



Japanese Imperialism through a Taiwanese Lens: Wei Te-sheng's Cinematic Portrayals of the Colonial Era

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ABSTRACT

Wei Te-sheng's film *Cape No. 7* (2008) depicts a Taiwanese postman's efforts to deliver long-lost love letters written sixty years earlier by a colonial Japanese teacher to the Taiwanese girl he courted. The film's sweetly nostalgic framing of colonial relations contrasts starkly with Wei's 2011 film *Seediq Bale*, which violently portrays the 1930 Wushe Uprising that left over 130 Japanese colonists and 600 indigenous Seediq people dead. This paper analyzes differences between Wei's two representations of the colonial period, examines cultural contexts for such distinct renderings of Japan-Taiwan relations, and explores their significance for contemporary Taiwanese identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Wei Te-sheng embarked on his film career in the mid-1990s as an assistant to the New Taiwanese Cinema director Edward Yang and began making his own short films in 1996. Around that time, he conceived of making an epic historical film about the 1930 Wushe Uprising, in which a group of indigenous Seediq warriors rebelled against Japanese colonial oppression and killed 130 Japanese policemen, military personnel, and civilians. He completed a script for such a film in 1999 and produced a five-minute demo film in 2003 to raise funds for the project, but he could not secure financial backing for the sweeping epic he envisioned (Zeng 2013). In fact, he had borrowed NT\$2,000,000 just to complete the demo film (Wei 2008b). The director Chen Kuo-fu, with whom Wei worked as producer and editor on the 2002 film *Double Vision* 雙瞳 (*Shuang tong*), suggested that his difficulty in attracting investors for his proposed big-budget project derived in part from the fact that Wei had not yet made a feature film and thus was an unproven director. Chen encouraged Wei to direct a few films and establish a track record and to then try again to find funding for his project (Lan 2008).

As it turned out, it only took one film for Wei to establish himself as a bankable filmmaker. His first feature film was the musical romantic comedy *Cape No. 7* 海角七號 (*Haijiao qi hao*, 2008a), which has grossed NT\$530,000,000 since its release and is Taiwan's highest grossing domestic film ever. Inspired by a newspaper story about a postman in rural western Taiwan who had successfully delivered a letter from Japan marked only with a colonial-era address (Cai 2008), Wei wrote the film's screenplay, cast mostly non-professional actors, and filmed on location in scenic Hengchun Township in southern Taiwan (see [Figure 1](#)). The appealing story of two intercultural love affairs (one set in 1945 and the other

in 2008), the catchy songs, the local color and eccentric characters, and the beautiful coastal setting charmed local audiences, and the film drew crowds largely through word-of-mouth recommendations. The film generated modest ticket sales in its first three weeks of release, but then box office receipts multiplied nearly sevenfold in its fourth week, a point at which even Hollywood films generally cycle out of theaters in the highly competitive Taiwanese market. Ultimately it enjoyed a sixteen-week theatrical release, the longest in the history of Taiwanese cinema (Shiau 2013). The commercial success of *Cape No. 7* enabled Wei to attract investors to finance his historical epic, *Seediq Bale* 賽德克·巴萊,¹ which was released in 2011 and went on to achieve critical acclaim and commercial success, further enhancing Wei's reputation as a filmmaker among investors and audiences alike.

As remarkable as the interconnectedness of the two films in their geneses may be, my interest in *Cape No. 7* and *Seediq Bale* lies in their contrasting treatments of Japanese colonialism. The former presents the relations between colonizer and colonized through the warm glow of nostalgia, while the latter offers a jarringly brutal depiction of both Japanese oppression and exploitation of aboriginal people and the violence of the Seediq resistance. The two portrayals reflect the legacies of the colonial era, but they also indicate the diversity of the Taiwanese experience of colonialism, providing a complex image of Japan's colonial experiment and of Japan-Taiwan relations in the modern era. At the same time, while *Cape No. 7* and *Seediq Bale* differ in their depictions of Japanese colonialism, they agree in their obscuring China's role in Taiwan's modern history insofar as they both virtually excise China from their narratives. The focus on Taiwanese history and culture to the exclusion of China resonates with efforts of the "Taiwanization" movement (*bentuha* 本土化) to reclaim memory and assert a national identity uninhibited by China.



