

Your Highness, Mr. Policeman: the Taiwanese perception of the policeman during the Japanese Colonial Rule

Min-Chia Young, Shu-Te University, Taiwan

The Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion & Philosophy 2017
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This article examines the image of the policeman when Taiwan was under Japanese rule (1895-1945) through textual and linguistic analysis. It focuses on the process of how a foreign authority was transformed from a law abiding public servant to a ruthless mighty tyrant in the name of gaining full control and access to a land that was yet to be civilized. In contrast with the process of Taiwanese democratic reform when legitimate law enforcement has failed to cease the rising crime rate, some Taiwanese start to look back to the peaceful colonial period with nostalgia, that is, when the nation was ruled under Your Highness, Mr. Policeman.

Keywords: Japanese rule, Taiwan, police

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

The Early Law Enforcement in Chinese Society

The earliest law enforcement agency known in China is called *Situ* 司徒, which dates back to the time of Xia dynasty (ca. 2100-1600 B.C.).¹ According to the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents) (ca. 11th cent-770 B.C.), *Situ* is the Minister of Instruction, who navigates the legal system, holding responsibilities for the laws and orders in the society.²

However, the name and title of the law enforcement officer or agency changes accordingly from then on. Therefore, we have names, such as the *Siming* 司民, *Sibao* 司暴 or *Siji* 司稽 of the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 B.C.), *Zhongwei* 中尉 of the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.), *Zhijinwu* 執金吾 of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220), *Sili xiaowei* 司隸校衛 of the Wei, Jin and Northern and Southern dynasties (220-589), *Zuoyou wuwei* 左右武衛 of the Sui dynasty (581-618), *Zuoyou jinwuwei* 左右金吾衛 of the Tang and Song dynasty (618-1279), *Jingxunyuan* 警巡院 of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), *Bingma zhihuisi* 兵馬指揮司 of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and *Tongling yamen* 統領衙門 or *Xunjingbu* 巡警部 of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) in various times.³

Although the names of these organizations vary from time to time, they all belong to a constituted body of persons empowered by the state to enforce the law, maintain order and provide a range of social services for the community, that is to say, the popular conceptions of police work in modern society.⁴

Police and Community Control System in Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Rule

Following the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, the Japanese soon took over the jurisdiction of Taiwan. However the takeover was encountered by a myriad of armed resistances.⁵ Fearing for further armed resistance to jeopardize their ruling, the Japanese colonial administration began to impose strict regulations for ultimate dominance and control over the islanders. Two major impositions were deemed as being of high priority to lord over the Taiwanese populace. One was the institutionalizing of a policing system in local administration to structure a colonial spatiality; the other was the shaping of an invented identity to fortify the Japanese imperial spirit.

¹ Guo Baoan, "Jingcha zhidu qiyuan tanxi", *Qinghai daxue xuebao*, 24, No. 4(2006), 103-104.

² Kong Anguo, "Shangshu chengyi" (The Commentary of the Book of Documents), in *Shisan jing zhushu*, ed. Li Xueqin, vol. 2. (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 75.

³ Guo, "Jingcha zhidu", 103-104 and Wang Jiajian, "Qingmo minchu woguo jingcha zhidu xiandai hua de lichen", *Lishi xuebao*, 10 (1982), 302. For the historical records of these officers, see Ban Gu, *Han shu* (The Book of Former Han), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1964), 732, Fang Xuanling, *Jin shu* (The Book of Jin), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 739, Wei Zheng, *Sui shu* (The Book of Sui), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 777-778, Liu Xu, *Jiu tang shu* (The Old Book on Tang), (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 1901, Tuo Tuo et al., *Song shi* (The History of Song), (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 3931, Song Lian, *Yuan shi* (The History of Yuan), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 2301, Zhang Tingyu et al., *Ming shi* (The History of Ming), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1814-1815, and Zhao Ruxun, *Qing shi gao* (Manuscripts of the History of Qing), (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 3452 and 4211.

