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# Historiography of the Other: Global History and the Indigenous Pasts of Taiwan

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## Abstract

This article argues that Taiwan's distinctive historical position—at the centre of multiple overlapping colonial jurisdictions and historiographical traditions—furnishes an important opportunity to consider how indigenous pasts and experiences themselves played a role in disrupting or redirecting historical narratives of global connection. It examines texts by Ming travellers Chen Di (*Dongfan ji*, 1603) and Zhang Xie (*Dong Xi yang kao*, 1603); Dominican writers, including Jacinto Esquivel (1632); and later histories of early modern Japanese expansion and the dissemination of the Sinkan Manuscripts (Murakami, 1897, 1933). What all these foreign observers of Taiwan had in common was their struggle to integrate Taiwanese indigenous pasts into their existing grids of historical knowledge. By focusing on this 'historiography of the other', the article challenges commonplace assumptions regarding pre-modern foreign relations and indigenous forms of social organisation, showing how Taiwan can play a role in challenging operating foci of global history.

## Keywords

early modern – encounter – ethnography – historiography – colonialism

How does Taiwan, particularly its Austronesian peoples, matter to global history? By 'global history', we mean past and current efforts to write narratives of connection and comparison at scales both above and below those of a single region (Drayton & Motadel, 2018: 13). Joining long-standing calls to define global history beyond its Eurocentric focus—to include past traditions of narration that reflect on 'large and connected geographical spaces' in order 'to understand how their past articulated with their present' (Subrahmanyam, 2005: 30)—we argue that Taiwan's distinctive position as the subject of multiple overlapping historiographical traditions furnishes an important opportunity to consider how indigenous pasts and experiences themselves played a role in disrupting early modern narratives of global connection. It has long been recognised that Taiwan's history is a multilayered reflection of global interactions between indigenous peoples,<sup>1</sup> colonial settlers, and colonial administrations (Ts'ao, 2000). Indigenous experience in particular has played an important role in recent historical efforts to narrate Taiwan's precolonial and colonial past using Dutch and Japanese colonial archives (Andrade, 2008; Barclay, 2017; Chiu, 2008; Kang, 2006), and to show how its native peoples played critical roles in shaping and resisting the extension of the modern state under global capitalism (Barclay, 2017). Others have added to historiographical knowledge by accessing colonial indigenous lives through material objects and oral histories (Ziomek, 2019). In this essay, we contribute to these conversations but also try to go beyond them. We focus in particular on sources in Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese languages which taken together offer an important lens through which to view the role played by Taiwan's indigenous peoples in writing about global pasts in the early modern period: these sources include texts by Ming travellers Chen Di (*Dongfan ji*, 1603) and Zhang Xie (*Dong Xi yang kao*, 1617); Dominican writers Jacinto Esquivel (*Memoria de las cosas pertenecientes al estado de la Isla Hermosa* and *Memoria de lo perteneciente al estado de la nueva conversion de la Isla Hermosa*, both 1632)<sup>2</sup> and Diego Aduarte (*Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*, 1640); as well as work by the Taiwan-based Japanese colonial historian Murakami Naojirō (Murakami, 1897, 1933), who was responsible for ordering and disseminating influential work on early modern Taiwan history.

1 This article uses 'indigenous peoples' and 'Taiwan aborigines' to translate the concept Taiwan *yuanzhumin* (臺灣原住民), an officially used term deriving from the self-identification of these groups.

2 Archivo de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario (University of Santo Tomas, Manila), Libros, tomo 49, ff. 306–316f.; ff. 317–324. Jacinto Esquivel's 1632 reports are reprinted in Borao (2001).

What all these foreign observers of Taiwan had in common was their struggle to integrate the substance and sources of Taiwanese indigenous pasts into their existing grids of historical knowledge, space, and ideas of social organisation. But consequently, such indigenous encounters forced all these writers to formulate new narratives of global connection that could take account of those distinctive pasts and their relation to the larger world. Each of these writers conceptualised that larger world differently: for Chen and Zhang, Taiwan lay in the 'Eastern Seas' outside both the cultural and territorial jurisdiction of the Ming dynasty, yet trade and conversation connected its islanders to China, Japan, the Philippines, and beyond. The seventeenth-century Spaniards saw Taiwan as part of 'the Far East' (*extremo oriente*), an area roughly equivalent to modern East and Southeast Asia—a spatialisation nearly identical to Murakami's 'Southern Seas' geography. These foreign observers tried to integrate what they thought they saw and understood into their existing knowledge grids, although notably we lack accounts of how the islanders imagined their own geography, not to mention that of their colonisers (of the kind David Chang has explored for native Hawaiians, see Chang, 2016: ix).<sup>3</sup>

Yet, by writing Taiwan into these larger worlds, each writer also confronted indigenous agency—by which we mean, not the authentic voices of seventeenth-century islanders, which are largely absent from these texts, but rather the capacity of Taiwan's native peoples to influence the terms on which they were integrated in larger-than-local processes, as illustrated in the texts produced by their observers and colonisers. By focusing on this 'historiography of the other', we show how Taiwan can play a role not only as a subject of global history but also as a challenge to its operating principles and foci. Coming to grips with the indigenous pasts of Taiwan entails comprehending multiple, overlapping historiographical traditions that generally misrepresent those who did not produce an archive written in their own words. But it also entails recognising how such traditions, and the archives they make possible, can reveal shortcomings in existing literature in global history and validate the agency of indigenous peoples in the writing of global history.

Our comparative analysis reveals the surprising observation that while nearly all sources comment on the lack of leaders or a clear structure of governance in Taiwanese society, the Chinese and Spanish sources do not as a result impose a primitive–civilised binary on the native peoples. This binary

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3 While nineteenth-century encounters in and around Hawaii arguably offer a superior material base for an empirical study of indigenous agency in forging pasts and futures, we have found Chang's vivid examples of an alternative perspective on the people and structures the indigenes imagined on their own terms instructive for the present study.

comes into play only when Taiwan is written into the more self-consciously 'global' history of connections in Murakami's imperialist 'Southern Seas history' (*Nan'yō shi*), modelled on the self-fulfilling historical narratives of European colonial expansion. For the early modern period, indigenous agency as we define it appears more prominently in Chinese and Spanish sources than we might expect, offering new models for envisioning relationships between native peoples and putative outsiders. Although none of those relationships were fully reciprocal or equal, these writers nevertheless structure global encounters by historicising processes of interaction and encounter, rather than by upholding notions of progress or civilisation.