Figure 1 This distressed metal placard bearing the fictional address “Cape No. 7, Hengchun Township” is one of the souvenirs included in the *Cape No. 7* DVD box set. The address “Cape No. 7” was conceived by Wei Te-sheng for his screenplay. No such address existed during the colonial period (Cai 2008). Photo by the author.

CAPE NO. 7

Set in Hengchun, Pingtung County, a resort town on the southern tip of the island of Taiwan, *Cape No. 7* is a romantic comedy about a motley group of amateur musicians who must overcome their differences and work together to perform the opening act for a seaside concert headlined by a Japanese pop star who has been hired by one of the resort hotels. The pop star's advance person, a young woman named Tomoko, has been tasked with whipping the local amateurs into shape lest their lackluster performance spoil the show. But Tomoko, a failed model who speaks Mandarin but not the local language, Minnan, bristles at having to wrangle the inexperienced and disparate musicians, who prior to their selection at open auditions have never played together and who each have troubles of their own impeding their ability to perform harmoniously.

The biggest challenge to the band's success is the surly attitude of lead singer and guitarist Aga, the only professional musician in the group. He resents having to perform with amateurs, but his real problem is his deeply wounded self-esteem. Having failed to make a name for himself in the Taipei music industry despite fifteen years of trying, he has returned to rural Hengchun in disgrace and grudgingly accepted a job as a letter carrier that his stepfather has arranged for him at the local post office. Like Tomoko, Aga hates his job. He shows up late for work, delivers only a fraction of the letters and parcels he is given, and leaves work early to go brood at the beach, dumping the undelivered mail into a large box at home.

Part of the charm of *Cape No. 7* is its ability to efficiently adhere to formula (Hu 2008). As in many romantic comedies, the two leads, Tomoko and Aga, start out antagonizing one another but eventually fall in love. On the morning after their first intimate encounter, Tomoko finds an opened parcel among the undelivered mail in Aga's apartment. The package is addressed to a woman named Kojima Tomoko at Cape No. 7, an old address from a system used during the colonial period that is no longer in use. Inside the parcel, Tomoko finds seven love letters written in Japanese in 1945 to Kojima Tomoko and, upon reading them, is moved by the passion they exude. She urges Aga to deliver the letters. But he counters that it is impossible, since the address no longer exists and he has never heard of a local woman with a Japanese name. The two lovers quarrel, break up, and then pine for each other. The remainder of the film follows Tomoko and Aga as they try to put aside their resentments, stage a great concert, deliver the old love letters, and resolve their feelings for one another before Tomoko must return to Japan.

Another formulaic element the film delivers effectively is the parallel love story, specifically the 1945 love story between Kojima Tomoko and the nameless Japanese man who wrote her the seven love letters. In fact, the parallel love story frames the action of *Cape No. 7*. The film opens with a voice-over from the unknown man,

reading his first letter (in Japanese) as the screen fills with an image of the repatriation ship carrying him back to Japan. The war has ended in defeat for his country, and he must leave Taiwan and his position as a colonial school teacher as well as the young Taiwanese woman, Kojima Tomoko, his former student, for whom he has never openly declared his love. At various points throughout the movie, one of the seven letters is read in voice-over, accompanied by appropriately sentimental music, in a way that highlights the challenges of the budding intercultural romance between Aga and Tomoko. As Brian Hu has observed, "Narrating a present romance in terms of a past romance is a staple of Asian teen romance.... The parallel stories bolster each other's credibility"; Hu suggests that because the two romances in *Cape No. 7* intercut with each other throughout the course of the movie, "they seem to grow in importance to the point where the final reference to the old couple gives just enough melodramatic momentum to make us believe in the contemporary one" (2008).