⁴ For the popular concepts about the character of police work, see Egon Bittner, *The Functions of the Police in Modern Society: a review of background factors, current practices, and possible role models* (Chevy Chase: National Institute of Mental Health, Center for Studies of Crime and Delinquency, 1970), 6-14.

⁵ Harry J. Lamley, "Taiwan under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945: the vicissitudes of colonialism" in *Taiwan: A New History*, ed. Murray A. Rubenstein (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 207.

The restructuring of Taiwan into different self-rule bounded geo-spatial territories, supervised by highly regulated household registration and advanced police force was the Japanese empire's way to institutionalize a hierarchical network, which aimed to penetrate and gain full control of the Taiwanese everyday life. This centralized framework was deemed by the Japanese as a necessity for sustaining their colonial rule, that is, a power, which could serve as a control mechanism, a base for local administration, and a vehicle for wartime mobilization.⁶ However, the empire's appropriation of the control mechanism went far beyond its mere defense mechanism and the endorsement of excessive force to the police further pushed this lowest ranking civil servant's jurisdiction to an extreme that no law was above him. Henceforth, the colonial police became the highest authority of all time and was addressed by the public mass as "Emperor" or "Your Highness" honorifically.⁷

The Omnipotence and Omnipresence of the Colonial Police

To most Taiwanese the image of a police officer during the Japanese colonial times was like a watchtower behind the darkness of closed eyes or a Holy Buddha (*namo da pusa* 南無大菩薩), who sat aloft with the world spreading out below awaited for his inspection (Figure 1).⁸ This dual aspect view of the colonial police perception, to certain extent, could be deemed as a reflection of the Taiwanese fear towards the imperial ruler's superior technical and scientific innovations, which could simultaneously deprive and empower their rights, needs and privileges.⁹ To be exact, prior to the Japanese colonial period, the living standard of the Taiwanese society was hardly adequate. With the help of modern technologies that the Japanese brought in, the overall social condition, such as environmental hygiene, public health and educational level of the Taiwanese communities had significantly improved.¹⁰ That is to say, with the help of modern technologies, the colonial police played a decisive role in exercising the imperial ruler's disciplinary power over various administrative works locally and nationally. These public affairs, to an extent, had permeated all aspects of the Taiwanese community as well as their daily life depicting the omnipotent and omnipresent nature of the colonial policemen, be they *junsa* 巡查 (police patrolman), who were almost all Japanese or *junsaho* 巡查補 (assistant patrolman), the police supplemental force who were mostly Taiwanese.¹¹

⁶ The idea was borrowed from Caroline Ts'ai, see her "One Kind of Control: The Hoko System in Taiwan under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1990)", especially Part One to Part Three.

⁷ The original description is *tianshe huangdi* 田舍皇帝, literally emperor of the farmers or local tyrant, see "Dui jingcha de bufu xingwei yao yanzhong jiuban le" (Do Something about the Police Misconducts), *Taiwan minbao* (Taiwan People News), 1 April, 1925.

⁸ In an Exhibition of Police and Sanitation held in Taipei, 1925, an image of a policeman associated with various powers of Buddha, named "Holy Police Buddha" (*namo jingcha da pusa* 南無警察大菩薩), was used to describe and show the power and authority of the colonial police. See Chiang Yu-Lin, "Namo jingcha da pusa: rizhi shiqi taipei zhou jingcha weisheng zhanlanhui zhong de jingcha xingxiang" (Buddha Police: the Image of the Police in the Taipei Police and Hygiene Exhibition during the Japanese Colonial Government), *Faxue pinglun*, 112 (2009), 1-44.