## 1 Multiple Narratives, Diverse Traditions

Among the earliest written sources we have about the indigenous people of Taiwan—called 'Formosa' in contemporary European writing, and 'Dongfan' in contemporary Chinese sources and standard histories (Zhu, 1959: 22)—are Chen Di's *Record of Formosa* (東番記, *Dongfan ji*) and the section on 'Jilong and Danshui (Tamshui)' in Zhang Xie's encyclopaedic compendium on south-east Asia, *Investigation of the Eastern and Western Oceans* (*Dong Xi yang kao*) (Zhang & Lin, 2009).<sup>4</sup> It is therefore not surprising that their texts would be copied repeatedly, often with some modification, into prefectural and provincial gazetteers and other 'factual' sources of material about the island for a Chinese readership.<sup>5</sup> Fragments and information from their accounts, which partially overlap, appear not only in later Chinese sources after the annexation of the island by the Qing in 1684 but also in modern scholarship in multiple languages. Both texts played a major role in contributing to Japanese imperial understanding of Taiwan's history and ethnography: Chen's text provided key place names for Tanaka Katsumi's history of Zheng Chenggong's regime, and his handwritten notes on the text enabled the Taiwanese historian Hao

4 Although *Dongfan ji* is widely translated as a 'record of eastern barbarians' (e.g. Teng, 2006; Thompson, 1964), in only two places in Chen's text (discussed below) can the term *Dongfan* grammatically function as meaning 'eastern barbarians'. Everywhere else it appears in the text, the term follows well-documented Ming-era usage to refer unequivocally to the island itself, not its inhabitants. For that reason, we translate the title of the work as *Record of Formosa*.

5 Fang (1965: 66) offers a chart showing the process by which Chen's text (or portions of it) was copied, redacted, and summarised throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in other texts, including Zhang's *Investigation* as well as the Ming standard history (*Mingshi*).

Fang to later piece together clues about its authorship (Fang, 1959). We might also safely assume that Japanese maritime treatises of the 1620s and 1630s used Zhang's work in addition to their own research in collaboration with Dutch and Chinese seagoing merchants: in Japan, copies of Zhang's 12 scrolls circulated soon after its publication in 1618—which also happens to be the same year the Japanese captain and seasoned traveller Ikeda Kōun wrote the navigational work *Genna Kōkaisho* (Shapinski, 2006: 16–20). In Western scholarship, Zhang's text served as one basis for the authoritative, and reprinted, history of southeast Asia culled from Chinese sources in 1880 by W. P. Groeneveldt, in which is contained some of the only English-language translations of Zhang's work (Groeneveldt, 1960), even as it also influenced later Qing understanding of the Chinese maritime frontier (Po, 2018: 188). Zhang's account rose again to prominence in Sinophone academia in the 1930s, as research in the emerging field of historical geography gained momentum. Scholars such as Yong Wang and Juren Cao sought out Zhang's work as a means of charting the transnational and trans-civilisational flows of people and ideas in China's past (Xue, 1935: 38). Most recently, scholars in Taiwan studies use Chen as a source for reconstructing the precolonial or 'pre-invasion' history of the island (Chou, 2003; Jacobs, 2016; Li, 2001; see also Thompson, 1964).

These accounts join a significant archive of Castilian-language materials produced over 16 years of military and missionary efforts to integrate Taiwan (called *La Isla Hermosa*—a direct translation of the Portuguese labelling of the island as 'Formosa') into the vast Spanish Empire from 1626 to 1642 and to administer it from the Philippines. As with the Chinese and Japanese authors we discuss (with the exception of Zhang Xie), these Spanish authors also personally visited the island and had first-hand contact with most of the people and circumstances they described. While fragmented and often misguided, their accounts nevertheless include indirect attempts to get to terms with the past of the natives and thus contribute to a historiography of the other. The Dominican friar Jacinto Esquivel made the most significant contribution in this regard. His descriptions of the aborigines in the northeast of the island was copied by contemporaries including his Dominican superior Diego Aduarte (1640, 1693), a century later by the Jesuit Pedro Murillo Velarde (1749), and at the beginning of the twentieth century by Dominican José María Álvarez (1915).

These texts, like those in Chinese, thus played an obvious load-bearing role in developing both a history of Taiwan since its earliest colonial moment and the global historical narratives sufficient to contain it. They are therefore uniquely suited to comprehending how both contemporary and later writers (including the authors of this essay) could situate Taiwan. They shape how we

interpret the agency of the island's indigenous peoples in contributing to trade and exchange in the South China Seas and how we might and do integrate them into global narratives broader than those of any particular group, regime, or island. This agency, as we will see, is often articulated in the foreign authors' conviction that change came from contact with the outside world. However, by listening closely to indigenous silences, we can also intimate how native peoples expressed intentions and indeed shaped a shared future within larger regions, despite their subsequent marginalisation in Eurocentric narratives of progress.

## 2 Early Modern Chinese and Spanish Perspectives on the Taiwan Islanders

By the time Chen Di arrived on the shores of Taiwan in 1602 at the age of 60, as a military advisor in the retinue of General Shen Yourong, he was already a seasoned traveller. Born to a lower-class literati family in Lianjiang, Fujian, Chen spent most of his career in the military, most prominently as a garrison commander along the Great Wall, and retired at the age of 43 to travel. He continued to read and write, producing shortly after his trip to Taiwan an authoritative study of rhyme patterns in the ancient text *Mao Odes*, which contributed to his later reputation as a progenitor of the Qing *kaozheng* (evidential studies) movement.<sup>6</sup> Chen Di's short yet detailed account of the Austronesian inhabitants of the southwest plain of Taiwan, *Record of Formosa*, was included in a larger compendium of work, *Words of Praise from the Fujian Sea* (閩海贈言, *Minhai zengyan*), celebrating Shen's success at ridding the island of pirates who were threatening trade and livelihoods along the south China coast (Shen, 1959). Although sometimes invoked as an exemplar of the 'primitivist tropes' of Chinese 'colonial discourse' (Teng, 2006: 66)—a point to which we return below—Chen's information about the social and political lives of the islanders is, to the contrary, factual and precise. Presumably, his access to this knowledge was facilitated by his meeting with an indigenous person, whose name he transcribes into Chinese as Da-mi-la. This person led several scores of people in greeting Shen and his entourage when they moored at Dayuan (in present-day

6 This biographical information is digested from Mao (1973). For information on the relationship between Chen and Shen, and more information on their expedition to Taiwan, see Li (2001).

Anping, near Tainan), to thank them for clearing the island of its pirate scourge (Chen, 1959: 27).<sup>7</sup>

Chen begins his account by noting that he 'does not know the origins of the foreign people of Dongfan', only that they now live divided into villages (社, *she*) in places such as Little Danshui and Dagou Peak, on an island in the seas beyond Penghu (Chen, 1959: 24).<sup>8</sup> These peoples, he observes, are of extremely diverse kinds, as the many village names he enumerates bears out (24). His subsequent description of life on Taiwan does not differentiate between different village customs, but Chen was almost certainly describing the Siraya people, one of at least five aboriginal groups on the southwest Taiwan plain (Ferrell, 1971: 217).