There are noteworthy parallels between the two love stories in *Cape No. 7*. Both deal with an intercultural romance between a Taiwanese and a Japanese. Both involve a woman named Tomoko 友子, whose name signifies "friendship." Both include the challenge of imminent separation, as the Japanese lover in each must return to Japan. Indeed, in the 1945 romance, the Japanese lover is already sailing for Japan. But the differences between the love stories are even more remarkable, particularly in light of the historical colonial relationship between Japan and Taiwan. In the 1945 romance, the male school teacher represents the colonizer and the female student represents the subaltern colonial subject, who benefits from the education of the colonial school system. In the contemporary romance, the roles of male colonizer and female subaltern have been reversed. Tomoko in 2008 represents the imperialist power, but now she wields soft power—J-pop music, fashion, intercultural exchange. Aga, the unruly subaltern, needs to be "tamed," but not in the way the 1945 imperialist educated his Taiwanese sweetheart. Rather, through Tomoko's gentle influence Aga learns to value and cherish all that distinguishes his hometown of Hengchun: the town's "melting pot" population, which includes young and old, Hoklo, Hakka, Han, indigenous people, and even some foreigners; local customs, history, and folk music; and even the tourism business that has given him the big break that his fifteen years of toil in Taipei never did—a chance to share the stage with an internationally acclaimed Japanese pop star Atari Kousuke (playing himself). Indeed, the concert ends with a multicultural rendition of the German song "Heidenröslein," with Aga singing in Chinese and Kousuke singing in Japanese, whereby, to quote Chiao-ning Su, "they transcend cultural differences and produce something beautiful... presenting a Utopian image of globalization" (2009, 185). So while Japan-

Taiwan relations in the colonial period emphasized the “assimilation” 同化 (*tong hua* or *dōka*) of the colonized, as reflected in the Taiwanese Tomoko assuming a Japanese name and learning to speak, read, and write Japanese,² contemporary Japan-Taiwan relations as portrayed in *Cape No. 7* privilege self-awareness, mutual respect, and free and productive exchange within the context of both the local and global communities.

The reason why it took over sixty years for the seven love letters to be mailed to the Taiwanese sweetheart is alluded to repeatedly in the letters themselves, in which the Japanese school teacher refers regretfully to the cowardice that prevented him from confessing or acting on his love for Kojima Tomoko. In the end, it is revealed that upon his return to Japan, the man stored the letters away in a wardrobe, where they sat untouched for decades until his daughter discovered them while disposing of his personal effects after his death. As the daughter explains in an accompanying letter she encloses for Kojima Tomoko, she had never known of her father’s unrequited love, and she felt that Tomoko should receive the letters and thus know how ardently her father had loved her. The Japanese school teacher’s admission of timidity and uncertainty subverts the image of decisive and authoritative imperial power, perhaps humanizing the colonizer to some extent.

Wei has faced criticism for the arguably soft focus with which he presents Japanese colonialism in *Cape No. 7* and also for romanticizing the colonial relationship by foregrounding “love letters from the colonizer” and implying nostalgia for the colonial era (Y. Wang 2009, 264–66). But if the Japanese school teacher’s love letters suggest imperial longing for the colonial subject, the ultimate failure of the colonial project is repeatedly highlighted in recurring scenes of the repatriation ship carrying the colonizer back to Japan and in continual reminders of his unrequited love. There is also the unmistakable message that where imperial hard power ultimately failed, cultural soft power—whether in the form of colonial-era education or Japanese popular culture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century—has fostered international relations and cultivated meaningful exchange.

SEEDIQ BALE

If Wei’s portrayal of Japan-Taiwan relations in *Cape No. 7* exposed him to accusations of “Japanophilia” (Nojima 2016), his violent depiction of the Wushe Uprising and the oppression of the Seediq people by their Japanese colonizers opened him up to accusations of “Japanophobia” (J. Wang 2018). Several reviews of *Seediq Bale* in English-language media decried the barbarity of the film’s violence, particularly its frequent depictions of the Seediq custom of taking enemy heads as trophies, and attributed to the film a naked Taiwanese nationalism.³ But such a reading of the film is too simplistic and disregards

the director’s stated desire to depict a significant event in Taiwanese history that generally has been overlooked, both in popular media and in school textbooks (Xie 2012; Wu 2014), and to foreground the cultural perspectives of the Taiwanese, not only in *Seediq Bale* but in all his films (Nojima 2016; Kolesnikov-Jessop 2008). Moreover, as Hiro Aida observes, if Wei’s motivation was to stir up Taiwanese nationalism, it seems unlikely that he would have made a film focused on aboriginals, who comprise only two percent of Taiwan’s population, or specifically about the Seediq people, who represent a mere fraction of that two percent. Aida argues that Wei’s true intention is “to rescue aboriginal history” (2016, 91).

