

Symbolic Interpretations of the Republic of Taiwan's Yellow Tiger Flag History is Asking Questions

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Abstract

As Taiwan establishes its nascent democracy, it must search its past for appropriate symbols of identity as well as symbols that indicate the future direction of the country. For example, many questions on the appropriateness of Taiwan's current flag, does it represent the nation or simply the waishengren Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)? Another controversial symbol of the past is that of the Yellow Tiger Flag from the 1895 Republic.

Some see the Tiger Flag as representative of Taiwan's first Republic, short-lived as it may have been. Others see it as a ploy by the Qing to maintain control over the island, and how the furthest thing from Beijing's mind was a free republic.

In determining criteria for appropriate symbols many questions need to be asked. Included in this are the various perspectives from which a symbol is viewed in both its historical context and by later participants in that history.

While some try to limit the perspective on the Yellow Tiger Flag to that of Tang Ching-sung, Taiwan's ten day president or Lien Heng who avoids it in his *General History of Taiwan*, a case can be made that the subsequent generation including Taiwan's own Lai Ho saw it from a totally different perspective.

This paper thus aims to demonstrate that symbols like the Yellow Tiger Flag force historians to look beyond the narrow perspective of the immediate Qing authorities to the often unspoken but separate and real intentions of the people. Symbols take on different meanings for different levels of society. For Lai Ho's generation, the Yellow Tiger Flag came to be not only a rejection of Japanese rule but also (at a deeper level) the rejection of all outside empires.

Taiwan, like any nation needs national symbols. Now as it enters its second decade of being a democracy with its president freely elected by the people, it is time to examine this issue of symbolism. However, the choosing of national symbols is not a simple matter; it involves many things. The symbol must relate to the country in a positive and meaningful way and resonate with the people. It must in some way link to the nation's history and past and be able to withstand challenges to its credibility. It must also be able to inspire.

Years ago, when I lived in Washington D.C., I once went for a drive in Maryland south along the Potomac River. Soon I came across Fort Washington Park. There on the grounds of Fort Washington was a beautiful park where one could take the family for a picnic. Besides being a good picnic spot, the fort lent itself to be a perfect play area for children of all ages. They could climb among its ramparts; play war games or hide and seek and have a beautiful view of the Potomac River. At first glance it seemed well worth the visit.

However, when I got back home I did a little research on the fort and found some surprises. It was originally built in 1809 to guard the city of Washington. Its first test under fire came during the war of 1812. During that war, in August 1814, the British Fleet moved up the Potomac River and landed troops some 30 miles from the city. To my chagrin the fort failed in its purpose. The defenders felt they were outclassed and outgunned and abandoned the fort, destroying it as they left. The British advance went on, defeated the United States defenders and burned the nation's capitol. President Madison and his wife barely escaped. When the British retreated, plans for rebuilding the fort were immediately set.

The British Fleet sailed down the Potomac River and went around to Chesapeake Bay to attack another fort, Fort McHenry. This fort was guarding Baltimore, the nation's third largest city. Here the results were different and the ability of Fort McHenry's gunners to thwart the British ships proved a turning point in the war. The battle also gave birth to the National Anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner."

Here were two forts. One had not fired a shot in defense of the capital and had been destroyed by its own army; the second withstood a heavy assault from the enemy and "the flag was still there." I had visited both forts. Strategically in 1814, it may have been better to abandon Fort Washington, but I must admit that when I visited there again, I felt a twinge of embarrassment. Fort Washington did not resonate or pass the test of inspiration as a symbol.

When Fort Washington had been rebuilt it is true it did serve as part of the Potomac Defense Network of Washington D. C. during the Civil War, but still, in its first test of fire, unlike Fort McHenry, Fort Washington had been abandoned. Perhaps it was now a state park because of its beautiful location, but I still wondered why the Department of Interior did not do a better job in picking a more heroic fort as a state park.

This is Taiwan's current challenge. As it begins to enjoy its democracy, it must seek symbols that can both relate in some manner to the formative development of its democracy and to its future. It must seek new symbols and change some old ones that do not speak to its mission and identity. It must find symbols of its democratic roots and yearnings.

