Utrecht University

“Cultural Violence”: A Study of the Visual Power of Taiwan Postcards during the Japanese Colonial Period

Kelsey Zhang

7499906

June 23th 2025

Abstract

This study examines the colonial-era photographic postcards depicting Taiwan's Indigenous peoples during Japanese rule (1895–1945), exploring how these visual materials contributed to the ideological construction and everyday reproduction of imperial authority. Far from being innocent souvenirs or neutral ethnographic records, these postcards functioned as powerful tools of colonial visuality, embedding Indigenous bodies and cultures within a larger apparatus of governance, classification, and symbolic violence.

Drawing on postcolonial theory, visual semiotics, and Foucauldian discourse analysis, the research analyzes postcards produced and circulated between the 1910s and 1930s. It traces their production from academic anthropology and colonial bureaucracy to commercial photography studios, and investigates how images of portraits, labor scenes, rituals, and domestic life were staged, framed, and captioned to reflect and reinforce dominant narratives of primitivity, exoticism, and modernization. These representations shaped not only how Indigenous peoples were seen but also how colonial society imagined itself—progressive, modern, and civilizing.

The study reveals that these postcards enacted a form of "everyday visual violence," naturalizing unequal power relations through seemingly mundane images. By examining the aesthetics, production mechanisms, and circulation of these materials

across expositions, educational settings, and private correspondence, this paper argues that colonial postcards were key instruments in the making of a shared imperial imaginary. Ultimately, this research contributes to broader conversations on visual colonialism, the politics of representation, and the lingering effects of historical visual regimes in contemporary cultural memory.

Keywords: Taiwan Indigenous peoples, colonial postcards, Japanese Empire, visual culture, postcolonial theory, symbolic violence, image circulation

Contents

Figures

Chapter 1 Introduction

Early postcolonial theory emphasized the binary opposition between colonizers and colonized; postcolonial theory breaks the binary opposition and emphasizes hybridity and ambiguity: the different colonies in the empire and the nature, culture, material and people in them are all mutually generated and related networks. In the intersection of the empire's human, cultural and material flows, as the empire expanded, the colonial image that was gradually absorbed into popular images also became an important part of the construction of the colonial rule imagination. From 1895 to 1945, Taiwan suffered fifty years of Japanese colonial rule. During this period, the colonial government not only implemented a series of administrative and economic reforms but also carried out extensive cultural governance projects. Among them, the management of Taiwan's indigenous peoples - usually officially referred to as "managing the aborigines" - became the focus of the colonial government's integration, transformation and discipline of the frontier population. Although military conquest and administrative reorganization played a key role, the Japanese colonial government also relied heavily on visual and symbolic practices to define, classify and regulate its rule over the indigenous peoples.

As early as the Mudan Incident in 1874, the subject of "Taiwan" began to appear in the "brocade-prints" of Japanese mass media. The characters depicted in the brocade prints inherited the Edo period's scroll-unfolding format from right to left, and still maintained the composition of "the enemy is on the left, I am on the right". The subsequent Sino-

Japanese War produced many such "war brocade-prints", which had the functions of propaganda, entertainment, art, and reporting. In some war brocade prints, you can also see the appearance of "news reporters" on the battlefield, announcing the birth of modern media. For example, modern Japanese literary writers such as Masaoka Shiki and Kunikida Doppo all served as military reporters at the time. Starting with such news brocade-prints, to advertising pictures, flyers, posters, and today's protagonist - postcards - these images, which were not worthy of being published in the past, are important media that help us understand how the empire was imagined. How did the Japanese in the mountains of Nagano imagine the colony? How did the Taiwanese on the edge of the empire imagine Japan? Often, it is through these ephemeral art and materials.

This paper focuses on a specific and underexplored medium of colonial visuality: the photographic postcards depicting Taiwan's Indigenous peoples produced and circulated during the Japanese colonial period. These postcards—featuring images titled "Savage Woman Smoking", "Amis Girl Drawing Water", or "Tattooed Taroko Headshot"—were widely distributed in both Taiwan and the Japanese metropole, functioning simultaneously as ethnographic documents and commercial souvenirs. This duality is critical: they are not merely aesthetic or nostalgic images, but active instruments in the ideological reproduction of empire. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic violence, this study argues that such images enacted a subtle but powerful form of domination, in which the colonized body was objectified, classified, and

aesthetically disciplined through everyday visual culture.

1.1 Research Questions and Method

The central research questions guiding this inquiry are: How were Taiwan's Indigenous peoples visually constructed in colonial postcards? What visual metaphors, compositional strategies, and textual captions were employed to frame them as "barbarians," "noble savages," or "civilized subjects"? Who produced these images, and under what ideological and institutional conditions? How did these images circulate, and what functions did they serve within the broader apparatus of colonial knowledge and governance? To address these questions, this study brings together methods from visual semiotics, postcolonial theory, and Foucauldian discourse analysis, focusing on postcards produced between the 1910s and 1930s, now housed in archival collections such as the Taiwan Memory Project and institutional holdings in Taipei and Tokyo.

1.2 Literature Review

Photography, in particular, served as a powerful technology of classification and containment. In the context of colonial Taiwan, postcards became a conduit through which Indigenous peoples were aestheticized, essentialized, and circulated as consumable visual objects. Elizabeth Edwards (2001) conceptualizes such images as "raw histories"—visual records embedded in the colonial structures of collecting, exhibiting, and archiving.[1] Timothy Mitchell (1989) similarly contends that colonial visuality does not just represent the colonized world; it constructs the very conditions

[1] Edwards, Elizabeth. Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums. Oxford: Berg, 2001, 213–214.

under which the world becomes visible, knowable, and administrable to the colonizer.[2]

Local Taiwanese scholars have also contributed to understanding how these visual representations functioned within colonial aesthetics and ideology. Ting (2011) analyzes how the Japanese colonial art system developed the idea of "local color" (地方色), wherein Indigenous bodies and landscapes were transformed into aestheticized signs of otherness.[3] Feng (2006)[4] and Zhang (2009)[5] examine how colonial expositions, such as the 1914 Taishō Exhibition or the Taiwan Industry Promotion Exhibition, created institutional spaces where Indigenous artifacts and images were staged within a developmentalist narrative of "from savagery to civilization." These exhibitions relied on postcards, dioramas, and ethnographic models to visualize the "progress" of Indigenous peoples under Japanese rule, framing them as governable, observable, and ultimately incorporable into the imperial fold.

Meanwhile, scholars such as Peng (2011) have employed semiotic approaches to analyze how Indigenous peoples were visually codified in postcards through gestures, costumes, gazes, and captions.[6] These visual signs collectively produced a mode of "taxonomic seeing" that made Indigenous bodies legible to both scientific and popular

[2] Mitchell, Timothy. "The World as Exhibition." Comparative Studies in Society and History 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–236. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015802.
[3] Ding, Ping. "The Construction of the Concept of 'Local Color' in Taiwanese Art during the Japanese Colonial Period: A Visual Representation of Coloniality." Meiyuan, no. 2 (2011): 72–79.
[4] Feng, Qiongying. "Displaying [Ruling Time]: The Governance Technology of the [First Anniversary Commemoration Fair] during the Japanese Colonial Period." Master's thesis, Tsinghua University, 2006.
[5] Zhang, Yu. "Dialogue between Literature and Fairs: Focusing on the 1935 Taiwan Fair." Taiwan Studies Journal, no. 1 (2009): 91–100.
[6] Peng, Jia. "On the Writing Strategies of Taiwan's Aborigines: Observation from the Perspective of Cultural Semiotics." Qinghai Nationalities Studies, no. 2 (2011).

audiences. Drawing on the work of Albers and James (1988), this study understands postcards as situated within a broader culture of travel photography, where images are not passive reflections but active constructions of cultural difference, desire, and control.[7] Furthermore, research by Ren et al. (2019) on the development of photography studios in colonial Taiwan reveals the commercial mechanisms behind image production, highlighting how state institutions, anthropologists, and private publishers collaborated in the design, titling, and distribution of these postcards for consumption by Japanese tourists, settlers, and officials.[8]

In addition, Taiwanese scholar Xie Shizhong, in his analysis of postcards of mountain ethnic minorities in North Southeast Asia, pointed out that these postcards mostly feature traditional costumes, handicrafts, special rituals or lifestyles of mountain residents, presenting mountain ethnic groups as stagnant and incompatible with modern society, highlighting their differences from mainstream society. This emphasis can satisfy tourists' imagination of exoticism, but it also simplifies their understanding of mountain residents and forms stereotypes.[9] Liu Weimin[10] and Xu Youhua, [11]researchers who study Taiwanese aboriginal postcards and "Taiwan Photo Albums", also pointed out a similar situation: the photos of Taiwanese aboriginals taken during

[7] Albers, Patricia C., and William R. James. "Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach." Annals of Tourism Research 15, no. 1 (1988): 134–158.
[8] Ren, Tianxing. "Colonial Symbols and Cultural Interpenetration: An Analysis of Images in the Taiwan Daily News in the Late Meiji Period." [Publication details incomplete; please supplement journal or publisher information].
[9] Hsieh, Shih-chung. "Exoticism, Eroticism, and Drugs: Touristic Images of Tribal Peoples in Northern Mainland Southeast Asia." Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore 157 (September 2007): 11–64.
[10] Liu, Weimin. "Image Reproduction of Colonial Situations: A Study of Aboriginal Postcard Images during the Japanese Occupation." PhD diss., 2005.
[11] Jian, Yongbin, Gao Zhizun, Lin Shouyi, Xu Youhua, Wu Qihao, Lian Ke, and Ling Zongkui. The Age of Gaze: Photo Galleries in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation. Taipei: Reading Republic/Left Bank Culture, 2019.

the Japanese colonial period reproduced the alien culture that was alien to the photographers at the time, including "real photos" of aboriginals wearing ethnic costumes and showing traditional lifestyles. The photos taken by the Japanese include exotic customs such as chiefs, warriors, and celebrations, as well as scenes of hunting, headhunting, weaving, and other aspects of daily life. There are even deliberately arranged simulated situations of colonizers fighting against aboriginals, which not only implies the colonizers' shaping and propaganda of stereotypes of others, but also shows the systematization, scientificization, and manipulation of foreign cultural groups.[12]

Despite these contributions, the specific role of Indigenous-themed postcards in the everyday visual regime of the Japanese Empire remains under-examined. Most prior studies have focused either on ethnographic photography or exhibition culture, overlooking how postcards operated at the intersection of scientific knowledge, commercial reproduction, and personal memory. As Clifford (1988) reminds us, objects like postcards are not neutral carriers of culture but are embedded in systems of classification, value, and mobility. They are what Bruno Latour (1986) would call “immutable mobiles”: visual artifacts that circulate widely while stabilizing particular forms of knowledge and power. By moving beyond institutional archives to focus on mass-circulated visual ephemera, this study seeks to understand how colonial power was not only imposed through policy and force, but also naturalized through the repetition of everyday images—images that rendered Indigenous lives as aestheticized,

[12] Xu, Youhua, Wu Qihao, Lian Ke, and Ling Zongkui. The Age of Gaze: Photo Galleries in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation. Taipei: Reading Republic/Left Bank Culture, 2019, 133–134.

consumable, and governable.