Set in Wushe Township in the densely wooded mountains of what is today Taiwan’s Nantou County,⁴ *Seediq Bale* begins by introducing Mouna Rudo, the eventual leader of the Wushe Uprising, as a teenager. Mouna and several other Seediq youths from the Tgdaya clan group discover a hunting party of Bunun warriors⁵ trespassing on their ancestral hunting grounds and poaching their game. The impetuous Mouna launches a daring attack on the Bunun poachers, singlehandedly takes the heads of two of them, and manages to escape their counterattack with only a flesh wound. He is rewarded for his bravery with the distinctive facial tattoo of the Seediq warrior, indicating that he has become a “true person” (the meaning of the phrase *Seediq bale*). Subsequent scenes show Mouna growing into a strong, fierce warrior and a leader of the Tgdaya clan who clashes regularly with enemies, particularly the rival clan group, the Toda.

Following this introduction, there is a brief montage depicting events from modern Taiwanese history: the ratification of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, through which the Qing Empire ceded Taiwan (Formosa) to the Japanese; the formation of the Republic of Formosa; the Japanese invasion of Formosa and the subsequent defeat of the republic’s military forces; the fall of the republic; and the beginning of Japan’s campaign to pacify the Taiwanese—particularly the indigenous people—who stand between the Japanese empire and the natural resources of the empire’s new colony. Mouna and his clansmen wage several battles with the Japanese colonizers, who have also recruited Bunun warriors to fight the Seediq, but eventually the Seediq are subjugated. They must give up their firearms and, more significantly, their traditions, including the custom of collecting the heads of their enemies as trophies.

The narrative then jumps forward twenty-five years. Seediq villages have been replaced by colonial settlements with schools, stores, post offices, and homes built in the Japanese style. Seediq warriors have been reduced to working as laborers and porters for the Japanese, resentfully harvesting trees from their ancestral forests and hauling logs down from the steep

mountains on their backs. The men of Mouna's Tgdaya clan are singled out for special abuse and humiliation at the hands of the colonial police force. But Mouna, the Tgdaya chief, can do nothing but drown his misery in wine. In a telling scene, Mouna listens to the entreaties of Dakis Nobing, a young Seediq clansman who has assimilated to Japanese ways, attended a Japanese normal school, and now works as a teacher in one of the colonial schools. When he advocates for accepting the civilized life offered by the colonizers, Mouna scoffs at the benefits of Japanese "civilization":

Our men are forced to bend over to carry logs on their backs and our women have to kneel down to serve and pour wine. I am a chief, but all I can do is get drunk and pretend I see nothing and hear nothing. What else can I do?

Post offices? Stores? Schools? Do any of those things make our lives easier and better? Instead, we're made to see how impoverished we are....

In another twenty years there will be no Seediq and no hunting grounds. All our children will have turned Japanese. (Wei [2011] 2012)

After enduring a particularly galling humiliation, several young men of the Tgdaya clan severely beat a Japanese policeman, who then spitefully rejects Mouna's attempts to make amends and promises a forceful reprisal to the full extent under colonial law. Realizing that his clansmen will surely die languishing in a Japanese prison, Mouna decides to stage a preemptive attack at an upcoming athletic meet at the local elementary school for the colonists' children. He knows that the uprising he is planning will ultimately result in the death of all warriors involved, but as Seediq lore has taught him, a warrior who does not shed blood defending the ancestral hunting grounds may not cross the rainbow bridge and be welcomed by the ancestors into the eternal hunting grounds. As he tells a young clansman, "a Seediq *bale* can lose his body, but he fights to keep his soul at all costs" (Wei [2011] 2012).

The remainder of *Seediq Bale* portrays the brutal assault on the athletic meet in which over 130 Japanese men, women, and children are viciously murdered, as well as the protracted punitive action taken by Japanese colonial police and the Imperial Army. Although vastly outnumbered and outgunned by the Japanese forces, the Seediq warriors retreat into the mountain forests and harass the enemy with guerilla attacks. Eventually the Imperial Army resorts to aerial bombardment of the territory, employing mustard gas bombs. All the insurgents die, just as Mouna had foreseen. After the uprising has been put down, the Japanese general who led the punitive action muses admiringly about the similarities between the fighting spirit of the Seediq warriors and that of the Japanese samurai. But like the samurai, the Seediq warriors have become history.