⁹ In terms of the education system and religious belief, the Japanese colonial government implemented a policy of compulsory primary education as a mechanism for facilitating the colonial control. They also promoted the existing Buddhist religion and adopted certain Taiwanese popular culture, such as having the deities painted in gold, trying to accelerate the assimilation of the Taiwanese culture into the Japanese one. That is to say, the Taiwanese, though were not explicitly content at being colonized by the Japanese, could still acknowledge the miraculous impacts of this "exotic ethnic group". See Tai Wen-Feng, "Huafan weishen: fanzai shen xinyang de kaocha" (The Research of Savages became the Deities Belief of Chinese), (Master diss., National University of Tainan, 2012), 67-78.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ According to an official police study, the patrolmen in Taiwan spent a total of 459,962 hours or 57,494 days in assisting general administrative works in 1931. See Taiwan sotokufu keisatsukyoku ed., *Taiwan no keisatsu* (The Police in Taiwan), (Taipei: Taiwan sotokufu keisatsukyoku, 1937), 109-115.

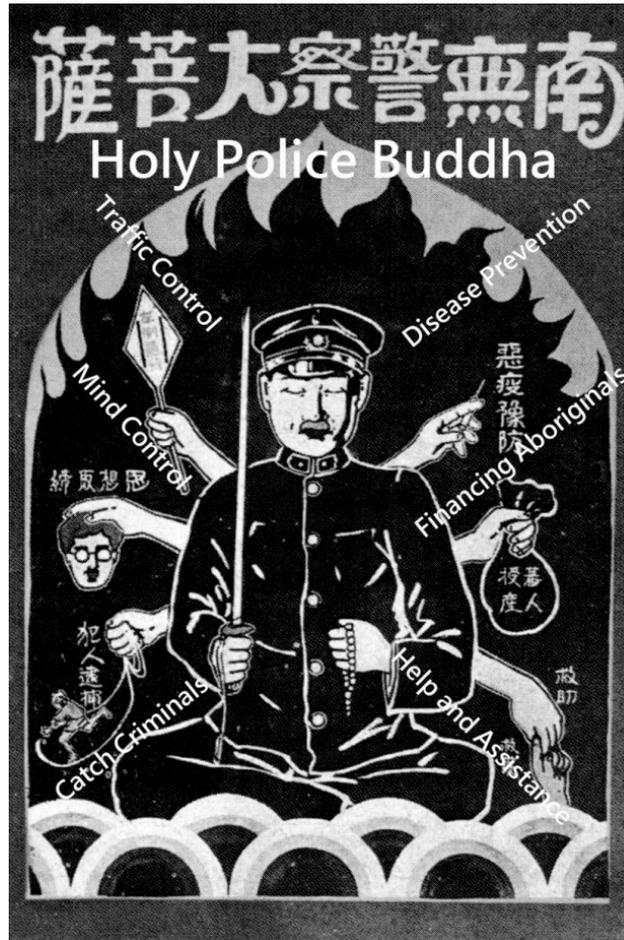


Figure 1: An image entitled the Holy Police Buddha shown on a Police and Hygiene Exhibition organized by the Taipei Police in 1925 best exemplifies the omnipotent and omnipresent nature of a colonial police officer. In the poster, a rank-and file policeman holds a rosary in his left hand and a sword in the right, exercising his disciplinary power with double standards. Source: Washisu, *Rizhi shiqi taiwan*, 548.

The ubiquitously rendering of the police disciplinary power, then served as a community watchtower, constantly exerting a consciousness of permanent visibility as a form of surveillance system in the mind of the Taiwanese. This surveillance control system could be deemed as a replica of Jeremy Bentham's panoptic construction, where no bars, chains or heavy locks were needed for a dominant control mechanism. That is, a mechanism, which assured that the one being observed would be controlled and contained at any moment without excessive forces (Figure 2).¹² Therefore, in the eyes of the Taiwanese, this miraculous deed could only be the act of god or a divine being, that is, the Lord or Your Highness.

¹² For the mechanism of the panopticon, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 195-228.