In sum, this research contributes to the growing field of colonial visual studies by treating postcards not as marginal curiosities, but as key components in the symbolic architecture of empire. It proposes that the seemingly banal images of Indigenous women carrying water, men engaged in ritual, or families posing in traditional dress, are in fact microcosms of a larger system of visual violence. Through their production, circulation, and consumption, these postcards produced an imagined geography of Taiwan that simultaneously exoticized and subordinated its Indigenous populations, aligning them with Japan's imperial narrative of enlightenment and modernity.

Chapter 2 Tracing the Origins of Violence: The Production Mechanism and Knowledge Construction of Colonial Postcards

As a popular image carrier under the modern colonial system, postcards not only record the objects being photographed but also reaffirm the colonial order in the production and viewing of images. So, how are these images produced? What kind of institutional background and knowledge production logic determines the appearance of the postcards we see today? This involves the production methods and historical mechanisms of these images.

During the colonial period, Taiwan's visual governance was not completed by a single photographer alone, but a complete visual production system of Taiwan's indigenous peoples was constructed under the coordination of the colonial government, the mobilization of the academic system, and the development of imaging technology. This system not only shapes the viewing logic during the image shooting process, but also embeds the image into the framework of colonial knowledge through publishing, naming, designing, and distribution. From the shooting site to the final postcard, the image of the indigenous peoples has gone through a series of powerful operational chains and finally entered social circulation as a cultural commodity.

Under the photographic lens of colonial power, the faces, postures, clothing, and even labor and daily life of the indigenous peoples were reorganized into a visual order in the name of "scientific observation." These postcard images are both a manifestation of

visual power under the colonial system and a "cultural other" construction project jointly completed by the state, anthropologists and photography institutions. This chapter will focus on the institutional production path of these images and analyze how colonial knowledge is visually constructed through images.

2.1 The intersection of academic investigation and colonial governance: the visualization of anthropological knowledge

After Japan took over Taiwan in 1895, the colonial government (Taiwan Governor-General's Office) led a series of investigations based on the need to establish colonial rule. In April 1896, the Taiwan Governor-General's Office specially established the Central Colonization and Production Department and the Local Reclamation Bureau in its administrative structure to be responsible for "vassal affairs". The Colonization and Production Department set up the "Aboriginal Affairs Research Association" to collect "aboriginal affairs" data and compiled the "Taiwan Governor-General's Office Statistics Book" for each year in order to gain a preliminary understanding of Taiwan's folk customs. In order to fully clarify the actual situation of the aboriginal areas, since 1908, the Japanese "Aboriginal Affairs Headquarters", the Japanese Army General Staff, the Colonization and Production Bureau and other units have organized many investigations and geographical surveys, attempting to lay a solid foundation for the future conquest of the "aboriginal people" and colonization of the "aboriginal areas". The contents of the "Fandi Records" archival survey covered geography, tribes, "Fan community" organizations (including ruling methods, sanctions and family relations), customs and habits, livelihoods, products, foreign relations, the evolution of "Fan

management", miscellaneous notes, and other aspects.[13] The "information on the foreign people" from various places was thus collected and integrated through a strict administrative system. The colonists "through this structure, transformed the local knowledge of the different 'foreign people' situations in various places into the unified 'foreign people' situation knowledge (colonial official knowledge)" from *the colonial authorities.*[14] In 1909, the "Temporary Taiwan Customs Investigation Committee" established by the colonial government began to investigate the inherent customs and habits of Taiwan's aborigines, and published investigation reports on aboriginal peoples one after another, with "remarkable results". In 1928, the Imperial University of Taipei was established, pushing the study of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples to a new stage.

In addition, the colonial government's information on the aboriginal situation largely came from special surveys conducted by anthropologists commissioned in the form of assignments or commissions. It can be said that anthropological research on Taiwan's aboriginal peoples during the Japanese occupation period was completely started and carried out in the context of serving colonial rule. The knowledge system of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples constructed by Japanese anthropologists represented by Inō

[13] Taiwan Governor-General's Office Police Headquarters. Draft of Aboriginal History, Vol. 3 (Vol. 1). Tokyo: Seishisha, 1918, 115–121.
[14] Chen, Weizhi. "Revisiting Ino Kano: The Construction and Influence of Taiwan's Historical Ethnography under Colonial Rule." Aboriginal Documents (electronic journal), no. 18 (December 2014).

Kanori,[15] Ryuzo Torii,[16] Ushinosuke Mori,[17] etc., became the basis for the Japanese government's understanding of Taiwan at that time. These anthropologists were sent to various aboriginal communities to conduct ethnographic surveys. In addition to language and material cultural records, photography also became one of their main recording methods. Among them, Torii Ryuzo was sent by the Anthropology Research Office of Tokyo Imperial University in 1896 to conduct anthropological research in Taiwan. This was the first time that Japanese anthropologists used photography in a colony to photograph the subjects in the field, leaving behind a large number of dry plate glass images.[18] When Japan took over Taiwan, Shogoro Tsuboi,[19] an anthropology professor at Tokyo Imperial University who encouraged Inō and sent

[15] Inō Kanori(伊能 嘉矩, 11 June 1867 – 30 September 1925) went to Taiwan in 1895. In December of that year, he and Tashiro Yasuda, who was also a member of the Tokyo Anthropological Society, jointly founded the "Taiwan Anthropological Society", thus establishing an extension of the anthropological knowledge network centered in Tokyo, Japan, in Taiwan. From 1896 to 1898, Ino used his position as an official of the colonial government to continue his research, gradually forming an interpretation system for Taiwan's aborigines, and published several research results in the "Aboriginal Research Society" in Taiwan and the Tokyo Anthropological Society in Japan. Refer to Chen, Weizhi. "Revisiting Ino Kano: The Construction and Influence of Taiwan's Historical Ethnography under Colonial Rule." Aboriginal Documents (electronic journal), no. 18 (December 2014).

[16] Ryuzo Torii (鳥居 龍藏; May 4, 1870 – January 14, 1953) is also a scholar with outstanding achievements in the study of Taiwan's aborigines. Starting from 1896, Torii conducted field surveys in four major areas where Taiwan's aboriginals were distributed, and based on this, he wrote nine reports on Hongtou Island, Paiwan, Rukai, Puyuma, Amei, Alishan, Bunun, Tingmian, Puli Community and Pingpu people. His *Hongtou Island Local Customs Survey Report* published in 1902, was the first ethnography describing Taiwan's aboriginals. Wu Ju also proposed the *Nine Tribes Theory* for the classification of Taiwan's aboriginal ethnic groups (In 1910, Torii Ryuzo published the article *Eludes Antlropologigues: Les Alorigenes De Formose* in French, dividing Taiwan's aboriginal people into nine tribes: Taiyai, Nitaka, Bounoun, Saou, Tsarisène, Paiwan, Pyouma, Ami, and Yami). This directly influenced the official classification of indigenous peoples by the colonial governor-general's office and became the prototype of the widely recognized nine-tribe theory.
See Pan, Ying. The Historical Origin of Taiwan's Aboriginal Peoples. Taipei: Taiyuan Publishing House, 1998, 79.

[17] Ushinosuke Mori (森 丑之助, January 16, 1877–July 4, 1926) divided the indigenous peoples other than the Pingpu people into six categories, which the Governor-General's Office adopted and later formed the official seven-tribe classification system during the Japanese occupation.
See Pan, Ying. The Historical Origin of Taiwan's Aboriginal Peoples. Taipei: Taiyuan Publishing House, 1998, 80–81.

[18] For an analysis of Torii Ryuzo's ethnographic images and their anthropological knowledge, see Pai, Hyung Il. "Capturing Visions of Japan's Prehistoric Past: Tori Ryuzo's Field Photographs of 'Primitive' Races and Lost Civilizations (1896–1915)." In Looking Modern: East Asia Visual Culture from Treaty Ports to World War II, edited by Jennifer Purtle and Hans Bjarne Thomsen, 265–293. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. And Wang, Ka F. "Entanglements of Ethnographic Images: Tori Ryuzo's Photographic Record of Taiwan Aborigines (1896–1900)." Japanese Studies 24, no. 3 (2004): 283–299.

[19] Shogoro Tsuboi (坪井 正五郎, February 22, 1863 - May 26, 1913) was a Japanese physical anthropologist. As Japan's first anthropologist, he worked hard to popularize and establish archaeology and anthropology in Japan.

Torii to Taiwan, was even better at using visual imaging technology, almost in sync with the development of anthropological research and knowledge presentation in the emerging disciplines of Europe and the United States.[20] These images were originally used for administrative and academic purposes, and gradually formed the core database of colonial vision.

However, the position of anthropologists who started out as colonizers is questionable. When Torii Ryuzo first went to Taiwan to conduct anthropological research, he wrote the following in the preface of his article:

> Taiwan, a rich and beautiful island, is a new colony of Japan. It is an island floating in the Pacific Ocean, opposite to Fujian Province in the southern corner of the Chinese mainland. There are mountains running from north to south on the island, which are steep and untouched by human beings. The main part of the island, blocked by the steep mountains, has never been invaded by others. Except for the coastal areas of the Pacific Ocean, the area has been isolated from civilization throughout history. Most of the primitive, uncivilized, and cruel aborigines live there. I found that the aborigines distributed on the island, which needs to be investigated urgently, no matter which tribe they are, stubbornly adhere to the primitive habits left by their ancestors and blatantly reject any attempt of foreign civilization to contact them. Although Taiwan is adjacent to China, the uncivilized aborigines on the island have been the most amazing research objects for any foreign travelers since ancient times. From the perspective of civilization, or from the perspective of human solidarity, the aborigines of Taiwan are obviously in an unfortunate state, and we should pity their situation; but for anthropologists, they are an amazing research field unfolding before their eyes.[21]

Descriptions such as "isolated from civilization", "primitive and cruel", "amazing", and

[20] From the early days of the Tokyo Anthropology Society, Tsuboi Shogoro made full use of various visual reproduction techniques, including sketching, drawing, and photography. See Kang, Inhye. "Visual Technologies of Imperial Anthropology: Tsuboi Shogoro and Multiethnic Japanese Empire." Positions 24, no. 4 (2016): 761–787.
[21] Torii, Ryuzo. Exploring Taiwan: Torii Ryuzo's Anthropological Journey in Taiwan. Translated and annotated by Yang Nanjun. Taipei: Yuanliu Publishing House, 1996, 5.

"in a miserable state" are common in the reports of various investigators. Dr. Torii, who discussed Taiwan's aborigines as an anthropologist, also fell into the colonizer's thinking trap of "the colonized area itself is an uncivilized area".