He mentions that villages often fight with their neighbours and take heads; these heads are then dried of their skins and hung above doors (Chen, 1959: 25). In trading, they use a knotted cord to keep track of accounts and do not irrigate their fields, preferring rather to engage in swidden agriculture (25). He observes that they grow large and small kinds of beans, sesame, and barley; consume coconuts, persimmons, Buddha hand fruit, and sugarcane; and have domesticated cats, dogs, pigs, and chickens but no horses, cows, ducks, or sheep (26). He also includes an interesting rumination on the nature of culinary tastes, when he records the indigenous practice of cutting open deer intestines to eat the faeces inside (26). Rather than dismiss this as a disgusting and backward custom, Chen rather observes that the indigenous people think the Chinese habit of eating chicken is similarly repugnant. In fact, he goes further to ask, 'Who knows what the correct taste is? And how can there be similarities in what people have a liking for?' (26).

Chen's narrative offers the richest and most extensive detail in relation to the marriage and funeral practices of these indigenous people, which modern anthropologists have identified as uxorilocal forms governed by age grade institutions and village endogamy (Ferrell, 1971: 220; Shepherd, 1993: 44, 1995). Chen observes that the inhabitants welcome the birth of a daughter far more

7 In the only full English translation of this text, Thompson assumes that Da-mi-la is a 'barbarian chief' who led 'men' to greet Shen and his crew. However, the text merely speaks of a 'barbarian called Da-mi-la' (*yi mu Da Mi La*) who led 'people' (*ren*). Given that Chen notes the lack of leaders in indigenous society as well as the prominent roles played by women (as the following discussion will show), Thompson's interpolations are supported neither grammatically nor by the actual contents of the text. In what follows, we have referred to Thompson's translation but provide our own English translations to avoid this and other errors made by Thompson.

8 To avoid repeated citation, we subsequently refer to the page numbers of Chen's text in parentheses.



than a son, because it is she who continues to live with her parents and maintain the family line. After a series of night-time rendezvous with the young man of her choice, only after the birth of their child will a young woman go to the man's home and formally take him into the home of her own parents (Chen, 1959: 25).

Although he observes that, due to their fear of the sea, the inhabitants tend not to have traffic with other barbarians (27), he nevertheless makes special mention of the contacts they have had with people from outside:

At the start of the Yongle period [c. 1405], when the ships of the eunuch Zheng [He] sailed the seas to instruct various barbarians, the eastern barbarians alone hid far away and did not submit.<sup>9</sup> As a result, families [there] were each bequeathed a brass bell meant to hang around their necks, to make them like dogs [showing their submission to the Chinese]; to this day these are passed on as a treasure. In the beginning they all lived together along the coastline; but at the end of the Jiajing period [c. 1560], they suffered calamity at the hands of the Japanese [likely pirates], and as a result fled to live in the mountains. The Japanese were skilled at using muskets, whereas the eastern barbarians relied only on spears, so they were not able to engage them. After living in the mountains, they began to have traffic with China, which today increases daily. People in the harbours of Huimin, Chonglong, and Liuyu in Zhangzhou and Quanzhou frequently translate their languages and trade with them. They trade such things as agates, porcelain, cloth, salt and brass pins and bracelets, in exchange for deer meat, skins and horns. (26–27)

Chen here notes how the practices and engagements of these peoples have changed through time, particularly in response to ongoing global interaction. Notably, this interaction was not passive; they refused to 'submit' to the Zheng He expedition and refigured the brass bells meant to mark their subordination into family treasures. They also taught their languages to harbour-dwelling Chinese and engaged them in trade to acquire goods of value to them. Chen does express concern over such changes, however: ongoing trade with Chinese for 'shoddy products', he fears, will erode the simple days of these people, and lead to their growing 'awareness' (*wu*) (27).

Emma Teng has argued on the basis of such statements that Chen's text inaugurates a 'discourse of primitivism' in Chinese discussions of Taiwan,

9 Notably, this and the line below are the only places in Chen Di's entire text where 'eastern barbarians' is a grammatically correct translation of 'dongfan'.



claiming that it draws more from the *Laozi's* image of simple society in the *Dao De Jing* than from the reality of native lives on the island (2006: 65–66). Yet Chen's description of the native peoples—which explicitly notes their head-hunting, inter-village warfare, ongoing contact with foreigners, and the change in their society over time alongside these encounters—tallies with later Dutch accounts and directly contradicts the tropes of peacefulness, timelessness, and simplicity that Teng claims characterise Chen's report. Although ethnocentrism is nearly unavoidable in any report of this kind, Chen's approach is overall remarkably factual and detail-oriented, adhering closely to the historicist (even iconoclastic) spirit of the philological work for which he was known among his contemporaries and later scholars (e.g. Elman, 2001: 61; Rong, 1969: 270–283). The ethnographic details of the *Record* have, moreover, supported comparative historical analysis by modern anthropologists and historians (e.g. Kang, 2003; Shepherd, 1995).<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Chen refers to the islanders more frequently as 'people' (*min*) rather than as 'barbarians' (*yi*), the latter being the normatively loaded term that would have been the expected usage in such situations.

With his *Record*, Chen straddled an odd dividing line between two different, seemingly contrasting genres of historical narrative. First, in detailing his journey to Taiwan as a first-hand record (*ji*) of wondrous things seen and heard, Chen employs a genre known as 'tales of the strange'. In such tales, travellers relate their experience with strange or foreign peoples or places, forming a 'record' (*ji*) that recalls 'interesting places visited by an author' (Franke, 1988: 728). Often these accounts were decried by contemporary historical writers such as Shizhen Wang, who saw their primary purpose as not to inform but to 'startle' or flatter its readers (Franke, 1988: 731–732). Such accounts thus contrasted sharply with an emerging tendency in late Ming literati writing that emphasised authentication and verification of historical sources, out of recognition (as Wang says) that some writers were 'unrestrained and skilful in concealing the truth', even as their own records contained valuable information that 'cannot be discarded' (cited in Franke 1988: 732; cf. J. Chen, 2010: 1087). Yet in claiming an accuracy to his account, noting that 'I personally witnessed these people and things' (Chen, 1959: 27), and by framing his narrative of indigenous peoples' way of life within a reflective consideration of the limitations of his own society, Chen also evinces commitment to the verification and contextualisation that mark his germinal work in *kaozheng* scholarship, which took a comparative and historicist approach to ancient texts.

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10 For a more thorough critique of Teng's reading of Chen's *Record*, see Jenco (2021).

It is, in fact, by tacking between these two genres of record-making—one committed to provoking wonder and the other to verification of the past—that Chen makes space for an approach to life very different from his own. At the end of his account, Chen offers a concluding statement that summarises the ways in which his encounter with the indigenous Formosans has given rise to new kinds of insights. He does this by situating himself as the ‘unofficial historian’ (*yeshi*) of the island. As Jack W. Chen has argued, such ‘unofficial’ histories expose the epistemological limits of standard histories: whereas the claim to factuality of standard histories is inextricable from the universalising claims to dynastic authority, accounts (such as Chen Di’s) that foreground the private authority of eyewitness experience point to contingent and particular modes of life that standard histories are unable to recognise (J. Chen, 2010: 1073, 1077). Chen Di’s framing of the *Record* as a kind of ‘unofficial history’ therefore suggests that what he offers is a narrative of the past, different from that told of Chinese as well as of non-Chinese groups (cf. Pidhainy, 2008). He focuses on the comparative differences between the indigenous Formosans and other non-Chinese, particularly regarding their lack of writing or calendars.