Alfred North Whitehead, in his work on symbolism states the challenge this way. "The art of *free society* (italics mine) consists first in the maintenance of the symbolic code; and secondly in fearlessness of revision, to secure that the code serves those purposes that satisfy an enlightened reason. Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision must ultimately decay either from anarchy or from the slow atrophy of a lie stifled by useless shadows." (*Symbolism*, p.88)

To establish important links to symbols from the past involves the examination of Taiwan's history and how that history developed. What is any history? What makes a national history, and how far back does one go?

History, is it facts, individuals, movements or people?

Some perceive that a nation's history simply resides in the recording of facts and the person with the most facts wins or becomes the best historian. Not so, for those facts have to be analyzed, sifted, and interpreted in terms of their relationships, causality and relevance, particularly to the development of the nation's identity.

Others propose history is the contributions and result of the thoughts, motivations, and actions of the nation's individual leading and great participants. Again, not quite so, however great the individual participants may be, they are human with hidden motives and there are too many participants that line up in opposite camps; each has his/her own background, motivation and intentions (expressed, unexpressed, and secret).

Consider for example the contrasting views of Taiwan's history under the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) as seen in the memoirs of Chiang Kai-shek now being made available at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, and that same history as expressed by Peng Ming-min in his autobiography, *A Taste of Freedom*.

In such cases, the result of historic outcomes too often conflicts with the secret motives and intentions of the leading participants. The subsequent results may also be due more to coincidence than to the cause/effect of the participant's professed intentions. Whose interpretation of Taiwan's history would you believe more, Chiang Kai-shek's or Peng Ming-min's?

Others believe that history is the result of mass world movements, trends, and/or institutions that are bigger than and beyond any individual person or country involved. The French historian, Fernand Braudel, holds that if we know the economic, political and military structures of a country we know its history. Marx prefers to interpret it all in terms of social and economic movements. However, these too fall short because

movements, organizations, and institutions change directions and can ironically be manipulated and used by individuals.

Finally, of course some feel the answers to history reside with the often unheard from common people and what is their collective thought and experience. While the first three interpretations above must be considered, the people and their collective experience must also be included when we examine the history that produces the symbols of a nation?

When a nation approaches its history and choose appropriate symbols from its past, it enters a kaleidoscopic labyrinth that is continually added to as time goes on. This creates many overlapping concentric rings of history and is the reason why I have always proposed that the essence of history is to constantly ask questions and to try to give answers. This must be done before any symbols are chosen.

To exemplify this, take a simple but controversial piece of history, Taiwan's Yellow Tiger Flag, one of the flags of the Republic of Taiwan 1895.

Symbols exist only as people give them meaning and this flag has different meanings for different people. At the immediate level, we can point to the symbolism of the flag and state that it represents Taiwan's first republic and its independent spirit. This interpretation champions the fact that Taiwan became a republic long before most if not all Asian republics. It stresses how Taiwan had its own postal system, taxes, and military that resisted the Japanese who had been given Taiwan by the Manchu Qing government as part of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

Seen from this standpoint, this position is correct. Taiwan was a declared republic; it did resist the Japanese takeover (albeit it was a republic for only six months); and the Yellow Tiger Flag was one of its flags—most prominent perhaps because it has survived in history and was present in the capital of Taipei. But now the questions begin.

In contrast, some who support Taiwan's unification with China immediately question the Taiwan Republic because they cannot bear to see the sense of republican independence linked with Taiwan and feel obligated to disprove any historic sense of a Republic of Taiwan. These have their personal vested interests and paradigms to protect.

Such questioning leads to declarations on how Tang Ching-sung, the former Qing Provincial Governor of Taiwan was pressured into being President of the new Taiwan Republic by the local gentry. This goes further to demonstrate how he earned the title of "ten day president" because he bolted to Qing China immediately after the Japanese landed.

In addition, the Yellow Tiger Flag is questioned. Some historians will emphasize that a tiger was used because the dragon was already reserved to the Imperial Dragon of the Qing court. They continue and say that the intent of the flag's creators was to establish a government simply to oppose Japan, one that would exist more as a tributary vassal in league with the Qing Empire.

From that standpoint, that position also has correctness. Surprisingly and perhaps ironically, for this same reason, even some who are pro-Taiwan independence hesitate to identify with the Yellow Tiger Flag because in their minds, it represents the subservient thinking of the Qing bureaucrats.