At the beginning of Japan's rule over Taiwan, the Taiwanese aborigines were the subjects of the colonists' administration and were also the subjects of the colonial anthropological knowledge construction. Stoler pointed out that colonial governance often transformed emotions, order and domination into a measurable and displayable symbolic system in the name of "rational governance" (Stoler, 1995). The aboriginal peoples in the postcard images were transformed into a "visible ethnic group" that could be observed and governed in this process of knowledge construction. In general, during the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, the shooting, naming, publishing and circulation of images were almost all incorporated into the ruling system of the Governor-General's Office. From the Aboriginal Research Association, the Colonial Production Bureau, to the Old Customs Investigation Association, the colonial state integrated the lives of the aboriginals into a scientific and hierarchical knowledge system in the name of "investigation" and "classification." Anthropologists were not only academic observers, but also political governors and image producers. Under the guise of scientific research, they provided the colonizers with a source of legitimacy for vision and discourse. In the process of knowledge production of the Governor-General's Aboriginal Administration and colonial anthropology, Taiwan's aborigines became what French

anthropologist and philosopher Bruno Latour called "immutable mobiles."[22] The social and cultural context of each ethnic group in their original habitat was extracted, and the overall life of the aborigines in each place was transformed into distribution maps, population values, various cultural characteristics that can be separated and compared one by one, head shape index, skin color depth, etc., which are convenient for analysis, induction, comparison, and determination of ethnic group classification, while also marking their degree of civilization evolution. Anthropologists are not only academic observers, but also political administrators and image producers. Under the banner of scientific research, they provide the colonizers with a legitimate source of vision and discourse.

2.2 Image conversion: from ethnographic archives to commodity postcards

How did these images, originally intended as academic records, transform into popular postcards? This transformation process reflects how colonial knowledge is "recoded" and enters the public culture and visual consumption system. This first requires talking about the history of Japanese postcard production.

In the late 19th century, Europe became the pinnacle of Western imperialism due to the expansion of overseas trade and colonies. As geographical boundaries diminished, anthropology, which is closely related to imperialism, also devoted a lot of attention to

[22] Bruno Latour's "immutable mobiles" are phenomena or objects that are translated into different contexts. In the process of abstraction, objects, phenomena, etc. that change their way of existence can be brought together and calculated.
See Latour, Bruno. Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

the "backward" society and culture identified by the colonized. At that time, the West's impression of other regions and cultures outside Europe came mainly from exhibitions, photographs and postcards, among which postcards had the greatest influence and level.[23] The use of postcards originated in Europe in the 19th century. Initially, the circulation of postcards was limited to within each country. It was not until the second Universal Postal Union (Union Postale Universelle) in 1878 that the participating countries agreed that postcards could be used for communication between countries. Postcards quickly became popular in Europe due to their low price and convenience, and later spread to Asia.[24]

By the 1890s, postcards were combined with optics to become the most popular advertising medium. Industries related to tourism, including accommodation, transportation, and service industries, all explored the use of postcards, and they were sold through train stations, passenger ship expositions, scenic spots, and souvenir shops. Postcards became a trend, and many businessmen therefore competed to engage in the publication of postcards, and issued postcards with various themes (such as military and politics, disaster events) and functions (such as charity, festivals, greetings). Postcards also became the most popular art form among the general public at the time because of their practical functions and appeals.[25]

[23] Zhang, Ruide. Imagining China: An Analysis of Circular Images on Antique Postcards Found in London, 807.
[24] Chen, Zongren, ed. Faces of the Century: Circular Statues of Taiwan's Aboriginal People 100 Years Ago, Vol. 1. Taipei: National Library, 2003, 6.
[25] Woody, Howard. "International Postcard: Their History, Production, and Distribution (circa 1895 to 1915)." In Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards, edited by Christraud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, 13. Santa Fe, NM: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1998.

In the early 19th century, when telephones were not as common as they are today, postcards became a widely used medium of communication among the public. Postcards were the most common means of communication at the time and were spread all over the country through the postal system. In addition to bringing news and surprises to distant friends and relatives, postcards also allowed people to get to know the world outside their own. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, the West entered a period of craze for collecting postcards. The market had a huge demand for new products, and businesses continued to launch various new products.

Since the Meiji Restoration (1868), Japan has established a modern postal system under the wave of Westernization, and imitated the Western postal policy, with official postal issuance. At that time, Shanghai, which was also part of Asia, began printing postcards through the "Shanghai Municipal Council Letter Office" in 1874. Therefore, postcards were already in circulation in China and Japan in the 1870s.

After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Taiwan became a Japanese colony. After Japan took control of Taiwan, due to the need for colonial rule, the official communication and postal networks in Taiwan continued to expand. The relevant regulations and rates were also based on those in mainland Japan, and a modern postal system was gradually established in Taiwan. The issuance of postcards in the Taiwan region is affiliated with the Japanese postal system, so its format, issuance and title are

deeply influenced by Japan. The Japanese government issued postcards as early as 1873. Although postcards were not yet available for sale to the public, Japanese traveling abroad at the time had already begun purchasing postcards and giving them as gifts or using them for correspondence. As for privately printed postcards, it was not until 1900, after Japan revised its Postal Law, that private printing of postcards was allowed, and this was five years after Japan took control of Taiwan.

Japan has vigorously promoted the policy of colonizing and promoting industry since the Meiji period. At that time, in order to revitalize trade exports and develop tourism, the colonial industry in Taiwan began to print postcards for the people. This was especially true during the two Nanbu Wusan Kopinkai events during the Meiji and Taisho years, and the Taiwan Industrial Kopinkai during the Taisho year. A large number of scenic postcards were printed in various parts of Taiwan and circulated in both Japan and Taiwan.[26] At that time, Taiwan's landscape postcards were distributed locally because there was no printing equipment. Photo studios in various places would take photos, ship the negatives taken in Taiwan back to Japan, and print them in mainland printing factories. They were then distributed to various places through bookstores, associations, stores, businesses, travel agencies, individuals, or the photo studios themselves. Among the postcards mentioned in next chapter, Figure 2 was taken by anthropologist Usunosuke Mori in October 1914 and published by Seibanya Main

[26] Lai, Chih-chang. "Photographic Photos as a Kind of Image and Language: On the Development of Photographic Photography in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation Period." In Taiwan Photography Yearbook Review, 67–68. Taipei: Yuan Yi Art Space, 1998.

Store in Taipei; Figure 4 was printed in Japan around the 1920s, but was still published by Katsuyama Photo Studio (personal photo studio) in Taipei; Figure 5 was made in Kanda, Tokyo, Japan around the 1910s; Figure 7 was published by Sugita Shoten (Japanese bookstore) around the 1910s; Figure 10 was printed and published by Suzuki Yujindo (personal photo studio) in Japan around the 1910s; Figure 12 was printed and published by SEIUNDO PRINTING CO. LTD in the 1920s, by Akaoka Brothers (Japanese store) in Taipei.

As the number of Japanese in Taiwan increased, the number of businesses engaged in the manufacture and sale of postcards also increased dramatically. Between 1900 and 1910 alone, there were at least twenty factories manufacturing and selling postcards in Taichung, Taipei, Tainan, Kaohsiung and other places in Taiwan.[27]From the above, we can see that the postcards issued in Taiwan at that time were all handled by the Japanese, from the source material, photography, design to printing. That is, the technology was mainly in the hands of the Japanese, and the consumer group was also set and preset on tourists from Japan to Taiwan. Therefore, the visual circular images in the postcards of this period are not difficult to find that the images in the subject matter and pictures

[27] Matsumoto, Akemi, and Xie Senzhan, eds. *Taiwan Reminiscences*, 7–8.
According to Lai Chih-chang, in the article *Photographic Photos as an Image and Language - On the Development of Photographic Photos in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation Period*, it is pointed out that from south to north, there are: Keelung's Wakabayashi Keelung Hall and Xinyuan Bookstore; Taipei's Haowan Art Association, Ishisaka Famous Products Exhibition Hall, Taiwan Xingaotang Bookstore, East Asia Travel Agency, Shengfanya Main Store, Taiwan Railway Department, Akaoka Brothers Chamber of Commerce, Fujigo Bookstore, Jinyong Muling, Tsukagoshi Store, Sunagao Photo Gallery; Hsinchu's Otsuka Store; Taichung The Social Affairs Office and Pengbian Bookstore in Tainan, the Xiaochuqin Factory and the Taiwan Historical Museum in Tainan; Yamagata-ya and Nanli Store in Kaohsiung; Isshin-do in San; Juntendo in Pingtung; Okano Photo Gallery in Hengchun; Matsumoto Store, Okubo Department Store, and Sakamoto Bookstore in Penghu; Katayama Photo Gallery in Hualien Port and Oshuya Store in Yilan, etc. Among them, Seihanya Main Store and Heshudian had the largest circulation, and the number of scene postcards issued during the entire Japanese colonial period was at least more than 4,000.

often have a Japanese-centered viewing subject. Among them, many photographers are scholars and officials, and they also cooperate with local photo studios and printers in Taiwan. After photography, the negatives or image data are authorized by government agencies and organized and designed by publishing organizations to produce image products with fixed titles, exquisite composition, and multiple languages (Japanese, English, and Chinese), and then enter the printing and sales process.

In addition, at that time, only literate people could use postcards as a channel to communicate with relatives and friends, so those who regularly used postcards were probably intellectuals. However, the main targets of the issuance and distribution of a large number of postcards were Japanese living in Taiwan or Japanese troops stationed in Taiwan. In addition to exchanging information, mailing these illustrated books about Taiwan's round image also introduced the scenery of Taiwan to relatives and friends in mainland Japan.[28]

In short, the content of Taiwan postcards during the Japanese occupation was basically controlled by the Taiwan Governor-General's Office as a state agency, which produced images; scholars and anthropologists serving colonial politics used the concept of "ethnography" to produce images; and commercial organizations continued to commercialize postcards to cater to the Japanese and Western markets. Images are not static, but are constantly recoded in the process of shooting, design, naming, and

[28] Li, Qinxian. *Taiwan's Landscape Cookbook*, 12.

circulation (Elizabeth Edwards, 2012). At this point, Taiwan postcards during the Japanese occupation were transformed from original files to viewing texts for the audience, forming a colonial slice with indigenous people as the main content but without any indigenous people present.

2.3 Institutional design of image classification and visual narrative

Postcards produced by the Taiwan Governor-General's Office Transportation Bureau, Taiwan Daily News Agency and other institutions in cooperation with private commercial publishers often choose image themes that are "exotic", "barbaric" and "spectacular", such as tattooed women, tooth extraction ceremonies, drawing water, throwing stones and carrying scenes. The names also have a taxonomic and curious nature, such as "Taroko Barbarian Woman", "Barbarian Tooth Extraction", "Barbarian Carrying Rice Bags", etc., which simplifies the ethnic culture into a visual label. This is closely related to the development purpose of anthropology during the Japanese colonial period.