The ‘southern pirates’ and ‘northern slaves’ [likely the Japanese and Jurchens] all have writing . . . one presumes that at the beginning there were wise men who invented it. Why should this place alone have been lacking [such wise men]? (Chen, 1959: 27)

Yet, he argues, this lack is not necessarily to be interpreted as a problem: ‘when they have eaten to the full and are enjoying themselves, contented and happy, what need have they for wise men?’ he asks. He concludes that the indigenous islanders ‘are people of Wuhuai and Getian!’—mythical emperors known for their effective governance (27). As with his discussion of indigenous cuisine, Chen here seems to be prompted by his knowledge of the indigenes to ruminate on the requirements for a fulfilling life. By integrating the indigenous peoples and their experience into an ‘unofficial history’, moreover, Chen endorses the idea of writing a history of peoples without recourse to the lines of power and forms of technology (including that of writing) that organise ‘official histories’, such as those that document past Chinese dynasties.

Chen’s short 1,500-character essay was the earliest first-hand written account of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan in any language: the Dutch East India Company records that eventually formed the core archive of indigenous history for later ethnographers were not produced for another two decades, and did not circulate widely among Chinese or Japanese scholarship until

the twentieth century. But this did not mean that East Asians were unaware of life in Taiwan before that point. Sailors and merchants from the south China coast—among the ‘pirates’ whose lairs on the island Shen was sent to eliminate—had ongoing relations with indigenous people well before Chen’s visit. These relations were at times intimate and long-lasting; some privateers even settled in native villages or established residences in Tainan and Jilong (Keelung) (Ferrell, 1971: 217). Some of this knowledge about the inhabitants of Taiwan is documented in Zhang Xie’s *Dong Xi yang kao* (*Investigation of the Eastern and Western Seas*), a collection in 12 volumes published around 1618. Like Chen, Zhang too was from an established literati family but did not pursue a typical civil service career. He enjoyed travelling and was a known associate of the famous Ming traveller Xu Xiake (Xue, 1935: 33). Most of his scholarly output is no longer extant; of what survives the authoritative Qing compendium *Siku quanshu* contains only the *Investigation*, which remains Zhang’s best-known work (Xue, 1935: 37–38; Goodrich & Tay, 1976: 78). The *Investigation* organises second-hand accounts, gathered from numerous sources both oral and written, to clarify the ‘muddle’ of names and places that, Zhang complains, pervade existing Chinese-language work on foreign lands (Zhang, 1961: 79).

For Zhang, his intention in writing the *Investigation*—which includes extensive, albeit sometimes uneven, information about the trade, geography, and products of numerous places in southeast Asia, including the Moluccas, the Philippines, Java, and Japan, as well as activities in these regions of various Europeans such as the Portuguese and Dutch—was explicitly historical. In his preface to the work, Zhang claims that since the rise of the Ming, the detailed historical records of ‘foreign states’ (*waiguo*) have been set aside or lost. Contemporary writers tend to de-emphasise the importance of foreign places, and in relating their histories often end the narrative at an arbitrary point in the past without explaining how those societies extend into the present day (Zhang, 1961: 79). As a corrective, Zhang attempts to verify and extend the accounts found in existing published records—culled from ancient sources, records of tribute and trade, as well as dynastic histories—with sailors’ and merchants’ contemporary accounts of life in societies within and beyond Ming jurisdiction (Zhang, 1961: 79–80).

In parallel with Chen, Zhang does not refer to the islanders as ‘savage’. Rather he summarises Chen quite closely to provide information about the indigenous peoples’ marriage, burial, and adornment practices. He notes, for example, the custom of knocking out the two front teeth of girls who reach the age of 15. Zhang’s close summary of Chen Di’s account has lent further confusion to discussions of the authorship of Chen’s text, and to the identity and

residence of the indigenous peoples the texts describe.<sup>11</sup> Zhang does, however, introduce additional or novel details into his summary of Chen's account. He makes the observation that the people of Jilong not only did not have kings or officials (君長, *jūnzhang*, here like Chen who also states that the people of the southwest plain 'lacked tribal leaders', 無酋長, *wu qiuzhang*), they also did not have any system of taxes or corvée labour (徭賦, *yaofu*) (Zhang, 1961: 83). He adds a further section on famous places and produce of the island, noting that 'southerners' grow taro as a grain crop. He omits the description of headhunting practices, as well as Chen's reflection on indigenous cuisine.

The last part of Zhang's account includes a significant and apparently original discussion of indigenous life in the northern part of the island.<sup>12</sup> In this part of Zhang's account, listed under the heading of 'Trade', he gives a detailed description of the different kinds of people in Danshui and Jilong. The former are poor but honest; the latter are wealthier but also miserly and more demanding in their trading practices (Zhang, 1961: 85). Both have had long commerce with foreigners, and apparently the people of Jilong even feel comfortable enough to entertain them in their homes: 'Of those traders who have gone up into the mountains to see them, they are often enthusiastically escorted to their homes, and hosted with food and wine' (Zhang, 1961: 85).

At the end of his account, Zhang—like Chen Di—allows himself a personal observation about the life of the indigenous people: 'Distant and isolated islands [絕島] love guests, yet self-isolation also has its charms' (Zhang, 1961: 85). The overall tone of Zhang's text is, however, more factual than wistful. Where Chen uses the paradigm of 'unofficial history' to document the dynamic changes of the indigenous people over time, despite their lack of leaders or sages to teach them tools such as writing, Zhang offers a more direct view of the islanders as already deeply enmeshed in the exchange of both goods and conversation with foreign merchants: the shrewd people of Jilong, he notes, often claim damages for goods they earlier exchanged, or raise a ruckus about the price they are meant to pay (Zhang, 1961: 85).

Zhang Xie's accounts dovetail with the images of northern Taiwan indigenous groups found in Spanish (Castilian)-language sources. Jacinto Esquivel (1595–1634) not only provided lengthy reports on the abundance of gold, silver, and sulphur on the island but also described piratical and headhunting

11 Fang Hao offers an extensive overview of the long-standing historical confusion surrounding the authorship of the *Dongfan ji*, and advances the definitive text-critical argument for Chen Di as author; see Fang (1965).

12 For further evidence that the places named by Zhang Xie are located in northern Taiwan rather than the southeast coast visited by Chen Di, see Abe (1968).

practices among the indigenous population (Borao, 2001: 162–165, 168). In one prominent example, he detailed the capture and killing of the entire crew of a ship coming from Manila, and reports that the indigenous people drank the Spaniards' blood (Borao, 2001: 164). Strikingly, however, Esquivel did not exploit these dramatic events to create a stereotypical image of savage, blood-thirsty indigenes. Certainly, to agree with William Henry Scott, missionaries' writings about indigenous lives were mostly produced for European audiences and thus careful not to create the 'impression that their converts were naked savages' (Scott, 1994: 21). Esquivel thus hastens to add how many of the aboriginal communities feared the Spaniards and how others were quick in learning their language (Borao, 2001: 181–182). However, we can take a suitably critical approach to these missionary accounts without dismissing the possibility of the indigenous peoples' strategic engagement with the challenges and possibilities presented by colonial intrusion.