However, now we must consider a separate factor, what in literature is termed the intentional fallacy, a fallacy that applies to both art and symbolism. “The intentional fallacy, like the affective fallacy is an error particularly when viewed from an objective theory of art; for holders of the objective theory tend—at least in their extreme statements—to see the work of art as autotelic.” Autotelic, a fancy word, simply means that the intent that an author has for a symbol does not guarantee that that intent should or will be its end application.

Symbolic action involves a conceptual transfer from one domain to another. What happens when different people transfer the same symbol to opposite domains? How should Taiwan balance these different views of its history?

Still other interpretations emerge and must be considered. In looking at Taiwan’s history, some have tried to insinuate that Taiwan was so isolated from the rest of the world that the concept of an independent republic would be totally foreign and unknown to the local people. They stress the references to it being a “savage island.” There are, certainly, plenty of records of shipwrecked sailors being mistreated and killed. Outside the major cities there was as well the element of the wild, wild East. Nevertheless such claims of Taiwan’s isolation are far-fetched.

Taiwan was never that out of touch with the rest of the world. For example, even as far back as the Dutch era (1624—62), news from Batavia and Europe, as well as from Xiamen (Amoy) regularly reached Taiwan. Inez de Beauclair in *Neglected Formosa* documents how the Dutch knew that Koxinga or Zheng Cheng-gong was considering invasion more than ten years before he came in 1661. These warnings unfortunately for them went on unheeded for several years before he actually came.

In the mid-1800s outside contacts and influence on Taiwan dramatically increased. Several American businessmen or entrepreneurs like Gideon Nye knew of the island’s potential and were suggesting annexation by America. Their motives were naturally profit, but ships from the Perry expedition in 1854 echoed this and gave more reasoned reports to Congress. Taiwan was not that isolated from western thought and knowledge of republics.

That individuals like Nye and Perry would have such ambitions also indicates a Taiwan that was loosely ruled by the Qing. If it were not, why would these Americans feel so free as to publicly recommend annexation of this open territory before the US Congress? They would never recommend annexing a sovereign part of China.

After the Tianjin treaty of 1858, four ports were opened up for international trade particularly with the Americans, British, French and Russians. The British followed by establishing consulates in several cities. Robert Swinhoe, a British botanist who had visited Taiwan in 1856 would later serve as a Vice Consul and then Consul as well as numerous others people.

A further colorful character involved in these times was the American Civil War colonel, Charles W. Le Gendre. He wrote numerous treatises on the island and was very helpful to the Japanese in their punitive expedition of 1873. He further suggested the argument to the Japanese that the eastern half of the island was there for the taking. While LeGendre was imprisoned in China, other Americans went along with the Japanese expedition as observers. Again what this simply says is that the island was not as isolated from the outside world and contact with democracies and republics as critics would try to make out.

James W. Davidson in his history *The Island of Formosa Past and Present* (1903) offers an opposite interpretation on Japan and China. When he speaks of the Qing bureaucrats intentions against the Japanese in 1895, he indicates that this was common knowledge among the people at the time. He attributes it to the “duplicity of the Chinese,” a “trickery for which modern history shows no parallel.”

The tone and motivation of Davidson remarks would lead to a different set of questions. He was an eyewitness to 1895, it is true, but when he writes eight years later he is there under the Japanese. Perhaps this is this why he goes on to express that the Japanese were too magnanimous to respond to this Chinese duplicity.

Perceptions of Taiwan had even changed dramatically in the minds of Qing officialdom. Emma Jinhua Teng in her work *Taiwan's Imagined Geography* provides extensive records of such changing images of Taiwan as expressed in Chinese Colonial Travel Writing. These cover a gamut from being an “island beyond the seas” to “a ball of mud” to a place of “raw and cooked savages” to “green gold.”

How much control and influence did the Qing have in the establishment of the Taiwan Republic? Certainly, of course, the Qing would overtly deny any link to supporting the 1895 republic or proposing a vassal state just as they might disavow their trying to sell the island to Britain or France. They had been soundly thrashed in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5. If the Japanese could prove that the treaty had been purposely broken before the signature ink was barely dry they would have justification to come storming back and claim much more of the Qing territory than the treaty generously gave them.