Japan's achievements in modernization since the Meiji Restoration enabled it to defeat the Qing Empire in 1895 and Imperial Russia in 1905, becoming an emerging colonial empire in Asia in just ten years. The "De-Asianization and Europeanization Theory" successfully transformed Japan's "diachronic modernization" into "synchronic modernity", eliminated its time difference in cultural development, and put it on par

with the European and American powers.[29] At that time, Japan, as a newly emerging colonial empire in Asia, was trying hard to "completely Westernize". In order to get rid of its backward position in the world knowledge system, it began to modernize the country based on Europe and the United States.[30]

In the past, Japan was viewed by Europe and the United States as a colonized country. Before taking over Taiwan, Japan had never had any experience of colonial rule. After internalizing European and American ideas, as a sub-imperial colonizer, Japan wanted to emulate Western colonialism and viewed Taiwan's indigenous peoples as its anthropological laboratory, producing research and discourse related to Taiwan's indigenous peoples; on the other hand, it was also practicing the disciplinary principles of subject classification under Western scientism.[31]

Precisely because Japan copied the Western knowledge system as the only standard for measuring progress, in addition to learning from the Western colonial experience, under the influence of a national inferiority complex, Japan also attempted to surpass the Western colonial experience. After being "educated" and "enlightened" by European and American countries in the past, Japan, after internalizing Western ideas, was eager to play the role of an enlightener. On the one hand, it actively shaped itself as a progressive; on the other hand, it regarded other countries in neighboring Asia that had

[29] Chen, Fangming. Colonial Modernity: Modernity and Taiwan's Historical Perspective, 11.
[30] Chen, Weizhi. "Knowledge and Power: Yi Neng Jiaju and the Study of Taiwan's Aboriginal Peoples." Contemporary Journal, no. 135 (1998): 30.
[31] Qiu, Yanliang. "Rereading and Re-evaluating the Japanese Colonial Anthropology's 'Taiwan Studies'." Journal of Taiwan Social Studies, no. 28 (1997): 150.

not yet been westernized and modernized as backward and primitive nations, and began to play the role of enlightening others.

For the colonizers, finding the most "barbaric", "primitive," and "ancient" ethnic group is an excellent driving force for constructing the role of enlighteners and the legitimacy of colonization.[32] The diversity and complexity of Taiwan's ethnic groups were like a huge anthropological database for the newly arrived Japanese colonists, and also a new object of anthropological research in Japan. At that time, Japanese anthropologist Torii Ryuzo said: "From the perspective of civilization, or from the perspective of anthropological solidarity, Taiwan's aborigines are obviously in an unfortunate situation, and we should pity their situation; but for anthropologists, they are an amazing research field that is unfolding before our eyes..."[33] Mori Usonosuke, who later served as his assistant, also said: "There are still ethnic minorities on the island of Taiwan who maintain the most primitive and ancient culture of the Malays, namely the Taiwanese tribes. Therefore, Taiwan is a treasure trove for academic researchers, the most complete "ethnology museum" and the best "ethnology specimen room, providing valuable information for anthropologists and sociologists, ethnologists and other scientific scholars."[34]

[32] A typical case is the Belgian colonists' "barbaric" construction of the local ethnic group in the Congo Free State (1885-1908) to rationalize their extremely violent colonial rule. Belgian colonial officials measured the height, skull, and skin color of the Mbuti people through physical anthropology, classified them as "the race closest to primitive humans", and declared them to be "mentally retarded" (See Czekanowski's Congo Anthropology Report). The colonial government funded "scientific" research and packaged the plunder of Congo's natural resources as a mission to "save primitive people": *Manuel d'ethnographie congolaise* (1912) clearly divided the Congolese people into "civilized and educable people" and "incorrigible savages", the latter of whom were classified as objects of forced labor.

[33] Yang, Nanjun. Exploring Taiwan: Torii Ryuzo's Anthropological Journey in Taiwan. Taipei: Yuanliu, 1996, 50.

[34] Yang, Nanjun. Traveling with the Barbarians: Mori Usonosuke's Exploration into Taiwan. Taipei: Yuanliu, 2000, 520.

The reason why the postcard images formed in this way have a strong "consistency" does not come from the real state of the subjects, but from the institutional image production strategy. For colonial rulers, historical compilation and anthropological research in the survey model are the most powerful and authoritative ways to construct indigenous ethnic groups. In particular, statistical reports on population and ethnic distribution can be further developed into scientific or economic research reports through the use of the administrative power of the colonial system, thereby facilitating the ruling authorities' management and development of mountainous areas. Whether the postcards are printed by the public or supervised by the government, their composition mostly follows a certain logic: the subject is centered, the background is simple, the clothing is clear, the line of sight is blurred, and the title is short and direct. These arrangements are not artistic pursuits, but visual classification strategies that make the images of indigenous peoples easy to identify, compare, and classify, just like an atlas of racial classification.

As Timothy Mitchell points out, colonial narratives are powerful not only because they say something, but also because they “make us see it” (Timothy Mitchell, 1989). The visual form of colonial postcards does not simply reflect "barbarian life" but constructs the conditions under which "barbarians can be seen." The title text in the image, the arrangement between images, and even the explanations behind the images all become extensions of the visual narrative, together constructing a "viewing guide" for the

colonizer to understand the other.

2.4 Summary: How Colonial Knowledge is Represented in Images

The transformation from academic images to postcards constitutes the concrete practice of how colonial knowledge is visualized within the institution. The shooting, naming, designing, classification, and publication of images is a set of cultural operations within the colonial system, which makes indigenous peoples no longer just objects of governance, but also "visual cultural assets" that can be displayed, classified, and circulated. In the process of institutionalization, images were gradually transformed from local knowledge into colonial knowledge, systematically circulated and reproduced, and finally penetrated into every corner of colonial society; this institutional reproduction process not only disciplined the way of viewing, but also created a shareable visual experience for colonial society.

Chapter 3 Violence in Action: The Construction of Images of Taiwan's Aboriginals in Japanese Colonial Postcards

The experience of being watched by Taiwan's indigenous peoples under Japanese colonial rule is not only reflected in the political and legal framework, but also in the way their bodies are shaped, classified and coded in visual images. The flow of power between images is ubiquitous, and watching itself is an expression of power relations. The camera in the hands of the photographer hidden behind the photo is regarded as the most tangible power mechanism.

As John Tagg pointed out, photography has been closely related to state power since its birth. It is not a neutral medium that purely reproduces reality, but a tool for recording and governance (John Tagg, 1988). In the postcard images, we see not only "indigenous people", but "indigenous people" in the eyes of the colonizers - they are still, posed, annotated, and gradually become the "specimen of the other" of colonial modernity. This chapter will start from the visual content itself, through different types of images such as portraits, labor scenes, folk rituals and family life, to explore how Japanese colonial postcards exerted a visual power mechanism on Taiwan's indigenous people in the relationship between viewing and being viewed.

3.1 Portrait images as specimens

The postcard images analyzed in this article can be roughly divided into two categories: the first category is survey images taken from the perspective of anthropological

research. This type of image mainly records the physique, clothing, material objects, architecture, daily life, and customs of the indigenous people from multiple angles and in great detail. It also describes daily life, labor, and sacrificial rituals. Such images convey the anthropologist's view of the others. What's more, in order to present the culture of other ethnic groups in detail, anthropologists use simulation to recreate their culture, including daily labor situations and rituals.

The second category is the official record of the attitude of the Taiwan people towards submission and the achievements of the relevant people’s rule construction from the perspective of government propaganda. This is related to the fact that images of indigenous people at the time were seen as a model of colonial policy, used to demonstrate the colonists' achievements in "taming the aborigines" and the implementation of the policy of "managing the aborigines."

From most of the documentary images we see today that focus on the indigenous people themselves, we can clearly see that in terms of framing, the faces of the indigenous people photographed by the Japanese are all presented in close-up upright frontal images, or the indigenous people are divided into head portraits, half-length portraits, full-length portraits, side portraits, and group photos in clothing, etc., in order to highlight and verify many viewpoints of racial theory. Such images often emphasize facial features, body contours, and clothing details. The subject faces the camera with no obvious emotional response, his body in a state of stillness and waiting.

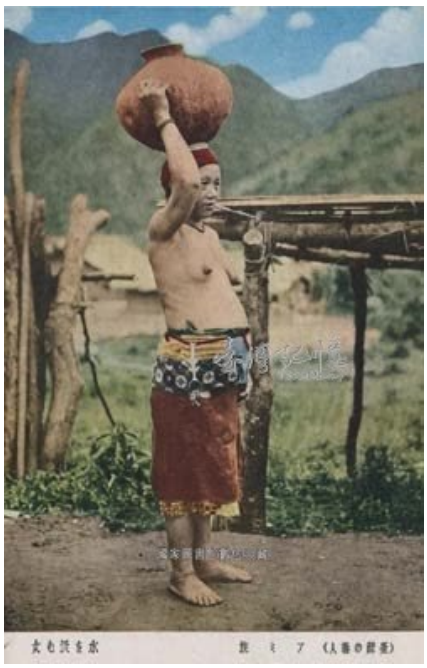

Figure 1. Amei Women of Qimei Community Fetching Water[35]

The postcard shown in Figure 1 is titled "Woman Drawing Water" at the bottom. The people in this picture belong to the Chimi Society of the Amis people. In Taiwan, where the climate is hot all year round, many ethnic minorities wear short clothes or go shirtless in order to help dissipate heat and work. This postcard was issued around the 1930s, when the "modern concept"[36] that exposing breasts is shameful was still somewhat distant from the lifestyle and cultural customs in the mountains. The photo shown on the postcard should be a close-up photo taken by an anthropologist to record

[35] "Amei Women of Qimei Community Fetching Water." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1930. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360527.

[36] After the Reformation in the 16th century, Protestants (especially Calvinists) regarded nudity as a "symbol of depravity" and strengthened the moral requirement for women to cover their breasts (Wiesner-Hanks, 2018). Reference Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe. 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
Similar to this article, European missionaries and colonists in the 19th century defined African women's bare breasts as "barbaric" and forced them to cover their breasts: In the 1890s, Anglican missionaries in East Africa burned traditional bark clothes and distributed "decent" dresses (reference Mutongi, Kenda. "John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff. Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier, Vol. 2. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. xxiii + 587 pp. $70.00 (cloth), $24.95 (paper)." African Studies Review 42, no. 1 (1999): 162–165. https://doi.org/10.2307/525547.).
The Belgian colonial government enacted legislation prohibiting Congolese women from exposing their breasts in public (see Hunt, Nancy Rose. A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv120qrzv.).

the living habits of the "barbarians". In modern concepts, places that should retain absolute privacy have been plundered by the camera and presented nakedly to outsiders. Through the lens, the subject's facial expression seems a little vague and helpless, and his submissive posture seems almost like a clay pot on his head, allowing himself to be manipulated without any subjectivity. However, there are many such close-up shots in the postcard images I have collected. In this type of image, the subjects' multiple faces stand in front of the camera without reservation as requested by the photographer, like a silent object for people to examine and distinguish, a "visualized" file, allowing the photographer to plunder and objectify their figures, but the people in the image have no possibility of resistance.