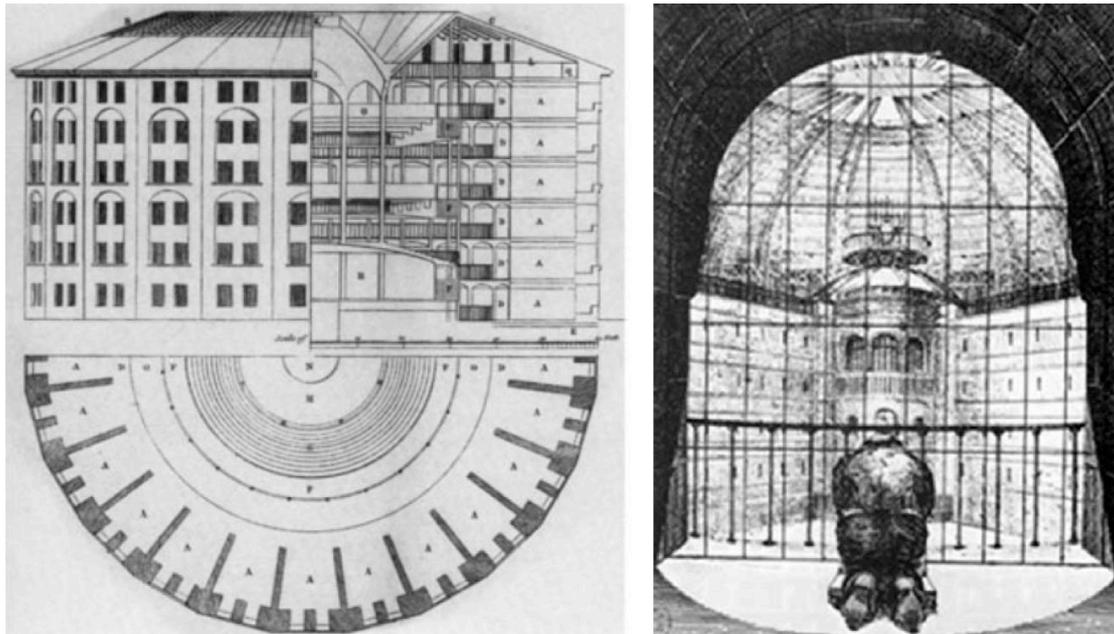


Figure 2: A conceptual plan of the panopticon by J. Bentham depicts the major effect of the penitentiary, which is to induce the inmate into a state of conscious and permanent visibility making sure the functioning of a dominant control mechanism. Source: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), plate 3 and 4.

Henceforth, the colonial police officer became the only lord (*daren* 大人) the Taiwanese had ever seen and known. This was due to the fact that most imperial rulers had never laid their feet on this petty island.¹³ This omnipresent lord was hence like an extension of the sovereign's body revered, adored and feared by all in the Taiwanese popular culture. Therefore, he could, on the one hand, be a dedicated public servant, constantly engaging in crime prevention promotions, as shown in the poster of the 1925 Taiwan Exhibition (Figure 3), and a man of mercy, willing to fight for the right of the public mass even at the cost of his own life, as the case of the 嘉義 County policeman, Morikawa Seijiro (Figure 4).¹⁴

¹³ Chen Jialing, "Riju shiqi taiwan duanpian xiaoshuo zhong de jingcha miaoxie" (The Descriptions of Colonial Policemen in the Taiwanese Novels and Fictions during the Japanese Occupation). (Master diss., National Chengchi University, 2002), 15.

¹⁴ For Morikawa's story, see Ye Ren-Jie, "Cong taiwan rizhi shiqi de hanshi zaitan rizhi jingcha: baozheng yu baojia zhi xingxiang" (The Police in Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Rule Appeared in Chinese Poetry: The Forming of Baozheng and Baojia, *Wenshi taiwan xuebao*, 2 (2010), 202-205. For others, who treated the Taiwanese with respect, see Nitt Jun, "Ikezoi no ie" (Home of the Riverside), *Taiwan Shibao* (Taiwan Times), 257 (1941), 131.



Figure 3: One poster from the 1925 Police and Hygiene Exhibition depicts the police as a faithful public servant, working hand in hand with the general public in any crime prevention activities. Source: Washisu, *Rizhi shiqi taiwan*, 557.



Figure 4: The police patrolman of Chiayi County, Morikawa Seijiro was deified by the villagers and honored as *Yiaigong* 義愛公 (The Duke of Justice and Mercy) after his death. Source: Ye, “Cong taiwan rizhi shiqi”, 202.

