the office of its first president. Literary figure Qiu Fengjia (丘逢甲) was appointed as the commander of the volunteer army for all of Taiwan, while Liu Yongfu, responsible for the defense of the southern region, was entrusted with military leadership. Other key officials included Chen Jitong (陳季同) as the minister of foreign affairs, Yu Mingzhen (俞明震) as the minister of the interior, and Li Bingrui (李秉瑞) as the minister of military affairs. Lin Weiyuan (林維源) was elected as the speaker of the national assembly. Local officials retained their previous positions, with Lin Chaodong (林朝棟) appointed as prince shaobao, succeeding Lin Wenchang (林文察), and taking command of the military. Qiu Fengjia recommended Wu Tangxing (吳湯興), a scholar from Miaoli, who had raised his own volunteer army. Tang Ching-sung subsequently appointed Qiu Fengjia as head of Taiwan's military defense (Wu, 2014).

Upon hearing of the instability in Taiwan, the Japanese authorities appointed admiral Kabayama Sukenori as the first governor-general of Taiwan on May 10. In addition to this, he was tasked with leading the imperial guard division and the regular expeditionary fleet to prepare for the conquest of Taiwan. Meanwhile, president Tang Ching-sung sought to calm the population, reorganize Taiwan's defenses, and secure recognition and protection from foreign nations. However, none of the foreign countries were willing to offer assistance. Despite the enthusiasm of the officials, Taiwan could not prevent the Japanese military from using force to take control. On May 28, admiral Kabayama Sukenori led 5,000 troops and 15 warships, landing at Sandiaojiao (now Gongliang, Taipei), the easternmost point of Taiwan island.

On May 30, prince Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa, commander of the imperial guard division, also landed at Sandiaojiao. By June 2, the Japanese forces had captured Ruifang (瑞芳), and by June 3, they

had seized Keelung, forcing the retreating volunteer army into Taipei, which led to unrest. On June 4, the defeated volunteer army set fire to government institutions, causing internal chaos in Taipei city. In this critical moment, president Tang Ching-sung abandoned his commitments to both Taiwan and the Qing dynasty. He fled by night to Huwei (now Tamsui), and on June 6, boarded the German merchant ship *Arthur* at Huwei, escaping to Xiamen (廈門). This event reflected the overly optimistic misjudgment of the international situation by Tang Ching-sung and other officials.

Tang's flight under the cover of night, abandoning both the people of Taiwan and the volunteer forces, was in stark contrast to his earlier impassioned appeals to the Qing dynasty for a military commission. His earlier fervent promises of "loyalty and survival" and his vows to "defend to the death" had been full of zeal and rhetoric. Yet, when the Japanese army arrived in Keelung, he panicked and fled, earning him the nickname "ten-day president" (Lee, 1995). The difference between a hero and a coward, as history often shows, can be defined by a single moment of decision. After fleeing to Xiamen, the Qing dynasty ceased supplying military arms to Taiwan, effectively abandoning the resistance. The Taiwan republic, originally established to prevent Taiwan's cession to Japan, quickly faded into a fleeting dream (Luo, 2015).

Meanwhile, various government officials abandoned their posts and hurried back to the Qing dynasty. Soldiers and bandits took advantage of the situation, plundering the city. Taipei descended into chaos, with widespread burning, killing, and looting, leaving bodies scattered across the streets. gentlemen such as Liu Tingyu (劉廷玉), Chen Rulin (陳儒林), and foreign merchants like Li Chunsheng (李春生), along with English merchant Thomson, German merchant Ohly, and American journalist James Wheeler Davidson, gathered to discuss the possibility of meeting the Japanese at Shuiqijiao (now Xizhi) in order to restore order in Taipei. At the same time, Gu Xianrong (辜顯榮), a businessman from Lukang (鹿港), witnessing the disorder and lack of leadership in the city, also proposed the same plan. The Japanese military entered Taipei without resistance and swiftly restored order (Luo, n.d.).

In the Hsinchu and Miaoli regions, Qiu Fengjia, the leader of the militia, continued to lead the resistance after learning of Tang Ching-sung's flight. Initially, Qiu had planned to share Taiwan's fate, but was dissuaded by military officers and local gentry, who advised him that dying in vain would serve no purpose. Xie Daolong (謝道隆), a local leader, counseled him, saying, "although Taiwan may be lost, if we strengthen the motherland, we can recover the land and avenge the shame. It is better to return to the Qing." (Tang, 2023). Following the earnest advice of his subordinates, Qiu Fengjia fled to Qing on July 26. He departed from Wuyi harbor in Taichung (now Wuqiu harbor), boarding a merchant fishing boat. Before leaving, filled with frustration, he styled himself as a "surviving subject of the East Sea" and composed the famous "poem of leaving Taiwan," which consisted of six verses. On August 1, he landed at Quanzhou port in Fujian. Qiu Fengjia's actions — from swearing to live and die with Taiwan to fleeing back to the Qing dynasty — resulted in a polarized historical evaluation and ongoing controversy regarding his legacy (Zeng & Yang, 2015).