In seventeenth-century Spanish accounts of Formosa, conscious reflection on aboriginal pasts are largely absent. Even the encounter with the indigenous population is marginal to the large corpus of colonial administration records that the Spanish produced in Taiwan and Manila. Therefore, it is even more important to examine and contextualise the few existing sources closely. Reading them along the broader literature of colonial encounter written by Catholic authors yields a better understanding both of how such accounts biased the representation of indigenous experience and of how they came to feature in notions of global(ised) history. Since early modern ethnographic accounts such as chronicles not only oscillated between curiosity and prejudice (Rubiés, 2003: 418) but also followed teleological and theological views (which, it is worth noting, did not yet exhibit the focus on progress that would become commonplace in the following centuries), they essentially always dealt with pasts. Early modern Catholic travellers, missionaries in particular, understood the conversion of 'non-believers' (*infideles*) to Christianity as an ongoing historical process and a global mission in exactly this global context (Banchoff & Casanova, 2016). That said, in Esquivel's account, past and present blur as he does not consider them as clearly distinctive for these primitive populations. Primitiveness was not yet defined by the telos of progress but by a combination of factors considered markers of cultural achievement. These markers included the existence of a hierarchical central administration, the use of writing, the existence of markets and a hierarchical society including commercial elites, and certain religious aspects. Such notions were informed both by ancient Roman interpretations of civilisation and by past encounters with highly advanced Asian civilisations in China or Japan, which became the missionaries' benchmark (Valignano, 1954).

A native of Vitoria who left Spain for the Philippines in 1625, the Dominican Jacinto Esquivel lived in the area of Jilong for two years beginning in 1631.<sup>13</sup> In 1626 a Spanish fortress was established in the Bay of Jilong and another one in Danshui, some 50 kilometres west of Jilong. Esquivel arrived in Taiwan in the summer of 1631. After a short stay in a village near Jilong, which Esquivel referred to as Taparri (see also Andrade, 2006, chap. 4: 11), he lived for eight months among the aborigines of Senar (to whom he regularly referred as friends) (Kang, 2016). In summer 1632 he returned to Jilong, where he met his superior Diego Aduarte (1570–1636)—who, in addition to serving as procurador general of the Dominican Order in the Philippines, Prior of Manila, and bishop of Nueva Segovia (1634–1636), was also a seasoned traveller in the Far East. Upon Aduarte's request (Borao, 2001: 162), Esquivel drafted *Memoria de las cosas pertenecientes al estado de la Isla Hermosa*, a detailed report about the aborigines living on the island. Esquivel is moreover believed to have compiled a grammar, a dictionary, and a catechism in the native tongue of Tamsui (i.e. Danshui), however those manuscripts are lost. In 1633 he left Taiwan for Japan where he died as martyr (Aduarte, 1640).

Esquivel's description of the natives living in northern Taiwan is divided into two different documents: one dealing mostly with civil and administrative matters, the other with religious and cultural matters. The original copies of both can be found in the Archive of the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. Taken together they amount to about 20 double-sided handwritten sheets. Esquivel's report lists aboriginal terms and describes customs of religion, marriage, and drinking habits during festivities. It describes diseases and native practices for treating them, as well as superstitions, and practices related to fishing and hunting. When examining Esquivel's account, it is important to keep in mind that the geographical region he covered was comparatively small—like Chen and Zhang, he did not provide an account for the entire island. In the 1630s communication and transport in the northeast of the island was tedious and slow; movement on either water or land depended entirely on manpower. Due to the lack of central meeting places such as markets, we can surmise that any observation by Esquivel was the result of personally visiting indigenous villages.

While Esquivel obviously struggled to accommodate his observations about aboriginal communities and their practices, social organisation and modes of production helped Esquivel to structure his account. He described certain aboriginal groups cultivating vast tracks of fertile land, others as engaged in

13 Filipinas Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI Filipinas) 80, n. 103 (1625-05-15).



hunting and fishing (Borao, 2001: 166). He moreover distinguished villagers who had farmland from those who did not know how to cultivate rice on land they owned. This becomes obvious in his portrayal of the natives of Taparri as ignorant of agricultural production ('They do not plant as the other natives do, as they do not know how'). Others he classified as those who engaged in mining. Mines (gold, silver, and sulphur), like ports, played an important role in his evaluations and we may argue that he mentioned them with his Spanish-Filipino audience in mind (Borao, 2001: 164). For instance, he introduced the people of Senar as one of those having perfected the practice of mining silver, gold, and sulphur for the purpose of selling these resources to visiting merchants from China and Japan. It implies change over time in some but not all of the villages and 'cities' he visited where indigenous people lived in houses built of 'excellent timber' (Borao, 2001: 165). Esquivel moreover suggests that advanced economic practices emerged with increasing trade with the Chinese merchants. While the colonial motivation behind this is clear, Esquivel's attempt to add nuances to his descriptions is also the part that makes it difficult to classify Esquivel's taxonomy as the result of haughty culturalist essentialism of Christian European superiority. While it seems tempting from a postcolonial perspective to read a civilisational discourse into Esquivel's account, his records had more of a practical than a judgemental character.

While chronicles produced by European authors in the sixteenth and seventeenth century often also refer to past events, Esquivel did not venture into sketching the history of the aboriginal peoples living on Taiwan. But he did indirectly engage with their pasts. For instance, in a crude generalisation taken from his account of indigenous beliefs, he claims that none of the aborigines would believe in the certainty of death but instead considered it as a stroke of bad luck when someone they knew died (Borao, 2001: 180). As transience and death are particularly clear examples of change over time or markers of temporality, we may argue that Esquivel's bizarre conclusion was a way of denying the aborigines a consciousness of their own past. By arguing that they were unconscious of the passage from life to death he would not only have denied them an awareness of temporality but also the possibility of salvation. Obviously, the question of death and images of what happens afterwards mattered to Esquivel who sought to instruct non-Christian societies in Catholic catechism. The purpose of his account is thus doubtful, yet it is crucial as a vivid example of indigenous resilience, which Esquivel (otherwise sharp in his observations) chose to ignore.