He could, on the other hand, be a tyranny of minority, having the right to detect and correct a layman’s “misconducts” with randomly generated excuses, such as accusing

an innocent vendor's scale of being inaccurate when he did not like the pricing,¹⁵ assuming an ox cart of being a vehicle for transporting cargo only when he did not like to see any person riding on it,¹⁶ or declaring a permit of being compulsory for fishing in the creeks when he felt like it.¹⁷ All of these accusations were invented and perfected under the dominant power of the mighty lawman. To further populate his extreme power, this "Holy Majesty" could even do his jobs with excessive force and without any excuse at all.

The demarcation of the ruler and ruled became obvious when excessive power was superimposed to reduce a human's awareness of himself/herself, and as such he/she could easily be manipulated and exploited by the dominating party at will. Therefore, it was perfectly normal for a police officer to slap a child if he was too terrified to answer questions, rope a man if he had a rice cake for no specific reason, and trash a widow's house if she forgot to close the door.¹⁸ These raging feelings against certain vulnerable groups were then justified, warranted and merged into collective unconscious as righteous deeds, which ultimately attributed to the building of an police empire, where the sole representative of power and authority was the Lord Police (*keisatsu daijin* 警察大人). Under this geo-spatial framework, the police officer was the lord, the role model and the only civilized one. The rest were merely lesser human beings or barbarians needed to be educated and tamed.¹⁹ The impact of the police as a monarch, a dictator and a scoundrel had even gone further to the first few decades of the Republic of China, when the best way to stop children from screaming and crying was to tell them that "the police is around".²⁰

The Policing System in the Republic of China, Taiwan

When Taiwan was restored to the Republic of China sovereignty in 1945, the policing system (National Police Service) was ruled by the Taiwan Provincial Administration Office, which was later renamed as National Police Agency in 1947.²¹ With the Chinese Nationalist one-party rule, the declaration of martial law was fully implemented from 1949 to 1980, and the Taiwanese were forced to live under strict military commands. This was the time justified by the Nationalist Party as a period for 戰地政務 (Battlefield Government Administration), which combined the rulings of political party, government administration and military system in one.²² Hence, the police force was under the jurisdiction of the military force with even more power

¹⁵ Lai He, *Laihe ji* (The Collected Works of Lai He), (Taipei: Qianwei chuban she, 1999), 55-65.

¹⁶ Lu Heruo, "Niuche" (Ox Cart), in *Lu heruo xiaoshuo quanji* (The Complete Works of Lu Heruo), (Zhonghe: INK yinhe chuban youxian gongsi, 2006), 81.

¹⁷ Yang Shouyu, *Yang Shouyu ji* (The Complete Works of Yang Shouyu), (Taipei: Qianwei chuban she, 1991), 277-291.

¹⁸ For these incidents, see Lai, *Laihe ji*, 67-74 and 169-188, and Zhang Henghao ed., "Chen xugu zhang qingtang lin yuefeng heji" (The Collected Works of Chen Xugu, Zhang Qingtang and Lin Yuefeng), (Taipei: Qianwei chuban she, 1991), 61-71.

¹⁹ The Japanese regarded themselves as the civilized and the Taiwanese as the uncivilized, who could only learn from harsh punishments. Corporal punishment was preferred by the colonial rulers as a term of imprisonment to the Taiwanese was associated with relaxation and pleasure, which meant free labor, free accommodation and free meal. See Chu Huei-Chu, "Zhimindi de guixun yu jiaohua: rizhi shiqi taiwan xiaoshuo zhong de jingmin guanxi" (Disciplining and Cultivating the Colonized: Literary Representations of Ethnic Relations between Japanese Policemen and Taiwanese People), *Taiwan wenxue yanjiu xuebao* (Journal of Taiwan Literary Studies), 10 (2010), 122 and 127. In Li Li's words, the Japanese colonial police system in Taiwan differed significantly from their homeland in its confluence and diversification, making it a centralized administrative and executive body, that is, "Police Monopoly" (*jingcha zhengzhi* 警察政治), see Li Li, *Riju taiwan shiqi jingcha zhidu yanjiu* (The Study of the Police System during the Japanese Colonial Period), (Taipei: Cross-Strait Academy, 2007), 161.