CONTRASTING REPRESENTATIONS OF COLONIALISM

The portrayal of Japanese colonialism in *Seediq Bale* accurately reflects the history of that enterprise's brutalities: the violent suppression of Taiwanese resistance, particularly among the aboriginal peoples; the aggressive campaign to assimilate the "untamed" or "raw, uncooked savages" 生番 (*sheng fan, seiban*) (Kleeman 2003, 20); the consequent effacement of indigenous culture; and the arrogant exploitation of natural resources on aboriginal ancestral lands. A scene in which a young Japanese colonist intervenes in a dispute between rival Seediq clan groups reflects the chauvinistic contempt for indigenous territorial claims—he says, "Tgdaya hunting grounds or Toda hunting grounds, what does it matter? It all belongs to Japan now" (Wei [2011] 2012).

But if the film depicts the "bad" aspects of Japanese colonialism, it also presents elements of the "good"—education, modernization, and new opportunities for indigenous people. Seediq clansmen Dakis Nobing and Dakis Nawi, educated at government expense at a colonial normal school, have taken positions in the colonial administration of Wushe as school teachers and policemen. Their assimilation is reflected in their use of the Japanese names Hanaoka Ichirō and Hanaoka Jirō, their employment in the colonial administration, the Japanese clothing both they and their families wear, and their Japanese-style homes. *Seediq Bale* likewise presents the "good" and "bad" of indigenous culture, chiefly in portraying the ardor with which the Seediq defend their traditions and their homeland. While their willingness to die defending their way of life is admirable, their massacre of innocent women and children to that end is abhorrent. But Wei has stated that portraying the complexities of human experience was part of his objective for the film:

In history, it is important to try to understand the motives of the people involved. If we look at a person's actions only to decide if that person was right or wrong, then we are really thinking about humanity on too small a scale.... If you place yourself in their shoes, then it becomes easier to understand why they did what they did. With this level of understanding, it should be easier to move away from past hatreds. (Quoted in Lan 2011)

Cape No. 7, on the other hand, does not deal with the harsh aspects of Japanese colonialism but instead relies on the soft power of popular culture—Japanese popular music, Japanese romantic dramas, Japanese fashion—to illustrate contemporary Japan-Taiwan relations. Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) has observed that Japanese popular cultural products, and J-dramas in particular, have influenced the tastes of young Taiwanese since

the 1990s. Wei's casting of Japanese model-cum-actress Tanaka Chie as Tomoko, pop star Atari Kousuke as himself, and Taiwanese rocker-cum-actor Fan Yi-chen as Aga, and his incorporation of formulas from Japanese dramas and polished pop songs in the mode of J-pop music all reflect his recognition of and reliance on the appeal of Japanese popular culture to attract a younger Taiwanese audience. And if Wei catered to the younger demographic by deploying popular Japanese culture, then his incorporation of intergenerational tension and characters such as the octogenarian "Old Mao" resonated with older audiences (Shiau 2009). Old Mao and Kojima Tomoko represent Taiwanese who personally experienced the colonial era and still speak Japanese. While the number of people in this latter demographic is small and diminishing, some of this generation are prominent, such as the Republic of China's first Taiwan-born president Lee Teng-hui and Taiwanese-independence advocate Peng Ming-min, both ardent patriots who, like many of their generation, continue to have an affinity for Japan and Japanese culture.

While those Taiwanese in their eighties and nineties and those in their thirties and younger have a familiarity with (if not sympathy for) Japanese culture, such is less likely to be the case with the generation that came of age during the White Terror, the thirty-eight years of martial law ushered in by the Kuomintang (or KMT, meaning the "Chinese Nationalist Party") in 1949, during which the government attempted to erase the memory of the colonial era, in part by implementing a national language policy that banned the use of Japanese in favor of Mandarin. Remarkably, that language policy also banned the use of Minnan, so while the policy reflected an effort to expunge Japanese colonial influence, it also amounted to KMT colonialist effacement of Taiwanese identity (Kleeman 2003, 245–46; Sandel 2003, 523–24, 529; Hubbs 2013, 81–84). Interpreting *Cape No. 7* in light of KMT attempts to control Taiwan's historical narrative, William Zachary Hill suggests that the film's sixty-year-old love letters may be read as "a piece of history that Taiwanese felt they had lost but now has been restored to them," and that Wei's foregrounding of the letters resonates with the goals of the Taiwanization movement to reincorporate history and culture that has been lost (Hill 2017, 79, 91).