Figure 2. Amei Women Fetching Water[37]

Similar images include Figure 2 and Figure 3. The title of Figure 2 is Amei women fetching water. The description in the sidebar is: Drawing water for daily use seems simple, but it is a very important job. Water must be carried up the mountain from the

[37] "Amei Women Fetching Water." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360526.

bottom of the valley, which is two thousand feet or even three thousand feet deep. The description of the difficulty of drawing water implies a judgment of low productivity. The girl on the right side of the image is wearing a Han-style top, while the other two are wearing traditional ethnic clothing. The postcard caption speculatively links this image of traditional clothing style with low productivity. It is also worth noting that among the traditional costumes of the Amis people, the earliest clothing was made of tree bark, and it was enough to wrap around the body to keep warm. After the emergence of cloth, in order to avoid wasting cloth, traditional clothes were also in the form of "square cloth". They were not cut, but only cut once, and if not enough, they would be added with cloth. The aboriginals in the picture wearing ethnic costumes have complete waist ornaments and necklaces, which do not look like the clothes they should wear for daily water-drawing work.

Figure 3. Atayal Women Transporting Food[38]

[38] "Atayal Women Transporting Food." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360532.

Figure 3 is titled Atayal women carrying food. The women all carry backpacks on their foreheads, and one of them holds a child. Judging from their clothing, they should be Atayal people from the upper reaches of Beigang River in Ren'ai Township, Nantou County. The two women have dull eyes and just stand quietly in front of the camera. Such portraits rarely show emotions. The full-body frontal and full-body side profiles that are common in such photos make the indigenous people in the photos become a kind of objectification that is completely suspended and manipulated, and narrated by others, like specimens of cultural relics, included in the archives of the colonizers' racial classification.

Figure 4. Taroko Aboriginal Women[39]

The postcard shown in Figure 4 is titled Taroko Aboriginal Women. In front of the camera are two women wearing Taroko ethnic[40] costumes, with a backpack behind them. But the light-colored traditional costumes in this photo are obviously intentional.

[39] "Taroko Aboriginal Women." *Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library*, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360547.

[40] The Taroko people mentioned here lived around Wuxi in present-day Taiwan.

When Taroko women are engaged in physical production labor such as carrying a backpack, they most often wear navy blue and dark black work clothes; while the two people in front of the camera are wearing limited festive costumes, which creates a relative break from the scene. The strong performative nature of the picture makes the specimen meaning of these images more obvious. Even more ironic is the Japanese description printed on the back of the postcard:

> "A few miles upstream along the Tahkiri River (about a 2-day journey), there is the Uchitaroko Aboriginal community that has never had contact with other people since its primitive days. The photo shows an Aboriginal woman from this place. She is very strong, has a strange appearance, and has a strange look. With the tattoos on her face, people will feel surprised at first sight. Now because of the opening of the road, the flow of goods is smooth and abundant, just like the prosperous times."

The strange appearance, strange eyes, and surprised feeling are all describing an "other" that is different from the "normal modern nation." The addition of "prosperous times" in the second half of the sentence is even more of a sophistry to legitimize colonial behavior.

Figure 5. Taroko Aboriginal Woman[41]

The title of the postcard shown in Figure 5 is also called Taroko Aboriginal Woman. This is a rare photo that reveals some emotions in portraiture. The subject is an adult woman with a child in her arms and missing her left arm. Putting aside the messy environment, the adult smiled at the camera in a rushed and difficult environment, which is both friendly and represents an obvious inferior attitude (the child who cannot understand the act of being photographed did not smile). The identities of the subjects as indigenous people, women, and disabled people put them in an almost humble situation. Facing a foreign anthropologist holding a modern camera, smiling even became a self-protection mechanism for fear of pleasing.

Whether it is a woman drawing water, a woman carrying food, or a woman sitting quietly, they all appear with their hands hanging down and their eyes dull, with almost

[41] "Taroko Aboriginal Woman." *Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library*, 1910. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360541.

no subjective expression. This image coding method shows that the photographer (mostly anthropologists or military police) holds power at the shooting scene, and in the name of "scientific observation", uses the bodies of indigenous people as "archival specimens" for racial classification. The composition and aesthetic requirements of this type of image are not its main purpose, but recognition, classification, and analysis; in the form of photography, "non-human" characters are created for the legitimacy of colonization.

John Tagg once interpreted photography as follows: "Photography is often equated with the meaning of visible reality. Through photography, the body of the subject can be objectified, and the power relationship of domination and submission can be established.[42] Such images are in the contact behavior of aliens, and in the name of science, a series of images of "others" are constructed. Such images are particularly evident in contact and interaction with foreigners. Many current photography theory texts point out that when shooting, culturally disadvantaged groups, such as aborigines, the middle and lower classes, women, and children, tend to face the camera directly, while culturally dominant groups avoid facing the camera directly.[43] The portrait images in Taiwan postcards are an extension of the colonial "body file". They not only satisfy the curiosity of the Japanese mainland society about the appearance of "barbarians" but also provide the colonial rulers with a set of visual typologies of others,

[42] Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, 61–71.
[43] Zhang, Ruide. "Imagining China: An Analysis of Circular Images on Antique Postcards Found in London," 828.

thereby strengthening the political discourse of ethnic classification and cultural differences.

3.2 Labor and obedience: instrumentalized body image

In addition to static portraits, the postcards also present a large number of scenes of indigenous people engaged in labor. In addition to the static images of fetching water, transporting grain, and holding children mentioned above, there are also many dynamic images of scenes of labor in progress.

Figure 6 is a postcard issued around 1910. The caption at the bottom of the original picture is: "Due to the lack of drinking water, the scene of commanding the natives to draw water with bamboo tubes to climb the mountain"; the subject can be determined to be a Japanese officer and soldier based on the clothing and tone. Most of the indigenous people in the picture are carrying two bamboo tubes, while many of the Japanese accompanying them are holding guns, like the so-called "punitive team" at the time.

Figure 6. Indigenous People Fetching Water for the Japanese[44]

In colonial images, the bodies of indigenous peoples are often mobilized as symbols of labor and obedience. The postcard "Indigenous People Helping the Japanese Draw Water" (Taiwan version name) shown in Figure 6 is a "visual narrative" presentation of the colonial domination structure. The center of the picture of this postcard is a group of indigenous people carrying bamboo tubes, marching in a line on a rugged mountain road, while several Japanese soldiers with guns appear on the right side of the picture, which highly overlaps with the image of the "punitive team". The image of the indigenous people almost never looks at the camera, their body posture is drooping, and their facial expressions are blurred. They are compressed into a group of instrumental labor by the composition. In contrast, the Japanese officers and soldiers are not only in high places, but also facing forward, armed and neat, showing the posture of conquerors.

[44] "Indigenous People Fetching Water for the Japanese." *Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library*, 1910. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360523.

The static expression of photographic images seems to be objective and neutral, recording "facts", but in fact it visualizes the hierarchical order of colonial relations - the indigenous people are shaped as "primitive tools" serving the colonizers, and on the basis of being familiar with the information of the primitive mountain and forest terrain, they become silent assistants in the imperial colonial action. This visual presentation is not an unconscious reproduction of reality, but as Foucault said, it is a mode of production in the "power-knowledge" mechanism: the image constructs the subject-object relationship through formal language (such as clothing contrast, body position, gaze relationship), which legitimizes the colonizer's dominance (Foucault, 1977).

In addition, the multiple translations of the title of the picture are also very meaningful. The original Japanese title of Figure 1 is: 飲料水ノ缺シキ故生凡人ヲ指揮シ竹筒ニテ水ヲ汲ミ爬山スル光景 (In a place where drinking water is scarce, a former aboriginal man leads a group of people to climb the mountain and draw water with a bamboo tube). In this title description, the agency of the aboriginals seems very vague. Who is the drinking water for? The colonizers thus concealed the violent aspects of the communication, and even made it seem ordinary and lifelike; The bilingual English version of the postcard was titled more simply THE SUPPLYING OF WATER, which directly removes the subject of action and focuses on "water". In the process of postcards being named, sold, and even sent overseas as personal souvenirs by Japan, all workers, managers, colonizers, and colonized were hidden. At the same time, the multilingual title not only reflects the multiple dissemination ranges of the image, but

also implies the function of the postcard: it is not only a tool for education within the colony, but also a display of imperial rule towards the Japanese local society and the world. As Elizabeth Edwards pointed out, the "ethnographic postcard" in colonial photography often continues to shape the audience's perception of "others" in informal communication (Edwards 2001).

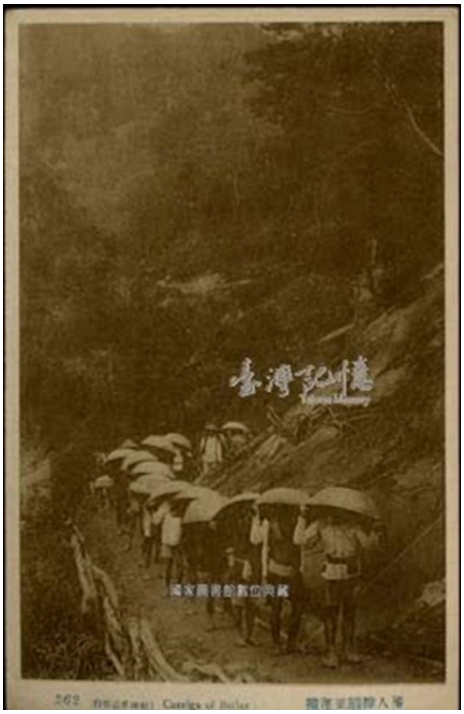

Figure 7. Indigenous People Transporting Camphor Cauldrons[45]

Figure 7 shows the aborigines carrying the camphor pot, which is similar to the picture shown in Figure 6. However, in this picture, the colonizers are further invisible; they become spectators, observers of the colonized's labor, and do not appear in the image at all. The aborigines are hunched over and carrying, and their faces are all hidden under the pot of camphor, becoming a pair of invisible working hands and feet.

[45] "Indigenous People Transporting Camphor Cauldrons." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1910. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360535.