At this point the questioning of most of Taiwan's historians generally stops whether historians are of blue or green persuasion in the island's current political scene. This second position is correct in its limited perspective and expression as was the first position. Those writers that fear or are against a historic precedent of democracy and/or independence in Taiwan feel justified that they have proven their case; those that lean

more to a basis for democracy feel they have fulfilled their role as historians, but have they? More is needed.

All that this questioning has done thus far is to simply expose the motivation of the Qing government as it sought to nullify the Japanese gains after the treaty of Shimonoseki. It does this and little more, but if we are seeking symbols, history has other and deeper levels and more participants. We have not yet heard from the people.

Where did the people stand? In twentieth century history, one would not limit one's interpretation of Taiwan's and China's past and symbols to Chiang Kai-shek's diaries or the Kuomintang's explanation of what happened. Similarly one would not limit one's interpretation of the United States history of the 1970s in Vietnam to the diaries of Kissinger or Nixon without including the protests. So too one should not limit one's interpretation of the symbolism of 1895 Taiwan to the intentions and explanations given by Qing bureaucrats.

That position simply provides an analysis of the motivation of what I would call the "fat-cat" Qing bureaucrats who went where their bread was buttered. It states nothing about the involvement or motivations of the simple people of Taiwan and of trends present on the island. Nor does it reflect the multi-faceted and changing perspective of the many anti-Qing Taiwanese who fought under the Yellow Tiger Flag and under other flags. The questioning needs to continue.

Examine the following. Throughout its reign, the Qing government had at best controlled only half of Taiwan. The Qing often forbade its people to cross the Strait to Taiwan; once there it forbade them to enter the half of the island it did not control. Yet people went to Taiwan to escape life in China and have better opportunities. Once there, they also crossed the border into aboriginal land.

In any history of Taiwan during the Qing era, a standard repeated phrase is that there was an "uprising every three years and a rebellion every five years." This phrase is repeated so often that it borders on being a cliché. The frequency of uprisings and rebellions alone indicates that the mass of people who resisted the Japanese did so with much the same spirit and reasons as they resisted the Qing. The majority of people had no love to return to or defend the Qing; they did not even want to "restore the Ming." In reality they simply wanted to be left alone.

The shared Taiwanese experience, particularly in the south of Taiwan, was one of despising life as ruled by the Qing. The people were seeking something more. They may have fought for land among themselves, but they did not fight for the rights of the Qing or any form of China to control things.

In 1895, in the northern capital of Taipei after President Tang had bolted, the Qing troops left behind immediately rioted and began looting. Why? These "loyal" troops had gone a week without pay. The businessmen of Taipei realizing that this was not a good situation sought to bring in the Japanese.

For businessmen, order and stability under the Japanese was much better than chaos and looting under disgruntled Qing soldiers. As a result in some histories, these businessmen are tarred with the brush of being collaborators, but their actions were motivated by simple common sense.

Now if the Qing troops in Taipei rioted after a week without pay, the next question to ask is how or why would other troops fight without pay in the south of Taiwan?

Some did fight for pay. They were those under the black flag of Liu Yung-fu, a soldier of fortune and pirate who had made a name for himself in fighting the French in Vietnam. He had been brought to Taiwan to help in its defense and took over as President of the Republic after Tang fled. He got some monetary support both from taxes and businessmen as well as arms from China. His troops however were fighting more for payment than for any Qing cause.

As a soldier of fortune, Liu had a limited loyal following of pirates and similar soldiers of fortune. While his fighting the French in Vietnam may have benefited the Qing Empire, his pirate followers would as easily raid Chinese cities and shipping as they would raid the shipping of others.

Liu refused to actively take the fight to the north of Taiwan where the Japanese were. He preferred security in the south where he was more familiar with the terrain and people. Further Liu was not a fight-to-the-death warrior; when the Japanese began to gain the advantage in the south, he snuck out dressed as an old woman. It is at this point that the general support of opposition by Qing bureaucrats began to play itself out, but this was not the end of opposition to Japan by the people on Taiwan or the end of a desire for self-rule.