One may productively read both *Cape No. 7* and *Seediq Bale* within a framework of Taiwanization. Like the Taiwanization movement, both films privilege the history, culture, languages, and peoples of Taiwan. Both films deal with the colonial era, a period that both the KMT and the People's Republic of China (PRC), which regards Taiwan as part of China, would rather deemphasize. Both films incorporate significant amounts of dialect—indeed, the dialogue of *Seediq Bale* is primarily in the language spoken by the Seediq people, used today by only one thousand people (Xie 2012). In *Cape No. 7*, much of

the humor derives from the prevalent and sometimes coarse usage of Minnan and from Mandarin-speaking Tomoko's inability to understand the language. Both films also celebrate aspects of indigenous culture, from the clothing, dancing, and facial tattooing of the Seediq to the distinctive bead jewelry of the Paiwan.

While Wei foregrounds Taiwanese culture and experience in both films, he simultaneously deemphasizes Chineseness to such an extent that China virtually disappears from the narratives. In *Seediq Bale*, only two Han characters are represented, both merchants who have very minor roles (Wu 2014). And as Chris Berry (2017) observes, although Western tourists vacation in the Hengchun of *Cape No. 7*, tourists from the PRC are nowhere to be found, something unimaginable in reality. "The absence of any reference to China stretches the realist conventions that otherwise shape Wei's films, suggesting that it is more than chance," writes Berry, adding, "the absence of China... is not something beyond the text, but a space of erasure produced within it" (2017, 119). The invisibility of China in these two films suggests Wei's impulse to valorize Taiwanese identity, which has been eclipsed by fifty years of internal colonization by the KMT and is threatened in the twenty-first century by unification pressures from a diplomatically, economically, and militarily powerful PRC. The films imply that, like many engaged in the endeavor to articulate Taiwan's postcolonial identity (Liao 1999), Wei advocates celebration of Taiwan's multiculturalism and reclamation of Taiwan's history, a process that involves reflection on the significance of Japanese colonialism. Insofar as China's looming presence inhibits such reflection, Wei excludes China from his representations of Taiwan.

NOTES

- 1 The film, titled *Sai de ke: ba lai* (賽德克 巴萊) in Mandarin, was released internationally as *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale*. It is the international version that I discuss in this paper, though I will refer to the film as *Seediq Bale* instead of using its international title.
- 2 While the name change program (*kaiseimei* 改姓名) and the national language movement (*kokugo undō* 國語運動) were part of the imperialization (*kōminka* 皇民化) campaign implemented in Taiwan and Korea beginning in 1937, at the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Leo Ching observes, "it is generally assumed in the study of Japanese colonialism that *kōminka* was an extension, if not an intensification, of *dōka* [assimilation 同化] on a linear and consistent trajectory of Japanese colonial policy" (2001, 90). He adds that "*kōminka* constituted the 'final stage' of *dōka*" (91).
- 3 See, for example: Allen Harris, "Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale (2011)," *Glued to the Seat*, September 16, 2011 (<http://www.gluedtotheseat.com/2011/09/16/warriors-of-the-rainbow-seediq-bale-2011/>); "A Taiwanese Blockbuster: Blood-Stained Rainbow," *The Economist*, September 17, 2011, (<https://www.economist.com/asia/2011/09/17/blood-stained-rainbow>); Walter Russell Meade, "Taiwanese Film Stirs Romantic Nationalism," *The American Interest*, September 17, 2011, (<https://www.the-american-interest.com/2011/09/17/taiwanese-film-stirs-romantic-nationalism/>); and Stephen Holden, "Machismo, Obtained via Machete," *The New York Times*, April 26, 2012 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/27/movies/warriors-of-the-rainbow-seediq-bale-by-wei-te-sheng.html>).

- ⁴ Wushe is the Sinicized reading of the colonial Japanese name for the township, Musha 霧社. It is known today as Ren'ai Township or Ren'ai Xiang 仁愛鄉.
- ⁵ The Bunun are an indigenous people inhabiting the central mountains of Taiwan, including Nantou County, the setting for *Seediq Bale*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, they were hostile toward rival indigenous groups and, like the Seediq, were known to practice headhunting (Wu 2014, 29; Yang 2011, 319).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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