²⁰ Hui-yu Caroline Ts'ai, *Taiwan in Japan's Empire Building: An Institutional Approach to Colonial Engineering* (London: Routledge, 2009), 67.

²¹ Zhang Guangming and Sang Weiming, "Taiwan bainian jingcha zhengce zhi huigu yu zhanwang" (A Hundred Years of the Taiwanese Policing System in Retrospect and Prospect), *Jingxue congkan*, 44, No. 4 (2014), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

than its predecessor of the Japanese ruler.²³ Hence, a police officer could arrest, detain and prosecute anyone with absolute authority. This was a time when the police was used by the ruling party (Nationalists) as a hitman or terminator to monitor and eradicate those Taiwanese who shared a different political view or had a different mindset against their ruling.²⁴ During this “White Terror” period, any one could be perceived as a potential threat and labeled as bandits or spies working for the Communist Party, including a translator working on a Popeye comic strip (Figure 5).²⁵



Figure 7: A comic strip depicts the protagonist, Popeye, delivering a speech on a soap box. He started by saying “Fellow...”, which was purposelessly translated into *quanguo junmin tongbao* 全國軍民同胞, a favorable phrase often used at the beginning of the then National Party leader, Chiang Kai-shek’s speech. The translator was then arrested for treason and sentenced to 12 years in prison. Source: She, “Boyang yu boyang an”, 110.

After the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan underwent a series of democratic reforms, which granted the localities the power to appoint their own police chiefs, the major task of police works then shifted from imposing law and order with absolute authority to improving public services with professionalism, dedication and most importantly, a good attitude.²⁶ These humble gestures, according to a former Police Commissioner, would eventually meet the rising crime rate and social disorder as an inevitable consequence of a democratic process.²⁷ As a result, the police officers have become the socially disadvantaged group, harshly criticized and monitored by mass media and public opinion.²⁸ Amidst those criticisms, one voice was heard, especially the words from those who had been through the Japanese colonial period, expressing their affection of the orderly society under the Japanese rule, a time when doors need

²³ Most of the Commissioner of Police during this period came from military background, see Zhang and Sang, “Taiwan bainian”, 3-4.

²⁴ Chen Chunying, “Woguo weiquan tizhi jiangou chuqi zhi jingzheng (1949-1958)” (The Police Administration in the Early Stage of Structuring an Authoritarian Regime in Taiwan), (Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences), 3, No. 3 (2007), 53.

²⁵ For the incident, see Shen Chao-Chun, “Boyang yu boyang an: cong xinwen pingyi dao baise kongbu de tantao” (Bo Yang and His Political Case of Injustice: The Research on the White Terror and News Commentary), (Master diss., Soochow University, 2006).

²⁶ Chen Yapeng, “Cai yingwe: jingcha buzaishi weiquan de yanshen ershi renmin de gongpu” (Police Were No Longer the Extension of Power and Authority But the Public Servants), *Pingguo ribao* (Apple Daily), 27 October 2016 and Ligu Cao, Lanying Huang and Ivan Y. Sun, *Policing in Taiwan: From Authoritarianism to Democracy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 34.

²⁷ Yang Mali and He Qiyu, “Jingcha ye zhishi pingfanren” (Policemen Are Only Human), *Tianxia zazhi* (Common Wealth), 170 (1995), 119-122.