In fact, behind this postcard is Japan's colonial encroachment on Taiwan's overall economy. Taiwan has dense forests and abundant camphor resources, and camphor is a specialty of Taiwan. The history of camphor production in Taiwan can be traced back to the period when Zheng Zhilong[46] occupied Taiwan in the late Ming Dynasty (about 1624-1644). When Zheng Zhilong occupied Taiwan, his apprentices went into the mountains to develop mountain resources and cut down camphor trees to boil camphor.[47] At that time, camphor was mainly sold to Japan as medicine, and the art of making camphor was passed down from Quanzhou, Fujian, China. In the early days of the Qing Dynasty's recovery of Taiwan, cutting down camphor trees to make camphor was only a sporadic act. Restricted by the Qing government's management system dominated by the Han and Manchu ethnic groups, there were still many indigenous ethnic minorities living in the mountains of Taiwan who resisted its rule and economic incorporation. However, during the 222 years of the Qing government's rule over Taiwan, Taiwan's camphor industry grew from nothing to something, from small to large, and after many ups and downs, it finally became one of Taiwan's pillar industries. By the end of the 19th century, Taiwan's camphor exports accounted for 70% of the

[46] Zheng Zhilong (April 16, 1604 - November 24, 1661) was born in Quanzhou, Fujian, mainland China. He was originally a coastal pirate in Fujian and Zhejiang. Later, he went to Japan to do business and made his fortune. In the 17th century, when the world's maritime power was booming and the Ming Dynasty's maritime ban was in place, he created an armed maritime merchant group. He maneuvered between the major forces in the East and the West, and even defeated the Dutch East India Company fleet in Liaoluo Bay. He was the maritime overlord of the East in the Age of Discovery. In 1628, he was recruited by the Ming court and served as the governor-general. After the Qing Dynasty overthrew the Ming Dynasty, Zheng Zhilong did not listen to the advice of his son Zheng Chenggong to surrender to the Qing Dynasty. He was placed under house arrest in Beijing and was later killed in 1661. As a pioneer Han Chinese before the Dutch, Zheng Zhilong established a foundation in Wanggang on the southwest coast of Taiwan, which became the main base for the Han Chinese to move to Taiwan. Later, Zheng Zhilong's son Zheng Chenggong expelled the Dutch and conquered Taiwan, and introduced a large number of Han Chinese to develop it.

[47] Liu, Ningyan, ed. Revised General History of Taiwan Province, Vol. 4, "Economic History: Forestry Chapter." Taiwan Provincial Documents Committee, 1992, 67.

world market.[48] At that time, Taiwanese landlords like the Wufeng Lin family accumulated huge wealth by operating the camphor industry and had a powerful private army. In the 1895 Yiwei War, these private armed forces were scattered all over the country and fought fiercely with the Japanese army.

Similarly, there is the opium policy proposed by the Japanese Governor-General's Office in Taiwan in order to stabilize the colonial order as quickly as possible. Before the fall of Taiwan, the Qing government adopted a laissez-faire policy towards opium trade and smoking, which led to the rampant opium in Taiwan, just like the mainland. Faced with this situation, two opinions emerged among the Japanese occupiers: one opinion was that a resolute method of cutting off opium should be adopted to control the cultivation and smoking of opium; the other opinion was that opium production and smoking must be placed under the control of the authorities, and a "gradual ban" method should be adopted to gradually eliminate opium. Under the advice and leadership of Goto Shinpei, the Japanese colonial government under the banner of the latter began to fully control opium in Taiwan.

But after the Japanese colonial government came to power, it quickly took over the camphor industry. After Goto Shinpei took office, he ordered Taiwanese to cut down camphor trees, make camphor, and ship it from Keelung Port to the world. Goto also built a 400-kilometer longitudinal railway based on the railway led by Liu Mingchuan,

[48] Qin, Fen. "Camphor Industry in Taiwan under the Rule of the Qing Dynasty." Heilongjiang History, no. 1 (2010): 18–19.

an official in charge of Taiwan in the Qing government, to ensure that these resources could be quickly transported back to Japan. In just two years, the profits earned by Japan from Taiwan's camphor industry were equivalent to about 10 billion yen today. The source of wealth for the Japanese in the first ten years of their rule in Taiwan was almost entirely based on the crazy plunder of cypress and camphor trees.

During the Japanese colonial period in Taiwan, Goto Shinpei led the establishment of the "Pharmacy", which actually functioned as an opium manufacturing factory. The factory mainly imported raw opium from India, Iran, and Turkey, extracted morphine and opium paste in Taiwan, and then monopolized the sale through the monopoly system of the Taiwan Governor's Office established by the Japanese. The Governor-General's Office allocated the distribution rights to retired Japanese officials and a group of pro-Japanese businessmen, who then resold the opium to Taiwanese who held opium smoking licenses. In 1905, there were as many as 137,000 people in Taiwan who held opium smoking licenses. The Japanese colonial government used this method to control addicts and provide a solid financial support for colonial rule. In 1898, the revenue from the opium monopoly accounted for 31% of the total fiscal revenue of the colonial government. By selling opium, monopolizing camphor, and plundering land, Japan achieved a fiscal surplus in just a few years. By 1907, Japan even used Taiwan's taxes and income to subsidize the Japanese government. The income from this "opium kingdom" later became an important economic support for Japan's invasion. When the Japanese government implemented this method in Taiwan, it also specially formulated

two laws: one was the "Opium Law", which implemented the "ban" policy in Japan; the other was the "Taiwan Opium Order", which encouraged colonial people to smoke opium. Taiwan's colonial opium monopoly system, in terms of its origin, was mainly inherited from the opium policy of old European colonists in Southeast Asia. At that time, about 30% to 60% of the financial revenue of European colonial agencies in Southeast Asia came from the opium monopoly.[49]

After 1904, Japan shipped opium produced in Taiwan to the Liaodong Peninsula, and then to Qingdao, Shandong in 1914. After 1937, it even went to Xiamen, Hainan Island, and the Korean Peninsula to grow poppy, and sent opium back to Taiwan for refining, and then further shipped to Japan for sale. The entire Japanese Empire was built step by step by plundering resources by force and selling opium. The Presidential Palace in Taipei today was the former Governor-General's Office of Taiwan, which was called the "Opium House" by the Taiwanese at the time. In this context, making such a judgment on the smoking aboriginals is a manifestation of arrogance and conceit. This shows that such exploitation and oppression are not isolated cases.

Back to the image, Figures 6 and 7 show how the body was organized into the labor system as a tool. The indigenous people in the image are hunched over, with blurred faces and mechanized movements. They have little interaction with the camera, as if they are just silent laborers who complete resource extraction for the colonizers. In

[49] "Taiwan's Opium Monopoly System – Drug Prohibition." Tianshan Medical College, 2022. Accessed June 23, 2025. https://www.tsu.tw/edu/12665.html.

contrast, the Japanese military and police figures that occasionally appear in the image are upright and hold weapons, forming a reproduction of a visual hierarchy. Foucault's mechanism of knowledge as power is also fully revealed here: The image of labor naturalizes the exploitation and disposability of the labor capacity of the colonized, making them the "Prisoners of Culture" of colonial governance. The labor nature of the indigenous people's bodies is regarded as a natural connection with their national characteristics, and the colonizers' economic and cultural control over them is once again rationalized.

3.3 Fragmented representation of rituals, culture, and customs

In addition to direct portraits and pictures of labor, there are also many so-called "customs pictures" presented on postcards, such as images of tooth extraction, facial tattooing, and stone throwing, which reproduce the cultural practices of indigenous peoples in a fragmented way.

Figure 8. Tooth Extraction Ritual of the Bunun People from Bakulas Community[50]

The postcard in Figure 8 shows the tooth extraction scene of the Bakulas community of the Bunun ethnic group. In the picture, a hemp rope is tied to a wooden stick, and the other end of the rope is tied to a certain tooth (incisor or lateral incisor). This photo was taken at one of the three Bunun villages in Ren'ai Township, which is also the northernmost Bunun village. This was originally an uninhabited area at the junction of the Atayal and Bunun tribes. During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese moved the Bunun tribe to the vicinity of the Ganzhuowan Station. The Ganzhuowan group originally consisted of 9 communities, 125 households and 1,015 people. For defense purposes, they had always been scattered in the vast mountainous area around Ganzhuowan on the right bank of the Zhuoshui River. After the Japanese occupied Taiwan, the local Bunun people did not launch a large-scale armed resistance, but the reason is unclear. On the contrary, on October 6, 1902, at the instigation of the Japanese, they lured the Wu community to the border between the two tribes to conduct a transaction, and took the opportunity to attack and kill more than 80 people, which is the so-called "Gan Zhuowan Incident." In August 1914, the Japanese police took advantage of the opportunity to attack the Hualien Taroko group to confiscate guns, forcibly depriving them of the possibility of resistance. At the same time, the Japanese set up the Ganzhuowan Police Station in July 1913 to manage the Ganzhuowan group. Later, they encouraged small tribes to relocate in groups. From April to July 1923, a total of 20 households from Lulun, 11 households from Bakulas, 8 households from

[50] "Tooth Extraction Ritual of the Bunun People from Bakulas Community." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360517.

Dockon, 4 households from Kukus, and 1 household from Saiko, totaling 44 households and 421 people, moved to Qoqowa, a flat area on the left bank of the Zhuoshui River, to dig canals and reclaim paddy fields. On December 31, 1925, the group migration of 93 households and 828 people was completed. The picture shows the life of the Bunun people in Bakulas community. Perhaps the Bunun people did not consider that the new group of rulers would be so tough and persistent in establishing their own centralized rule and changing their way of life.

Back to the scene shown in the picture, in the tradition of the indigenous Bunun people, when men and women reach a certain age (eight to thirteen), their left and right front teeth or molars will be pulled out. This custom is not entirely based on health considerations, but is for aesthetic purposes, and contains symbolic meanings of beauty, tribal identification, and adulthood. The forms of "destruction" practiced by Taiwan's aborigines include tattooing, tooth extraction, and ear piercing. However, in the eyes of "civilized" colonists, this is an extremely terrible and painful custom. However, in the indigenous traditions of many ethnic groups, the custom of "defacing" is quite common. Defacing is the practice of destroying certain parts of the body as decoration to express profound cultural meanings such as beauty and honor.

Figure 9. Aboriginal Women Addicted to Tobacco[51]

There are also many images related to facial tattoos. The Atayal, Saisiyat, Paiwan, Tsou and Puyuma ethnic groups in Taiwan all have the custom of tattooing. The tattoos are applied almost all over the body, but only the Atayal and Saisiyat people tattoo their faces. The title of the postcard in Figure 9 is "Aboriginal Women Addicted to Tobacco". The picture shows two Atayal women with tattoos holding pipes. In fact, in the indigenous tradition, tattoos are not only for the pursuit of beauty, but also have the meaning of self-identification. For example, among the Atayal people, men must have participated in headhunting and women must be able to weave before they can have facial tattoos. It also symbolizes that they have reached adulthood and can get married. The tattooing methods of different communities can also be used as a basis for identification between ethnic groups.

During the Japanese occupation, Japanese colonists viewed the indigenous people's

[51] "Aboriginal Women Addicted to Tobacco." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1930. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360543.

custom of tattooing as "evil and vulgar". In order to correct the "bad habits" of the indigenous people, they were strongly advised to abandon the traditional custom of tattooing, and those who violated the ban were admonished and punished.[52] In 1913, the colonial government began to ban the Atayal people from tattooing. When conquering the tribe, they confiscated tattoo tools. To preserve their traditions, the Atayal people in various places resisted the ban.[53] Under coercion and persuasion, many "foreign societies" were forced to swear to abolish hiding their heads and stop tattooing. Each "foreign society" stated in its regulations that tattooing and head cutting were prohibited. After swearing, the tattooists surrendered all tattooing tools to the government and promised not to violate the ban in the future. The custom of tattooing was completely terminated in 1939. However, the practice of showing beauty by destroying certain parts of the body actually exists in any era and society, but the form of expression and the meaning of existence are slightly different.