As the Japanese army continued its southward advance, prince Kitashirakawa Yoshihisa (北白川宮能久親王), commander of the

northern forces, died in battle in October 1895. Some accounts suggest, however, that he succumbed to tropical diseases (Kerr, 1974). At the time, Taiwan's environment was plagued with malaria, cholera, typhus, and dysentery, which resulted in a devastating death toll among the Japanese forces. Meanwhile, key figures of the Taiwanese republic continued to flee to the Qing. On June 26, Liu Yongfu, who had been stationed in the south, assumed the position of the second president. However, with no support from the Qing government, no reinforcements, and depleted supplies and ammunition, Liu was forced to issue government silver notes in Tainan (similar to today's "national bonds"), also known as the "Liu imperial envoy silver stamps," to raise funds for the military. He also sent people to collect taxes. Many wealthy merchants in the south fled to Xiamen, and the general populace faced severe hardships.

By mid-October, the Japanese army, continuously reinforced, began advancing toward the vicinity of Tainan city (Xu, 1995). Faced with the dire situation and isolated resistance, Liu Yongfu, recognizing that the cause was lost, decided to flee. On October 15 (the 26th day of the 8th lunar month), under the pretext of inspecting the troops at Anping, he hired the British-flagged ship *Thales* to escape to Xiamen (Luo, n.d.). On October 18, the local gentry in Tainan, following the example set in Taipei, approached the British pastor Thomas Barclay and Song Zhongjian (宋忠堅), urging them to negotiate with the Japanese for a peaceful entry into the city. Their efforts facilitated the Japanese forces' entry into Tainan, restoring order and marking the official collapse of the Taiwanese Republic after only 150 days of existence.

5.4. The Rule of a Foreign Ethnic Group Sparked a Sense of National Identity Among Taiwan's Inhabitants

The Treaty of Shimonoseki prompted governor Tang Ching-sung (president Tang) to seek assistance from France in an attempt to resist Japanese control with external support. However, this effort ultimately marked the beginning of Taiwan's emerging anti-Japanese consciousness, which had a profound impact on the subsequent national, ethnic, and self-identity of the Taiwanese Han people (Zhu, 2015). Before the Yiwei war, the identity of the Taiwanese Han people was primarily rooted in local culture and ethnic ties. However, after the war, the conflict significantly altered their understanding of identity, creating a clear distinction between the Taiwanese Han and the Japanese Yamato people (Huang, 2019).

During Japan's colonization of Taiwan, the Japanese referred to themselves as "mainland people," subject to Japan's "mainland laws." In contrast, the Taiwanese residents were considered "island people," governed by the "colonial laws" enforced by the Taiwan governor-general's office. As a result, there were significant differences in the rights and obligations of these two groups (Huang, 2016). The distinction between "mainland" and "island" was closely tied to the concepts of center and periphery. Referring to the Japanese as "mainland people" implied the centrality of the Yamato ethnicity, while positioning Taiwan as a peripheral region. This concept of periphery was internalized by the Japanese, who used it to forge a distinct sense of self, while the Taiwanese "island people" grew increasingly disconnected from both the Qing dynasty and their ancestral homelands in Fujian and Guangdong. Over time, the Japanese were perceived as more alien, evolving into a foreign ethnicity, distinct from the Taiwanese Han.

With Taiwan's transition from Qing rule to Japanese colonization, its residents shifted from being subjects of the Qing dynasty to

inhabitants of a Japanese colony. This transformation involved a shift from Han culture to Japanese culture, including the adoption of Japanese education, language, and customs. These changes profoundly influenced the Taiwanese people's understanding of their own identity and self-recognition.

National identity is typically defined by shared characteristics such as culture, language, history, religion, and values, and often manifests as loyalty to a nation or ethnic group. Identity recognition refers to an individual or group's understanding and acknowledgment of their own identity, encompassing dimensions such as ethnicity, culture, religion, and gender. This process not only shapes personal self-awareness but also influences interactions with others and social relationships (Yuan, 2011).

From the moment Japan took control of Taiwan, it regarded the land and its inhabitants as spoils of the Sino-Japanese war. While Taiwan was incorporated into Japan's territory, its people were treated differently. Taiwanese residents were often viewed as "people abandoned by the Qing," rather than as Japanese. Those who resisted or opposed Japanese rule were subjected to brutal repression and massacres. Under Japanese colonial rule, the Taiwanese endured both discrimination and exploitation, which fueled widespread anti-Japanese sentiment. This, in turn, ignited a sense of national identity focused on self-preservation and self-determination among the people of Taiwan (Lin, 1995).