Esquivel, who had also spent several years in the Philippines, frequently compared the indigenous encounter in the area around Jilong with the indigenous encounter on Luzon. In describing aboriginal customs, he maintained



that 'their ways are similar to the those of the others—somewhat inept and slow but naturally candid and simple, like the natives of Pangasinan' (Borao, 2001: 179). With regard to Spanish–indigenous relations in Taiwan, Esquivel used comparisons between the aborigines of Tamsui and the Philippines, making concrete references to Manila, Tondo, Binondo, and Dilao (Borao, 2001: 184). His comments reflect the fact that the Spanish advance towards Taiwan (1626–1642) was both materially and intellectually speaking a Philippine project. Resources and men, as much as concepts, ideas, and memories, were shipped to Taiwan's shores from Luzon. Esquivel himself requested specialised labourers from the Philippines including personnel from Cagayan and Papangaya (Borao, 2001: 196). Already prior to Esquivel's stay, people from Cagayan in the Philippines participated in the Spanish colonial project in Taiwan, because they were considered particularly well suited due to climatic similarities with their native land.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 Japanese Historiographies of the Other

Unlike the Chinese and Spanish accounts introduced above, surviving notes by early Japanese visitors to the island do not directly deal with the lives of the aboriginal communities but rather account for commercial exchange and Japanese mercantile activity on the shores. Their accounts set the stage for a simplified story of Japanese merchants and sailors frequenting Taiwan since the middle of the sixteenth century. In retrospect, Japanese historiography tied such brief navigational and quantitative records into a narrative which stressed the absence of formal relations. Such narratives were built around historical episodes such as that of the Japanese ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) who in 1593 sent an official letter to the island but abandoned his attempts after no central ruler nor someone acting as *primus inter pares* could be found to receive it (Murakami, 1917: 67). In fact, one of the earliest Spanish plans to bring the island under Spanish control arose in reaction to ultimately unfounded rumours in the late 1590s that Hideyoshi planned to conquer first Taiwan and from there invade the Spanish stronghold on the Philippines.

By the start of the seventeenth century, the island of Taiwan was known to the Japanese as Takasago or Takayama-koku. Visitors to the island and officials at home drafted reports, trading permits, and registers of goods; they collected records of ship passages and related nautical information. But apparently

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14 AGI Filipinas fol. 329, l. 3, f. 158R–162R (4 December 1630).

despite these ongoing complex relations, early modern Japanese writers offered no detailed description of the indigenous population nor the nature of the island. That changed when, in 1609, Hideyoshi's successor Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) dispatched military leader Arima Harunobu with soldiers to Taiwan for a thorough exploration of its geography, exportable products, and resources. Landing in the south of the island, they met a merchant vessel from China to trade. After dispatching an envoy, Arima's men transferred to the place where the Chinese merchants were but encountered a surprise attack of the aborigines. Consequently, Ieyasu encouraged some of the many Chinese merchants based in the Japanese trading ports Hirado and Nagasaki to transfer to Taiwan and take over trade between the island and Japan. Over the following years, as the Dutch based in Tayouan started to collect customs from Japanese merchants on incoming and outgoing goods, Taiwan became a stumbling block in the relations between the Shogunate and the Dutch East India Company, whose officials and merchants were equally interested in maintaining a foothold on Japan. As indicated, the role played by Taiwan's indigenous peoples in Japanese foreign relations never featured in the telling of an official Japanese history based on diplomatic relations. With the establishment of the Dutch East India Company around Tayouan (Fort Zeelandia) in southwest Taiwan, Japanese imports from the island (primarily Chinese silk and deerskin) became subject to fierce Dutch–Japanese competition. As a result, in Japanese historical writing of later centuries Taiwan came to feature as an inert platform on which Han Chinese, Dutch, and Japanese economic considerations played out, and where indigenous inhabitants were at best passive providers of resources (Nagazumi, 2003: 28–31). Imperial historians beginning with Murakami Naojirō (1868–1966) narrated Taiwan's integration into Japan's new system of foreign trade control through the system of trading passes (朱印状, *shuinjō*) issued nearly annually for Taiwan between 1617 and 1633 (Murakami, 1929: 273–308). At one point Murakami described how Taiwan turned into a meeting point between merchants from Japan and China in the 1590s (Murakami, 1917: 66).

Murakami Naojirō, who held the first chair in Southern Seas history at Taihoku Imperial University (台北帝国大学) in Taipei from 1928 until 1935, significantly contributed to a history of Taiwan primarily focusing on foreign influence and the colonial legacies of the seventeenth century. His academic position was closely linked to the office of the colonial governor general, who put Murakami in charge of building up this entirely new academic programme, internationally the first of its kind. In addition to designing the curriculum for a fairly small number of elite students, Murakami and his team of Japanese historians, such as Iwao Seiichi (1900–1988) and later Yanai Kenji (1910–2006),

received generous government funding to carry out research in Europe, the Philippines, and the Dutch Indies. In subsequent publications they promoted Japanese participation in the European colonial and commercial expansion in what is today commonly referred to as Southeast Asia.

The history of the Tokugawa Shogunate's relations with Japan as narrated by Murakami reveals precisely how indigenous contributions to the global history of East and Southeast Asian diplomatic relations were silenced in ways that contrast sharply with Chinese and Spanish accounts. Take for instance the documentation of how in December 1627 a group of Sirayan natives from the village of Sinkan were received in audience at the court in Edo. While Adam Clulow casts doubt on whether the Shogun was present during the audience (Clulow, 2014: 224), according to Murakami they were received by Shogun Iemitsu, who approached the aboriginal envoys from Taiwan in a friendly manner before they were sent back home via Nagasaki (Murakami, 1917: 69–70). But while overemphasising the Shogun's actions, at the same time Murakami silenced the agency of the Sirayan natives in diplomatic relations. He does not comment on their achievements in organising an overseas delegation to Edo or in travelling to unfamiliar lands (Murakami, 1917: 68). In Murakami's narration the whole setup was presented as the scheme of Nagasaki *daikan* (magistrate) Suetsugu Heizō to counter Dutch interference with Japanese trade in Taiwan. In other words, he excluded the arrival and reception of the indigenous delegation from the history of Tokugawa Japan's official foreign relations, and instead interpreted this episode as being merely the brainchild of a Japanese commercial potentate eager to maintain the profits from overseas trade. Despite referring to the Sinkan delegates as special envoys (Murakami, 1917: 69) on their mission to Edo where they arrived on 22 August, Murakami does not elaborate on their status as diplomatic actors, nor does he attribute to them any representative or negotiation power despite their tribute offerings in Edo. Instead, Murakami describes them as objectified by Japanese and Dutch merchants, an interpretation repeated in modern scholarship by Clulow (2016: 23–24).<sup>15</sup>

Murakami's understanding of history, and by extension later interpretations of the early history of Taiwan, can be glimpsed most clearly in his promotion of indigenous scripts through his collection and dissemination of the so-called 'Sinkan Manuscripts'. In early 1897 a British acquaintance from Tainan drew his attention to seventeenth-century manuscripts in a local language written in Roman alphabet, which had remained in the 'possession of the natives of

15 For the source-based evidence, Murakami implies that Suetsugu's reports were based on information from the Japanese of Taoyan and Dutch sources. However, there are no direct references to primary sources.

neighbouring villages', with some having 'Chinese text alongside the Formosan' (Murakami, 1933: 1). Western ethnographers called this 'Formosan' script Sinkan, after the village name (新港 in Japanese [Chinese: Xingang], based on the language of the Siraya [Chinese: Xilaya, 西拉雅]) (Heylen, 2001: 199–251). These manuscripts were composed by the Sirayans themselves—the same indigenous people whose ancestors had met Chen Di 300 years ago—using Dutch writing and spelling (Adelaar, 2011: 1–3). In 1933, Murakami co-edited about a hundred of these manuscripts into a comprehensive compilation, mainly composed of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century land contracts between the Siraya people and Chinese settlers. In his preface (Murakami, 1933: 1–2), he emphasised the value of these manuscripts for studying forgotten languages such as hieroglyphs—an implicit comparison with non-Asian history typical of Murakami.<sup>16</sup> In other words, what was remarkable to Murakami about these written manuscripts was not how they demonstrated the central role played by the Siraya in trade and commerce on the island, but the evidence they seemed to offer of the Sirayan people developing into educated and civilised people as a result of adapting foreign techniques. Hence, in his English-language preface to the Sinkan manuscript volume, he informs his international readership that in 1930 a historical exhibition was held at Tainan 'to commemorate three centuries of cultural progress in Formosa' (Murakami, 1933: 2). It was only by presumably 'catching up' to the outside world that historians like Murakami could synchronise these peoples' histories with that of other actors in early modern history.