The Qing would soon have more problems at home than to be worried about making life difficult for the Japanese. Taiwan's businessmen also began to see that they could make money under the Japanese as easily as they could under a Qing government. Few people chose to return to China in the two year amnesty period provided by the Japanese (1895-97). They had crossed the Strait to escape China; they had no desire to go back there.

One writer on Taiwan, Denny Roy in *Taiwan a Political History* makes the claim that 25% went back. "About a quarter of the island's population took advantage of the opportunity to leave.(p.34)" I have never seen any figures to support that; my figures show that less than 1% chose to leave. But I have found that Roy whose book was funded by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, repeatedly slips away from his attempts at objectivity and throws in outlandish comments that could only come from biased deep Blue sources.

The many remaining Taiwanese would continue resistance. Who then or what were they fighting for? My answer is that they were fighting for themselves and the right to be left alone.

This view is supported by the Su Beng (史明) in his 400 year history of Taiwan. I quote at length from his abbreviated English version.

After the Japanese army landed on Taiwan, the defense army of the Ch'ing in Taiwan not only did not fight back, it collapsed. The rulers, including T'ang Ching-sung and Liu Yung-fu, went back secretly to China in a hurry. The Taiwanese country gentry escaped as well. On the contrary, the Taiwanese masses, that is, descendants of the pioneers, were the main factor in Taiwan society. Their standpoint as the Taiwanese people was very steady, and their national consciousness of opposing the foreign invasion was also very strong. As a result, a Republic of Taiwan was established "the first republic in Asia" but it lasted only four months. Taiwanese guerrilla armies all over the island and their soldiers, consisting of sons of the Taiwanese masses, went on fighting against enemies in their own homeland, and displayed their strong will, by means of bloody struggles in which they sacrificed their lives. The anti-Japanese struggle did not end, in those isolated circumstances, but instead they continued fighting more bravely.

The anti-Japanese heroes in the early times of armed anti-Japanese struggle were never members of the remaining and escaped Qing army or Taiwanese upper class persons, but were local persons and unnamed soldiers who fought indomitably against the enemies. These Taiwanese soldiers saw their own homeland being invaded, and were stirred up resolutely under the tradition of resisting foreign invasion, which their ancestors had built. They did not spare their victims, using pre-modern arms to fight against the Japanese army, which had modern equipment. Naturally, such anti-Japanese activities almost came from impulse, but they still won Taiwanese sympathies, and went down to posterity.

The (Japanese) Governor General of Taiwan proclaimed "suppression at an end all over Taiwan" (November 1895) after the Japanese army occupied Tainan, but the Taiwanese armies continued to resist Japan everywhere, Japan called them "bandits," just as the Ch'ing Government did, and plotted to wipe them out by the cruelest means. During eight years of the early armed anti-Japanese struggle, 4,612 armed Taiwanese soldiers were killed under the name of "bandits," and 2,202 were sentenced for penal servitude. In another source, the Civil Administrator, goto Shinpei, who was an executioner, personally stated that during the six years from 1897 to 1902, the arrested amounted to 8,030. Among them 3,473 were killed. Four thousand forty-three were held under "provisional treatment" (Tsurumi Yusake, A Life of Goto Shinpei, vol. II 1937). There is one more view. It says that, during the five years from 1898 to 1902, the number

killed under the “Insurgent Punishment Act” totaled 2,998, and the number murdered reached 1,095 (Togo Minoru and Sato Shiro, *The History of Development of Settlement in Taiwan*, 1916). The dead consisted, in part, of armed Taiwanese people and innocent farmers. The total number killed, however, was far more than these. This is how Japanese imperialism trampled the colonial people of Taiwan.

Su Beng’s words have a Marxist rhetoric to them, but his message is clear; there was a difference between the Taiwanese who fought Japan and the Qing supported soldiers who soon ran back to China.

A different historian, W. G. Goddard in *Formosa, A Study in Chinese History* interprets the people’s action as definitely seeking of democracy. He even anticipates that this seeking for democracy will be an influence on the 1911 uprising in China. While Goddard’s conclusion simulates mine, I find that we are worlds apart in our views on the role and character of Chiang Kai-shek and on any separate Taiwanese identity.

Under the Japanese, the quest for a Taiwanese identity began to take more serious shape. The people knew they were not Japanese but they also knew that they were not Qing. Later after the uprising of 1911 in China, they still did not feel they were a part of that development.