5.5. The Shifting Situation After the Yiwei War: Gentry and Wealthy Merchants Flee to the Qing dynasty

After Kabayama Sukenori quelled the internal unrest in Taiwan, the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki granted Taiwanese residents a two-year grace period to choose their nationality. During this transitional period, those who did not wish to become Japanese subjects were allowed to sell their property and leave Taiwan freely. However, if they failed to depart by the deadline, they would automatically become Japanese nationals (Taiwan Governor-General's Office Police Bureau, 1938).

In the aftermath of the Yiwei war, many Taiwanese officials and wealthy merchants fled to the Qing dynasty. According to a Japanese investigation, those who left for the Qing dynasty did so for one of four reasons: first, they owned land in the Qing dynasty; second, they held academic or official titles from the Qing dynasty; third, they were not accustomed to Japanese laws, customs, or lifestyle; and fourth, they were laborers without a fixed residence, misled by rumors, or seeking to escape epidemics (Chen, 2013).

The Japanese government hoped that all the Han people in Taiwan would return to the Qing dynasty. However, the outcome was unexpectedly different. By the deadline of May 8, 1897, only 4,456 people had left, accounting for just 0.17% of Taiwan's population, which was approximately 2,545,731 at the time. As a result, under Japan's nationality law, those who remained became subjects of the Japanese colonial state. This was not because the Han people in Taiwan were eager to become subjects of the Japanese empire, but because they had migrated to Taiwan from their ancestral homelands in Fujian and Guangdong in search of survival. Their ancestral regions had already lost most of their wealth, and returning there would not guarantee their livelihood. The decision to stay in Taiwan was driven by harsh realities: they had already put down roots on the island, with several generations now established there, and they were unwilling to abandon the businesses and lives they had worked so hard to build. This

reflected the fact that the Han migrants from Fujian and Guangdong had truly settled in Taiwan and made it their home.

6. Conclusion

The Treaty of Shimonoseki marked the Qing dynasty's abandonment of Taiwan, especially its border regions. Taiwan became a scapegoat for the corruption and stagnation of the Qing dynasty, symbolizing the conflict between the conquering Japanese and the Taiwanese resistance. The entire process was characterized by extreme anxiety and uncertainty. The establishment of the republic of Taiwan was a direct result of the Qing dynasty's decline and Japan's invasion. Although it ultimately failed to withstand the powerful Japanese military offensive and was destroyed, the patriots who participated in the resistance embodied the Taiwanese Han people's sense of national identity, ethnic identity, and connection to the land of Taiwan. They resisted foreign rule in order to protect the dignity of their nation, their ethnic group, and their people, with the goal of liberating Taiwan from Japanese control. While the republic of Taiwan lasted only 150 days, it left a lasting impact on Taiwan's anti-Japanese history, representing the Taiwanese Han people's pursuit of national, ethnic, and self-identity.

Taiwan's last governor, Tang Ching-sung, along with local officials and scholars, sought to protect the nation's sovereignty by declaring the establishment of the "republic of Taiwan" and conveying this message to the world. However, this action reflected a mindset of "mentality of a lone minister and a wicked son." When the Japanese army landed at Bashi strait, the elites of the Republic of Taiwan—including Tang Ching-sung, Liu Yongfu, and other Qing-educated officials—were criticized by some scholars for making grandiose claims without a genuine resolve to resist Japan. Faced with an untenable situation, they abandoned Taiwan like a worn-out garment and fled back to the Qing dynasty. Only the brave patriots, determined to defend their homeland, villages, property, and dignity, remained. Armed with rudimentary weapons, they fought against the Japanese army, which was equipped with modern weaponry. Despite their valiant efforts, they ultimately could not escape the tragic fate of being "meat on somebody's chopping block."

Looking back at this period of history, it is clear that Taiwan had two significant opportunities to break free from Japanese rule. The first occurred before the intervention of the three powers (Russia, Germany, and France) in the Liaodong peninsula. At that time, the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki were still uncertain, and Japan's military presence in Taiwan was relatively small—smaller even than that of the Taiwanese volunteer forces. However, the Qing dynasty sent a telegram instructing Tang Ching-sung to emphasize that "Beijing is in danger," fearing that Japan might shift its focus to the capital. As a result, the Qing authorities prohibited the Taiwanese volunteers from resisting. The second opportunity came after Japan had occupied Taiwan. Due to the ongoing Taiwanese resistance, the difficulties of governing the island, and the rampant spread of infectious diseases, Japan briefly considered the possibility of relinquishing control over Taiwan.

This study examines Taiwan's resistance against the Japanese invasion, triggered by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, through the lenses of national identity, ethnic identity, and self-identity. It explores how the shared fate of Taiwan and the Qing dynasty was shaped, leaving a lasting impact on successive generations of Taiwanese people and influencing their ethnic and national

identities to varying degrees. During field research, the researcher discovered that the legends deeply rooted in the memories of ancestors continue to play an active role in the daily lives of the people of Taiwan. These legends are not simply distant historical memories; they represent the lived experiences of individuals and their families. In this way, they subtly foster a blending of indigenous consciousness and local identity among the people of Taiwan.

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