Murakami's work remains of unchallenged value to historians working on maritime encounters in East and Southeast Asia, with both Japanese and foreign researchers relying on his compilations and source translations. For these reasons, his research is sometimes regarded as the birth of Taiwanese history (Yeh, 2008). Counting in addition to the Sinkan Manuscripts contributions to the 59 volumes of the *Manuscripts of Taiwan Historic Materials* and annotations of Taiwanese history during the Dutch and the Spanish colonial period, Yeh concludes that Murakami's 'academic achievements are extremely rich, and significantly impact on the development of the modern history of Taiwan' (Yeh, 2008: 2). Although Murakami aimed to provide his readers with an all-encompassing view, his collections were in fact the reinforcement of a selective and biased writing about the past. Looking closely, we see that Taiwan itself featured marginally in his source-based narratives. This may indeed seem strange but is not at all peculiar given the archive with which he worked. Thanks to Michel-Rolph Trouillot and others, we have a better understanding

<sup>16</sup> On this point see Tremml-Werner (2021).

of how not only histories but also silences are produced in the service of concrete political agendas (Trouillot, 2015). Until 1945, when Japan ceded Taiwan to China after its defeat in the Second World War, Japanese historians wrote a colonial past into Taiwanese history, leaving the study of the practices and traditions of the aboriginal people to Japanese anthropologists. This clear disciplinary division was based on Western models and a set of very different questions, but it had a defining impact on the way the encounter with the other featured in the historiography of Taiwan: Japanese imperial historians exclusively focused on the European colonial period, marginalised the impact of Zheng (1661–1683) and Qing rule (1683–1895), and elided indigenous agency.

#### 4 Comparative Aspects

Bringing together these Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese accounts of indigenous society in Taiwan in the early modern period reveals important differences between them in terms of approach and context. Yet in this juxtaposition, we can glean important lessons about how and under what conditions we might narrate a global history that takes indigenous experience seriously. Most significantly, we show how the compilation of texts and sources from the early modern period in Taiwan, by historians such as Murakami, constrains the possibilities for identifying indigenous agency that ironically exists in some of those very texts.

While scholars such as Murakami mostly implicitly silenced and othered the Taiwanese aboriginals in the process of including them in a global narrative (namely, of Japanese southward expansion), the Chinese and Spanish accounts offer a surprising demonstration of the capabilities of indigenous people by contextualising their lives within broader narratives of global exchange. We can certainly acknowledge the serious biases of their accounts—including most prominently their shared failure to attend to how the indigenous people understood themselves, accounted for their social practices, or identified their social groups on their own terms—while recognising that these writers evince what for their time and place was an unusually sensitive grasp of the value of indigenous people to global history. Chen, Zhang, and Esquivel represent indigenous people and life with enough specificity that they are not mere tropes—what Geoff Wade has called ‘topoi’ of otherness (Wade, 1997)—nor do they serve merely as a mirror for the author’s criticism of his own society (cf. Teng, 2006: 67).

These claims are best demonstrated by comparison with other pre-modern accounts of otherness, found in both Spanish and Chinese sources. This

comparison reveals a prominent absence in their accounts of any claim about the animal-like nature of the people of Taiwan. Animal metaphors were rife in Chinese descriptions of foreign others, particularly in relation to indigenous or other peoples on the southern frontiers seen as 'primitive' (Fiskesjö, 2012). One related example is a Chinese account of the indigenous islanders of Java, written two centuries earlier by the Chinese Muslim (and Arabic translator) in the retinue of the famous explorer Zheng He, Ma Huan. Ma's 1416 *Yingyai Shenglan* (*General Account of the Shores of the Ocean*) classifies the island's inhabitants into three kinds of people, the Huihui (Muslims), the Chinese, and the natives, who contrast with the former two categories in being exceptionally 'ugly and uncouth'. These natives eat food that 'is dirty and bad, as for instance snakes, ants and all other kinds of insects and worms' (Ma Huan, cited and translated in Groeneveldt, 1960: 49–50). This example tallies with depictions of non-Chinese indigenous people, particularly on the southern frontiers in present-day Yunnan, Guizhou, and Southeast Asia, in other Ming sources. The *Ming Shilu* (*Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty*) contains numerous records of imperial proclamations declaring that such people are so lacking in (Chinese) virtues that they are just like birds and animals (Wade, 1997: 144). Even Zhang's description of the 'red-haired barbarians' (the Dutch), also included in the *Dong Xi yang kao*, cites liberally from gazetteers and other sources that compare the Dutch to macaques and demons 'with strange forms', including wild assertions about the excessive length of Dutch toes (Zhang, 1961: 103).

Chen and Zhang both commented specifically on the unusual cuisine of the indigenous people, observed their headhunting practices and the hanging skulls above their doors, and noted the distinctive appearance of both men and women, including their hairstyles and tattoos. These details infuse their account with unusual specificity, particularly when compared to other contemporary work on non-Chinese 'barbarians'. Yet such details about what to a contemporary Chinese might be off-putting, violent, or even offensive customs are not used by these writers as evidence of the islanders' inhuman, dirty, or animalistic nature. Esquivel's account is also distinctive for similar reasons, although his description of the indigenous peoples is a mirror image of Chen's and Zhang's: it is by *not* commenting on the hairstyle or dress of the indigenes of Taiwan that he sets his account apart from Spanish ethnographic descriptions of indigenous people in the Philippines, which focus explicitly on appearance and bodily features as a means of using these as markers of primitiveness (Jocano Landa, 1975).