There were some who would still look towards China for identity like Lien Heng and would eventually go there feeling out of place among those with the new Taiwanese spirit. (Lien Heng in his *General History of Taiwan* also felt that Taiwan had no history or identity by itself.) The majority of others on Taiwan, however, would realize that they must look within. The current split of localization and waishengren present in today’s politics already had its roots from the time when Taiwan was considered a backwater province by those in Beijing. Now it continued and took on a new development. The Japanese gave all Chinese on Taiwan two years to return to China or to stay and be colonial subjects of Japan. The majority who chose to stay have always had a different collective experience.

Taiwan was now a colony of Japan and fresh ideas would come from there. As Taiwanese studied in Japan they saw how it was experiencing its own development of democracy. (Keating *Taiwan, the Struggles of a Democracy* p. 21) They would begin to petition to elect their own representatives to the Japanese Diet and want self-rule. It is from this background that we see the sentiments that are expressed in the writings of Lai Ho, a man considered the father of Taiwanese literature. In his writings, we also begin to see an expressed shift in the perspective and interpretation of the Yellow Tiger Flag and in the opposition to the Japanese. Observe the two following poems written around 1925.

黃虎旗,此何時?

閒掛壁上網蛛絲,彈痕戰血空陸離。
不是盛名後難繼,子孫蟄伏良堪悲。
三十年間噤不語,忘有共和獨立時。
先民走險空流血,後人弔古徒有詩。
黃龍破碎亦已久,風雲變幻那得知。
仰頭向天發長嘆,堂堂日沒西山陲。
(〔讀林子瑾黃虎旗歌〕) 賴和 作

Yellow Tiger flag, what era was that?
You hang quietly on the wall amidst spider webs.
Pierced with bullet holes, stained with the blood of war,
No one acknowledges you.
Your brief, obscure fame is hard for later generations to recall.
They hide and lie low; I feel sad.

For 30 years, the people dare not speak up.
They forget there was a time of independence, a time of a republic.
Our ancestors risked their lives and sacrificed their blood for nothing.
Later generations mourn you in vain with a poem.

The yellow dragon is also broken, gone for a long time.
Unpredictable as wind and clouds who knows what will come?
I turn my head to the heavens and give a long sigh.
And the venerable sun sets on the west mountain frontier.

The “long gone” yellow dragon of course is Qing China. A second poem by Lai Ho, presents a picture of the spirit of the Tiger Flag. It is a spirit that is still alive in the people; it is not a spirit associated with the Qing bureaucrats of 1895. It is the spirit of a people who fought for and did want a real republic.

旗中黃虎尚如生,建國共和怎不成?
天與台灣原獨立,我疑記載欠分明
(〔讀台灣通史〕十首之七) 賴和 作

The yellow tiger in the flag is still alive.
Why can't the effort of building a nation and a republic succeed?
The heavens gave Taiwan independence from its very origins.

I am suspicious of the accuracy of this account.

The suspicion that Lai Ho holds is directed at the historic interpretation of Lien Heng (Lien Chan's grandfather) in his *General History of Taiwan* (1922). Lien Heng's view of history follows the traditional Chinese practice in glorifying Chinese tradition at the expense of accuracy and reality. It is not the experience of the people in Taiwan who fought for their own land.

An Analogy on Taiwan's Situation

The motivation of participants in history is often mixed. A full understanding of that motivation is not always clearly known at the moment it is happening even by the participants themselves. Take for example a woman who lives in an abusive marriage or relationship. The woman knows she is not happy. She wants out. What she really wants is a divorce and to be her own boss. Perhaps however her culture does not allow divorce or have a term for it; perhaps divorced women have been chauvinistically given a derogatory reputation in her culture; perhaps that option has no precedent. The woman resists and eventually after years of resistance comes to the realization that what she had been seeking all along was to control her own destiny and to be independent. Eventually she finds a way and the language to express it.

In a similar vein, if one were to examine the intentions of people in a revolution, these people often do not have a clear vision of their end. They know what they want to escape from; they have a general idea of where they want to go as a goal, but they cannot predict or express its exact form. Two groups fought Japan under the same Yellow Tiger Flag; one was the Qing bureaucrats and their mercenaries; the other was the true Taiwanese who wanted out of both a bad marriage to the Qing and a coming bad marriage to Japan. Though the latter may not have been able to spell out the full detail of their hoped for republic, they knew it was not a return or vassal state to China.

