

Cultural Identity of Overseas Chinese in East Asia

—An Empirical Study on Taiwanese Diaspora in Contemporary Japan

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This paper examines cultural identity and the related discourses of one particular immigrant group, the first-generation Taiwanese Diaspora, in contemporary Japan. This group of ethnic Chinese overseas came to Japan from Taiwan after the end of WWII. They have experienced complex transitions in both legal status and self-identification. Constituted from the legacies of Japanese colonialism and Chinese nationalism, the Taiwanese Diaspora constantly negotiate, reconstruct and redefine their identity of “neither here, nor there” perplexity. This distinctive feature of identity predicament represents a unique case within the population of overseas ethnic Chinese.

This paper employs a synthesized method of contextual analysis and field study. The approach of contextual analysis is to comprehend the related discourses in the literature on history and theories. Through participatory observations and questionnaires, the author collected data from 80 questionnaire respondents. Furthermore, the author conducted in-depth interviews with 20 informants in Japan.. According to the up-to-date data, this study suggests that the hybrid identity of ethnic Chinese from Taiwan might not be bound coherently, but are subject to modification in accordance with cultural practices and social contexts. While Taiwanese Diaspora culturally assimilates to Japanese homogeneous setting through inter-ethnic interactions, their Chinese consciousness serves to facilitate networking in intra-ethnic interactions.