In Esquivel's account we also find a further absence that attests to his distance from Spanish accounts that render indigenous people 'primitive'. Like Chen and Zhang, Esquivel too notes that 'They do not have leaders nor



a government' (*cabezas ni gobiernos no tienen*) (Borao, 2001: 181). A comparison with Spanish ethnography on other Austronesian peoples in the sixteenth-century Philippines, such as William Henry Scott's germinal work on Spanish perceptions of the Filipino people of Baranguay, can be helpful here. Scott's summary of the various eyewitness accounts of the Magellan voyage (1521) and reports drafted on early Spanish expeditions between the 1520s and 1540s reveals a Spanish obsession with social organisation, particularly the role of a leader or principal (in these sources called a *datu*, 'lord of vassals', Scott, 1994: 127–129). For early modern Spanish missionaries and conquistadors (the majority of their work focused on the Americas), the existence of a leader and a hierarchical society signalled the presence of a political community marked by the institutionalisation of power over land and people (Martínez-Fernández, 2018). This included fiscal and military capacity, following the Aristotelian categorisation common at the time (Rubiés, 2019: 129–131). That Esquivel did not use the Formosans' lack of a leader as evidence of their backwardness or lack of development signals his own attempt to portray the indigenous islanders less as examples of primitive peoples and more like fully realised contributors to broader currents of exchange and commerce in early modern southeast Asia. Taken in the context of its own time, Esquivel's report indicates how he found various forms of evidence for indigenous past connections with the outside world. It is thus safe to say that it would not have occurred to him that they were people without a history.

In the whole process of encounter in Taiwan, immigrants from mainland China played a crucial role for non-Chinese visitors and observers. Both Spanish and Japanese authors portrayed Han Chinese (whom Esquivel calls *sangleyes*) as intermediaries, for instance as go-betweens in trade or when collaborating in baptising or educating the islanders. For both Murakami and the Spanish ethnographers, imagining ancient relations between the natives and Chinese merchants/*sangleyes* visiting the island became one way of engaging with the past of the aborigines. This tactic echoes Spanish attempts to make sense of precolonial pasts of areas in the Philippines. The kingdom of Butuan on Cebu, for example, was long remembered for its delegation sent to the Song Chinese court in Bianjing/Kaifeng in 1001 (Scott, 1994: 164). In the case of Esquivel's implicit references to historical processes such as the introduction of new farming techniques or new ways of exploiting resources for a market, these episodes usually include *sangleye* agency. On one occasion, Esquivel singles them out as skilled craftsmen whose services would be helpful for Spanish expeditions (Borao, 2001: 173). Yet another example is the Sinkan Manuscripts themselves: as contracts between Chinese settlers and members of the Siraya tribe they highlight a period in Taiwanese history in which the Siraya people as



one aboriginal group made and wrote history thanks to mediation by the Dutch (as educators) and the Han Chinese (as intermediating business partners).

## 5 Taiwan in Global History

From the seventeenth century, travellers and administrators recognised how essential Taiwan could be for narrating global connections. Taiwan was chosen (albeit never realised) as a future regional centre for knowledge production by both the Dominicans and the Spanish colonial officials, with a school (*seminario*) for adolescent Christians from China, Japan, Ryukyu, and Korea (Borao, 2001: 185–186). In the nineteenth century, Taiwan served the Japanese colonial government as an intelligence centre for the study of the entire Southeast Asia (Yao, 2006). Yet, with the important exception of recent studies which examine the role played by Formosan indigenous resistance to modern Japanese empire-building (Barclay, 2017; Ziomek, 2019), present-day narratives of global history tend to ignore Taiwan, and marginalise the contributions of its indigenous people—particularly in the early modern period.

This omission relates to broader, structural problems in the practice of global history that unduly bind it to linear narratives about the global expansion of European and American power (e.g. Mazlish, 1993). One debilitating result is that the field is less capable of fully actualising its promise to theorise global movements and connections of ideas and peoples beyond Europe. Even in global histories that attempt to place indigenous experience at the centre rather than the periphery of their narrative, their interaction with European colonialism remains the central focus (e.g. Coates, 2004; Wolf, 1982). The role played by indigenous actors in modern and early modern connections and modes of exchange, particularly salient in the case of East and Southeast Asia, remains under-theorised. This risks registering indigenous peoples only as objects of colonial intervention or reformation by a dominant (typically European) power.

The materials we have analysed here suggest that Taiwan might again, as it did in the early modern period, play an important role in revising how global connections and interactions might be narrated. One way of inaugurating such an intervention might be to consider how early modern contemporaries validated the particularity and agency of indigenous people in their own narratives of connection—or put differently, how these indigenous encounters demanded from these writers new ways of comprehending the economic, political, and cultural connections into which all participants were being drawn. The Spanish and Chinese sources account for indigenous life in Taiwan in a

way that models how indigenous people might stand as equal agents within global circulations of goods and ideas. Each account acknowledges clear differences between the writer's society and that of the indigenous Formosans: one of the most prominent of these differences is the Formosans' lack of a leader or head of government, which is noted by all of the sources examined here. Yet for Chen, Zhang, and Esquivel, these observations serve to redirect their narratives of connection, rather than to prompt the articulation of hierarchical difference or the marking of progress in a linear developmental trajectory.

Indeed, that these Spanish and Chinese accounts fail to invoke tropes of primitiveness when discussing the indigenous people of Taiwan suggests the multilayered character of narrations of global connections. For Esquivel's narration of Taiwan, it is important not to confuse discourses of primitiveness with accounts on aboriginal aggressions against visitors from abroad. While Spanish accounts regularly mention the massacres by the aboriginal populations (Borao, 2001: 163), it was only in Japanese accounts of later centuries that 'aggression' became elaborated into a trope associated with the natures of indigenous peoples. Japanese histories of pre-modern Taiwan persistently portray the aborigines of Taiwan as aggressive, unreliable, and bloodthirsty (Murakami, 1930: 92). Murakami drew attention to how Japanese and Europeans seafarers became victims of aboriginal violence in Taiwan. In one of his many source compilations regarding Japanese–European relations, Murakami explicitly pointed out that a Spanish Dominican (named Juan Cobo) who had visited Japan as an official envoy in 1592 was killed by aborigines after being shipwrecked on the shores of Taiwan (Murakami, 1929: 34–43). Indeed, while Cobo's shipwreck is also mentioned in Spanish accounts, Spanish authors did not speculate about Cobo being killed by aborigines.<sup>17</sup>

The Chinese sources offer two models of inclusion that bank on the potential of history to challenge reigning norms of civilisation and difference. As the 'unofficial historian' of the Siraya, Chen Di self-consciously rebukes the typical conventions—including patrilineal genealogy, technologies of writing, and established structures of leadership—that structured historical accounts in his time and place. In noting the Formosan lack of all of these, Chen Di nevertheless provides an account of how their society changed through time, how the indigenous people themselves perceive time, and how their past and present interactions with outsiders shape their dynamic cultural practices. Zhang Xie offers further detail about how the northern peoples in Jilong and Danshui have long interacted with foreigners, trading and conversing with them in ways that result in mutual transformations of perception. In documenting the

17 AGI Filipinas fol. 6, r. 7, n. 107 (1593-06-01).

practices of the indigenous people alongside those of other parts and people of the world, without at the same time subjecting them to the dehumanising comparisons that feature in other parts of his work, he joins Chen in historicising *interaction*, rather than progress or ‘development’ towards some specified civilisational telos, as the key focus of his narration.<sup>18</sup>

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