²⁸ Yang and He, “Jingcha ye zhishi”, 122. To name a few of these criticisms, see Li Yixin, “Xianfan gao jingcha, zaixun dizhi saorao jiaoren” (A Suspect Sued a Police Officer and Harassed his Family), *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), 9 November 2016, Huang Zhaorong, “Xiang wuneng jiu wuneng, xiang youneng jiu youneng” (To Be Competent or Incompetent That Is the Question), *Ziyou shibao* (Liberty Times), 17 January 2015, and Lin Zhiqing, Huang Zhongyu and Lu Renqin, “Fujiazi huidao zhui jing” (A Police Was Chased by a Rich Kid with Knife), *Pingguo ribao*, 12 July 2011.

not be bolted at night.²⁹

These words might seem oddly appropriate for people who had gone through the extreme dominance and control period of the Japanese rule. Nonetheless, these expressions could also be deemed as a reflection of the gradual erosion of social order in Taiwan. This downgrading social condition, to most Taiwanese, is the result of the incompetent police force, which has failed to sustain crime prevention and crime eradication.³⁰ Especially for the people of older generation, who tend to equate an orderly society with a powerful and dominant policing system, the incompetence and vacillation of the current police force is just unbearable.³¹

Conclusion

A brief outline of the evolution of Chinese policing in Taiwan has shown us that the Taiwanese perception of the police has its origin from the almighty dictatorial ruler of the Japanese colonial period. This could be attributed to the successful incorporation of modern surveillance techniques and domestic intelligence networks. The implementation was obvious for the building of an omnipotent and omnipresent police force to gain full control of the Taiwanese public as well as the initiation of police monopoly that lasted for over fifty years.

The succeeding Nationalist Party further accumulated the power of this dominant control system to prosecute those who were against them or were perceived as a threat from the Communist Party, turning the nation into a period of “White Terror” for nearly forty years. The police was hence regarded as the hitman of the ruling party feared and awed by the public. With the birth of modern democratic movement, the Taiwanese police department has also gone through different structural reforms. The image of the police has gradually turned from a mighty lord into a general government employee with the sole purpose of serving the public. This humble servant has then become the target of mass media, heavily monitored and criticized by the public’s eyes. Among these screenings, issues of social disorder were frequently mentioned and attributed to the incompetence of the police force, turning certain generations start to look back to the peaceful colonial period with nostalgia, that is, an affection mitigating the trauma resulted from the dominance and control agenda of the Japanese rule.

Contact email: minchiay@stu.edu.tw

²⁹ Yen Feng-pin, “Cong maiyuan 1947 maiyuan shiliao yingyong kan 228 shijian yu dangshi de taiwan shehui” (An Insight into the 228 Incident and the 1947 Taiwan Society from the Appliance of the Historical Resource of “The Burial of the Unrighted Dead in 1947”), (Master diss., National Sun Yat-sen University, 2007), 80 and Tai Shih-chao, “Liudui keji zuqun zhengzhi de yanjiu” (The Ethnic Politics of Lui Tui Hakka), (Master diss., Nanhua University, 2007), 41. For Taiwanese affection of the Japanese rule, see Chih Huei Huang, “Ethnic Diversity, Two-Layered Colonization and Modern Taiwanese Attitudes toward Japan” in *Japanese Taiwan: Colonial Rule and its Contested Legacy*, ed. Andrew D. Morris, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) and Chen Ya-Jing, “Han tai duiri qinggan zhi chayi jiqi beijing yanjiu” (Compare with those Affections to Japan in Korea and Taiwan), (Master diss., Chinese Culture University, 2013), 72.

³⁰ Huang Yuhu, “Chuan heidao zhuanjin zhongxian baoquan zhao heiyong” (Mafia Took over Central Counties Running Security Business), *Taiwan shibao* (Taiwan Times), 16 July 2010, Chen Jieliang, “Jingcha wuneng faguan taijian” (Police Were Incompetent and the Judges Were Bored), *Ziyou shibao*, 31 December 2008, and Chen Yumei, “Lanjing zhuzai wuneng zhihui bisi xiaojie” (The Police Were Only Capable of Arresting Prostitutes), *Pingguo ribao*, 21 November 2007.

³¹ Luo Jifu, *Riben diguo zai taiwan: riben jinglue taiwan de cemou pouxi* (The Japanese Empire in Taiwan: The Analysis of Their Strategies), (Taipei: Yuanliu chuban shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 2004), 93.