It is also worth noting that the description printed on the postcard shown in Figure 9 is: "The foreign women hold a pipe in one hand and caresses the children with the other hand. Even the children start smoking very early." The tobacco mentioned here actually refers to opium.[54]

---

[52] Wen, Ji. *Taiwan Aborigines' Political History, Vol. II*. Nantou: Taiwan Provincial Literature Committee, [year not provided], 844–846.

[53] Ma, Tengyue. *Qinya Tribe Tattoo Atlas*. Taipei: Photography World Publishing House, 1998, 91.

[54] Opium is formed by cutting open the unripe fruit of the opium poppy flower, allowing the milky fluid to flow out and then solidify. Poppy flowers originate from the Middle East and were introduced to China by Arab merchants in the middle of the Tang Dynasty. At that time, there were records of using poppy seeds to treat diseases in India. By the Song Dynasty, they were already quite common in China. In addition to being used for viewing and eating, poppy seeds were used as medicine to treat nausea and poor appetite. In the Southern Song Dynasty, poppy also began to appear in medical books, and its efficacy shifted to stopping diarrhea and treating coughs. Although Zhu Zhenheng, a medical scientist in the Yuan Dynasty, confirmed that poppy shells were effective in treating coughs and diarrhea, he also mentioned for the first time that poppy had the harmful effects

After the defeat of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, Li Hongzhang pointed out during negotiations with the Japanese representative Ito Hirobumi that "the miasma in Taiwan is very serious and the Japanese soldiers suffered heavy casualties in Taiwan the day before," hoping to deter Japan from demanding the cession of Taiwan in the treaty. Lian Heng, the author of *General History of Taiwan*, also said in his opinion on the opium issue:

> Due to the local climate and local conditions, among the immigrants who came to Taiwan, only those who smoked opium could escape death. It is also said that Taiwanese people smoke opium because they are hardworking, not lazy; their mentality is aggressive, not defensive.

In addition, opium smokers in Taiwan are mainly from the middle and lower classes. They are accustomed to smoking opium to relieve physical pain and work fatigue because their income is relatively low. The age group of people who start smoking opium in Taiwan usually starts around the age of 20. On average, people become

---

of "strong medicinal properties and blocking the stomach and intestines." The earliest record of making opium from the fluid of poppy flowers and using it as a medicinal material appeared in the book *Introduction to Medicine* by Li Ting in the Ming Dynasty; in *the Compendium of Materia Medica* by Li Shizhen in the Ming Dynasty, poppy shells and opium were listed side by side. The two have similar therapeutic effects; both can treat severe diarrhea and can also strengthen the yang, but poppy shells are not poisonous, while opium is slightly toxic. *The Compendium of Materia Medica* in the Qing Dynasty also mentioned a similar effect in treating dysentery. However, at this time, poppy seeds, poppy shells, or opium are swallowed, or added to other medicines and boiled into a decoction for drinking.

Opium became widely popular in China after it was transformed from being swallowed to being smoked. One theory about this change is that it was because of the encounter with pipes. The North American Indians were the first to use pipes. After the Spanish conquered America, pipes began to become popular all over the world. In the early 17th century, Dutch sailors began to mix pills with arsenic in their pipes and smoke them to prevent malaria. In Taiwan under Dutch rule, Han immigrants were not used to the climate and were easily infected with Taiwan's endemic disease - malaria, so they used opium to prevent and treat malaria. At this time, opium mainly came from Indonesia and was still swallowed. After that, the Dutch began to sell opium to various parts of Asia, including Taiwan, and brought in the method of smoking opium mixed with tobacco. From Taiwan, it spread to the southeastern coastal areas of China and became very popular.

addicted after one month to three years of use.

The Customs Medical Journal in the late Qing Dynasty recorded the observations of foreign doctors: In addition to relieving pain from external injuries, opium in Taiwan can also treat dysentery, tetanus, and malaria. In the second year of Japanese rule over Taiwan, they interviewed people who had experience with opium smoking in Taipei, Tamsui, Keelung, Tainan, Fengshan, Kaohsiung and other places, and found that the main reason for smoking opium was to treat illness. Those who treated illness mainly used it to relieve pain, and a few used it to relieve cough. Opium was almost indispensable in Taiwanese families at that time. Even when babies in the family kept crying, they would blow opium smoke into the babies' mouths to make them stop crying and fall asleep peacefully. In conjunction with the Japanese opium policy mentioned above, the author believes that to regard opium smoking as a backward custom in a condescending tone is a lack of historical understanding and humanitarian concern.

Figure 10. A savage man carrying a patient (Zou ethnic group)[55]

The original title of Figure 10 is: A savage man carrying a patient (Zou ethnic group). The original English name was simplified to *Natives*. Natives is a more general term for heterogeneity than the classification of raw and cooked aboriginals. During the half century of Japanese rule, many Japanese crossed the sea to live in Taiwan. At that time, the Han Chinese were called "Honshima people", the aborigines were called "Natives" (later renamed "Takasago people", which is a more popular term), and people of Japanese origin and their descendants called themselves "mainland people".

According to the explanation of Rokusaburo Mochichi, a counselor of the Taiwan Governor-General's Office, "the so-called 'Natives' are human beings in sociology, but have no personality in international law, so 'raw natives' can be regarded as 'traitors to the country', and the power of life and death is within the scope of the country's disposal power." The Japanese colonial authorities established the "native" policy of armed conquest in 1903, and based on this sentence, formed the theoretical basis for the armed crusade against the "aboriginals".[56] At the same time, the huts and rocks behind them further strengthened the impression of "backwardness" and "poverty".

[55] "A savage man carrying a patient (Zou ethnic group)." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1910. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360534.

[56] Barclay, Paul D., and Lu. Abandoned Citizens of the Empire: Japanese Rule in Taiwan's 'Barbarian Borders' (1874–1945) = Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's 'Savage Border' (1874–1945) = Di guo qi min: Ri ben zai Taiwan 'fan jie' nei de tong zhi (1874–1945). Taipei: National Taiwan University, 2020, 229.

Figure 11. The Court of the Game to Throw up the Stone (at Barbarian Formosa)[57]

Figure 11 shows the Paiwan people's stone throwing competition. In the explanation of the postcard, the Paiwan people in the picture are using bamboo poles to measure the height of the thrown stone. Everyone looks up at the stone in the air, as if staring at a suspended time. The shooting far away from the competition field is more like a metaphor: the photographer stands outside the childish, immature, and irrational play. The title of the postcard in Figure 11 is *The Court of the Game to Throw up the Stone (at Barbarian Formosa)*, which simply defines this activity as stone throwing. This is most likely an important ritual activity of the Paiwan people. Legend has it that, in order to avoid famine, the ancestors of the Paiwan people separated their seven children to make a living and agreed that every five years, the elders would hold bamboo poles and lead the whole tribe to reunite and worship their ancestors, thus forming the prototype of the five-year ritual. The so-called stone throwing is a thorny rattan ball. The earliest

[57] "The Court of the Game to Throw up the Stone (at Barbarian Formosa)." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1910. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360536.

Paiwan people used the heads of defeated Han Chinese in their rituals, but after the intervention of Japanese officials, they later used a vine called Kalilach instead.[58] This activity is typically held over two days and is attended by adult men in the tribe. The first day is for blessing, and the second day is for fortune-telling. The description of stone throwing simplifies some of the information related to the national ideology of the indigenous people into a childish action. Even in the article written by anthropologist Torii Ryuzo for his third research trip in Taiwan, there are still comments such as "very backward customs", which further deepens the image of the indigenous people as childish colonized people who need to be educated:

> In order to welcome the five-year festival, the adults and children in the tribe made thorn balls in the shape of human heads with rattan when they had free time, and practiced the skill of throwing the thorn balls into the air and catching them with bamboo poles. This custom shows that the Shangfan community was very backward.[59]

Colonial rule not only relies on violence or law, but also through sensory experiences such as audio-visual, conveying emotions such as curiosity, fear, and superiority to maintain its rule and power.[60]As can be seen from the previous text, the tooth extraction scene shown in Figure 8 originally has the connotation of a tribal coming-of-age ceremony, but the perspective in the postcard only highlights the pain and barbarity of tooth extraction, blurring the cultural context; the image of the tattooed woman in

[58] Torii, Ryuzo. *Exploring Taiwan: Torii Ryuzo's Anthropological Journey in Taiwan*. Translated and annotated by Yang Nanjun. Taipei: Yuanliu Publishing House, 1996, 18.
[59] Torii, Ryuzo. *Exploring Taiwan: Torii Ryuzo's Anthropological Journey in Taiwan*. Translated and annotated by Yang Nanjun. Taipei: Yuanliu Publishing House, 1996, 19.
[60] Stoler, Ann Laura. Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Figure 9 is also accompanied by the description that "children also start smoking early", deliberately magnifying the so-called "uncivilized habits"; Figures 10 and 11 simplify the sacred rituals of the indigenous people into inefficient daily activities. As a colonizer, Japan, with its eyes that have been baptized and educated by Western modernization, observes the customs and traditions of the old Taiwanese indigenous people, with a judgment of progressive ideology in its eyes. If they do not move towards a Westernized and modernized lifestyle, then their old customs will be regarded as backward, anti-civilized, and barbaric. The selection and description of these images are the embodiment of what Stoler calls the "politics of sentiment and sensation", which not only constitutes a visual cultural contempt but also reflects the colonial discourse's use of "educational enlightenment" as a legitimate governance strategy (Ann Laura Stoler, 2016). The colonial government not only suppressed traditional customs in policy (such as prohibiting facial tattoos) but also magnified these cultural characteristics in images to highlight the necessity and effectiveness of rule.

3.4 Inside and outside the space: the daily performance

Figure 12. Suspension Bridge Constructed by Taiwan's Indigenous People[61]

The original title of Figure 12 refers to the suspension bridge built by Taiwanese indigenous people, specifically the Atayal, who constructed a bamboo bridge. Amid the giant boulders and streams, the Atayal people wearing traditional one-shoulder clothing stand barefoot on the connected stones, and the bamboo bridge behind them looks useless and shaky. In the vast forest, the Atayal people, men, women, old and young, look at the camera at the ends of the bamboo bridge at the request of the photographer, looking small and inaccessible. The image of the Atayal people has become a footnote to the picture, a decoration that can be manipulated, while their living environment looks pristine.

[61] "Suspension Bridge Constructed by Taiwan's Indigenous People." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360537.