When the American Revolution happened, we see the majority of Americans did not envisage the United States of America as it is now. Many did not necessarily want to break free of England; they had no clear concept of an independent identity; this had no precedent.

The people did know that they were being taxed without representation. They did know that they were abused and exploited. They did know that being on their own was as good as (if not better than) being under oppression. Some did have a vision and goal, but many were reluctantly drawn into the revolution. As they fought, however, they began to discover a new identity; it was an identity that had been forming through years of oppression and resistance. They found that it was what they really wanted.

It was only after the Americans had gained their independence that they began to settle down to hammering out how the thirteen colonies could find a form of government that they all could unite under. This did not happen overnight; it was and continues to be an ongoing process. That American identity is still being shaped today as the country

continues to question and discover the true meaning of the words “all men are created equal” and that the words apply not only to landed gentry but also to former slaves, to women, to all races, to all immigrants and on and on.

As for flags, the Americans also created many flags that expressed the diversity and variety of the colonies involved in the original revolution from the “Don’t Tread on Me” flag to the “Liberty Tree” flag. One in particular, the “Grand Union Flag,” resembled the British flag and caused confusion. Finally the Continental Congress would settle on the Stars and Stripes in June 1777 but even then they did not specify the order of the arrangement of the stars and stripes and many different versions appeared.

Return then to Asia and Taiwan. When historians begin to ask questions, they must leave the security of memorized facts behind. This becomes uncharted territory for them. Some prefer to remain with what they had been taught to memorize. They must now make judgments on and integrate perspectives that they may not want to admit do exist.

An unexplored area where I believe that further continued questions about democracy need to be asked is that if Sun Yat-sen preached government of the people, by the people and for the people, why was Communism so successful in China but yet not so successful in Japan or Taiwan. Was only lip service given to Sun’s preaching throughout China? Conversely, why was democracy so successful in Japan, why did it take longer in Taiwan, and why has it never come to China?

Symbols are powerful and Taiwan needs symbols, powerful symbols. Symbols can give a unifying power to help shape identity. Even a man like Hitler recognized this when he began his Nazi party. In *Mein Kampf*, he expresses how he designed the Swastika flag and why he chose the colors; Red is the social idea of movement; white is the purity of the Nationalism and the swastika is the vision of the struggle for victory of the Aryan man.

The Nazi flag remains a powerful symbol. The Holocaust Teacher Resource Center points out how Hitler took a symbol of good luck and turned it into a symbol of evil. “Hitler had a convenient but spurious reason for choosing the Hakenkreuz or hooked cross. It had been used by the Aryan nomads of India in the Second Millennium B. C. In Nazi theory, the Aryans were the German ancestors, and Hitler concluded that the swastika had been ‘eternally anti-Semitic.’” Would Hitler have changed his mind if someone objected and said, the swastika is supposed to be a symbol of love? No, symbols are what we make them.

If anyone would have a reason to despise the Nazi flag and its symbolism, it would be those who survived the holocaust. But even they admit the power of the flag. “In spite of its fanciful origin the swastika flag was a dramatic one and it achieved exactly what Hitler intended from the first day it was unfurled in public. Anti-Semites and unemployed workers rallied to the banner and even Nazi opponents were forced to acknowledge that the swastika had a hypnotic effect.”

So, while some point to the Qing historian phrase of the dragon being big brother to the little brother Tiger (龍兄虎弟) there are plenty of other phrases within the culture that give the tiger its own divergent image. Interestingly, tradition supports a dual and sometimes conflicting role of the dragon and tiger. Temples often have totems and symbols for both the dragon and the tiger.

Other phrases put the dragon and tiger in separate realms. The dragon follows the cloud, the tiger follows the wind (龍從雲 虎從風) and (龍生雲 虎生風). This statement reflects that the dragon is more suited to an agricultural society, the tiger to the nomadic. In China's past it was primarily agricultural. In today's fast-paced high tech world, which Taiwan specializes in, the tiger may be a more appropriate symbol to identify with.

The wind is no stranger to Taiwan. If one goes from Taipei to Ilan along the old mountain path one will come across the famous tiger stone set there to control the mountain winds. Numerous other references point to the fact that Qing bureaucratic intention should not be the only factor to be utilized in creating symbols.

Taiwan needs symbols that can express its collective identity, but this in itself is another problem, what is Taiwan's identity? Melissa J. Brown addresses this in her work, *Is Taiwan Chinese?* Taiwan's collective experience is far different from that of China, but it is also different from that of the waishengren who came with Chiang Kai-shek in 1949. That the collective identity has still to be worked out is seen with the current controversy over the removal of the statues of Chiang Kai-shek.

We must also expect sharp discussion; the meaning of symbols is rarely agreed upon at the beginning. Everyone knows that the Bald Eagle is the United States national bird and a part of the National Seal. However, it was only after long heated debate that the eagle selected as the national bird in 1782.

Ben Franklin, one of the nation's founding fathers and a man whom I admire and consider the quintessential American felt that the United States national bird should be the turkey and not the eagle. He argued consistently for the turkey instead of the eagle. He reasoned as follows, the eagle for him was a bird of "bad moral character" that does "not get his living honestly." The turkey is a "bird of courage" that would defend his territory.

As much as I admire Franklin, I am glad that his symbolic interpretation of birds did not win out. As I quoted Whitehead at the start of this paper, the changing concept of the turkey has brought about other cultural connotations.

Look finally to a current writer in Taiwan, Yao Chia-wen, President of the Examination Yuan; he wrote a series of books when he was in prison because of his involvement in the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident. Among them was the three volume work, *The Yellow Tiger Seal*. This in turn was made into an opera bearing the same name by Shih Ru-fang.

Yao keeps the Yellow Tiger as the symbol of the 1895 Republic. He cannot avoid it; the tiger is there in history. However he chooses to focus on the yellow tiger as placed in the gold chop or seal of state because the seal more than the flag can represent the seat of power of the republic.

The name of the protagonist in the *Yellow Tiger Seal* is Tai-ping Yang (太平洋). The name is carefully chosen to indicate that he belongs to the Pacific Ocean; he is separate from mainland Asia.

In a personal interview with Yao, he stressed how history presents facts, but the interpretation of the facts is what is most important. As proof of this, we can see that Yao composed this anti-KMT state trilogy while in prison and using only resources provided for him and screened by the Garrison Command.

Yao has the *Yellow Tiger Seal* end with the gold seal being lost in the mine pit in northern Taiwan. He purposely avoids having the seal brought to the south to Liu, the second president of the republic. In his words he wanted to emphasize that the seal of government belongs to the people thus it is buried in the land. To have it brought to Liu would be putting it in the hands of one person, (here Liu, one who also ran). Yao does not believe that the people in a democracy should trust any one person.

The *Yellow Tiger Seal* has many other twists and turns that the author may not have directly intended. For example, when the seal is in danger of being stolen, it is hidden by throwing it into a latrine. The protagonist later has to go rescue it from there. One can humorously interpret this as saying Taiwan has had to put up with a lot of shit in its past.

So, when one begins to ask questions, Taiwan's history and even the Yellow Tiger Flag begin to open up. We should not stop at one level and accept the limited and narrow perspective that some Qing bureaucrats may not have intended a real republic. Go beyond this and ask a few more questions. See what else was happening, see who else was fighting under the flag. What were the people thinking even if they could not articulate it at the time.

The people's perspective is the same perspective echoed in the United Nations Charter that people should determine their own destiny. After you realize this, then I believe that like Lai Ho, you will find a nation in its building. The tiger is a part of that past but the tiger also can go his own way.

Symbols are objects, pictures, or images that tell a story without using words. What story do we want to tell? In my interpretation of the symbolism of the Yellow Tiger Flag, I believe we must go beyond the narrow intention of the Qing bureaucratic and examine the bigger picture. This is the side of the story of the people as presented by Lai Ho, Su Beng, and Yao Chia-wen and why the Taiwanese painter Lin Yu-shan did a memorable painting of the Yellow Tiger Flag.

Like Lai Ho, I say for Taiwan "The dragon is dead, long live the tiger!"

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