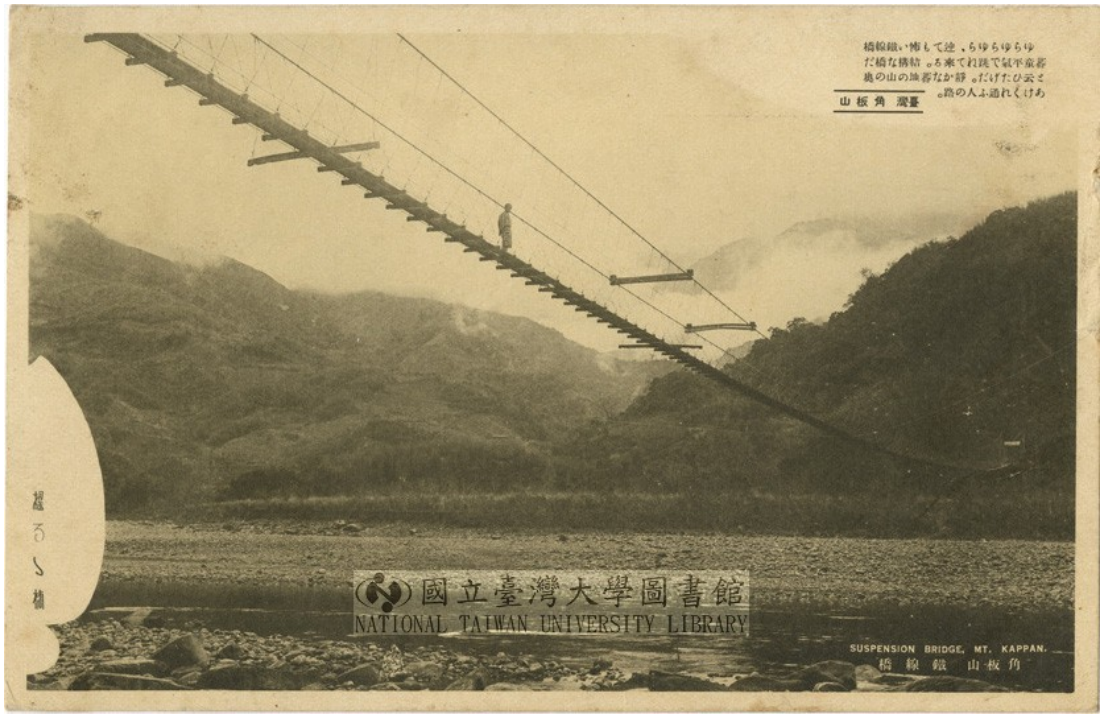

Figure 13. (Taiwan) Suspension Bridge at Kappanzan[62](above)

Figure 14. (Taroko) Suspension Bridge over Dazhuoshui River[63] (below)

[62] "(Taiwan) Suspension Bridge at Kappanzan (角板山ノ鐵線橋)." *National Museum of Taiwan History Collections*, 1926–1945. Accessed May 1, 2025. https://collections.nmth.gov.tw/CollectionContent.aspx?a=132&rno=2001.008.1039.

[63] "[Taroko] Suspension Bridge over Dazhuoshui River (大濁水溪の鐵線橋)." *National Taiwan University Postcard Collection*, 1934. Accessed March 5, 2025. https://dl.lib.ntu.edu.tw/s/postcard/item?Search=&property%5B0%5D%5Bproperty%5D=1&property%5B0%5D%

In the other two postcards with similar content, Figure 13, the aborigines themselves have been hidden, and the main subject is the suspension bridge built by the aborigines. From a distance from the pedestrians on the bridge, the bridge structure appears simple, tall and dangerous. The title of the postcard is very concise: SUSPENSION BRIDGE, MT. KAPPAN. But the description in the upper right corner reads:

> (Taiwan, Jiaoban Mountain) A shaky, scary bridge. An aboriginal child calmly jumped over it. This is a strange bridge, deep in the mountains and forests, just a path for people to walk in the dark.

In contrast, Figure 14, entitled "Wire Bridge over the Taroko Dazhuoshui River", shows another suspension bridge built by the colonial government: the angle of the picture chooses to shoot the metal structure of the bridge from a close distance, and the several cars in the center of the picture, which seemed very high-tech at the time, further highlight the technical content and "advancedness" of the bridge. The description in the upper right corner of the postcard reads:

> Railway bridge across the Datong River: This bridge is 1,700 feet (about 520 meters) long and consists of 2,600 No. 8 railway wires, which are tied to reinforced concrete columns. The construction cost was 320,000 yen. Even if five or six buses are driving at the same time, the bridge body remains stable, creating a beautiful scenery on the waterfront road.

The bridge, a space connecting the two sides and allowing communication, seems to be

5Btype%5D=eq&property%5B0%5D%5Btext%5D=%5B%E5%A4%AA%E9%AD%AF%E9%96%A3%5D%20%E5%A4%A7%E6%BF%81%E6%B0%B4%E6%BA%AA%E3%81%AE%E9%90%B5%E7%B7%9A%E6%A9%8B.

a special metaphor in the picture: it can communicate and transmit messages between the two worlds. The old bridge built by the locals is described as "terrifying" loneliness and isolation; the bridge built by the colonial government is a stable and firm "beautiful scenery". Naturally, it also corresponds to the difficulty of cultural communication. Superimposing the aborigines' obedience to the photographer under the low level of productivity and power relations implied by the postcard in Figure 12, it is not difficult to see the arrogance of the colonizers.

Figure 15. A Sweet Home of Savage, Formosa[64]

The original title of the postcard in Figure 15 is "Atayal Woman Spinning", and the English title is *A Sweet Home of Savage, Formosa*. The duality of the title itself is like a veil painted by the publisher. The postcard is named "A Sweet Home" in English when it was issued. The deviation between the image and the text itself has created a complex tension. Such an image and title often remind people of the scene of the European bourgeoisie hiring someone to take family photos, but is this really the case?

[64] "A Sweet Home of Savage, Formosa." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1910. Accessed March 3, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360623.

The caption on the postcard also reads: "Ordinary aborigines don't seem to have family disputes. Men are responsible for farming and hunting, and women are responsible for housework. They live a happy and peaceful life." The description of the text seems to tell the viewer that under Japanese rule, Taiwan's indigenous people lived a stable and peaceful life. A closer look at the images reveals that the costumes are mostly festive attire, the poses are neat, the faces are facing the camera, and even the spatial layout appears to be highly performative. These images are not casual shots of life, but "daily life on stage" reconstructed for photography. Of course, many traditional European superiors also had such staged photos of a performative nature to highlight the happy family atmosphere. Still, the deliberate "purification" of a specific production activity (here weaving) and the use of non-ordinary national costumes and non-ordinary scenes (the whole family, men, women, and children gathered together to watch weaving) to create an atmosphere has gone beyond the performance of life and entered a state of spectacle and heterogeneity.

The camera extends from common outdoor scenes to a barbarian woman and her family weaving indoors. At first glance, it seems close to daily life and full of life, but in fact, it is a picture of a private space being invaded by external forces. On the one hand, the image shows the living scenes of the barbarians at home, but on the other hand, the image also implies a sense of power and racial aggression. The family, as the most private cultural space, was invaded by the photographer from the perspective of an

outsider. Through power and the high position of the colonizers, the Japanese were able to enter the general private family life of the tribe without any hindrance as outsiders, and transformed it into a performance field under the gaze of colonial power, making it possible to use images for public exhibition and sale.

3.5 Summary: Visual Power Logic in Colonial Images

These images do not reproduce “reality” but construct an exotic space that can be consumed, gazed at, and categorized by Japanese viewers. This is what Said called the “Orientalist viewing mode” (Edward Said, 1978). The living environment of the indigenous people is no longer a place for their own cultural identity, but a slice of civilization display. Even in their daily lives, they are still "others being transformed". The images of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples in postcards, from portraits, labor, cultural rituals, to family life, all reflect the colonizers’ visual coding and power arrangements on the indigenous bodies and cultures. Although these images are diverse and rich on the surface, the viewing logic behind them is highly consistent: that is, to construct a “foreign image” that can be viewed, named, and controlled to support the legitimacy and justification of colonial rule. Photography is not only a tool for recording, but also a medium for governance.

Chapter 4: Recoding of Images: The Use and Colonial Function of Taiwan Aboriginal Postcards

The production of images does not stop at the shooting site. They also enter society and permeate life, becoming an effective medium for shaping collective cognition and power relations. Taiwan Aboriginal postcards during the colonial period were not only displayed as "governance results" in exhibitions, but also circulated between expositions, textbooks, folk museums, postal systems and family correspondence. They were not only hung in exhibition halls, but also posted on walls, stuffed into envelopes, and displayed in postcard collections, becoming a daily part of the "imperial other experience". As Benedict Anderson said, images are a way of national imagination, which enables the distant "barbaric land" to enter the cognitive framework of the people in mainland Japan, thereby constructing a jointly participated imperial space. This chapter will explore how these images complete the transformation from "ethnographic materials" to "colonial identity mechanisms" in communication from three perspectives: exhibition politics, postcard consumption and educational governance.

4.1 “Other Display” in Exhibition Space

The image of the indigenous people constructed by postcards not only exists in images, but is also institutionalized and recoded in the space of colonial exhibitions. In 1903, Japan held the "Fifth Domestic Exposition",[65] which was much larger and more visited

[65] In 1877 (the 10th year of the Meiji era), when the Southwest War broke out, the then Minister of Home Affairs, Okubo Toshimichi, insisted on holding the Domestic Industrial Promotion Association to promote the prosperity of Japanese domestic industries and ease the unrest in the hearts of the people caused by the Southwest War. Therefore, the "First Domestic Industrial Exposition" with the slogan of "promoting industry and

than the previous four expositions. In addition to ten exhibition halls, including industry, forestry, aquatic products, industry, machinery, education, fine arts, transportation, animals, and aquariums, there were also reference halls displaying exhibits from 18 countries, including Britain, the United States, France, and Russia. In addition, in order to show the strong national strength of the Japanese Empire, the colony of Taiwan was presented to the Japanese for the first time in the form of the "Taiwan Pavilion". The puppet model of the Taiwan Study Research Association and the "Taiwanese-style architecture" displayed in the "Taiwan Pavilion" successfully conveyed the image of Taiwan as "exotic, cultural, and ethnic", becoming the focus of everyone's attention at the venue.[66]

In 1912, to commemorate the achievements of Japan during the Meiji period, the "Meiji Commemorative Colonial Exposition" was held from October 1 to November 29 at the Shinobazu Pond in Ueno Park, Tokyo. The exhibition was hosted by the Hokkaido Exhibition Association. In addition to displaying the products and customs of the colonies within the Japanese territory, people of all ethnic groups living in the colonies were invited to build their own houses in the venue and live there during the exhibition.

entrepreneurship" was grandly held in Ueno Park, Tokyo. In the instructions provided to visitors, it was specially reminded that the purpose of the Domestic Industrial Exposition was to promote technological progress and increase the source of profit from commodity trade. The venue area was 100,000 square meters, with six exhibition halls including art galleries, industry halls, machinery halls, animal halls, and gardening halls, with a total of 84,352 exhibits. During the 102-day session, the number of visitors reached 454,168. The holding of this Domestic Industrial Exposition had a far-reaching impact on promoting the development of Japanese domestic industries and became the prototype of future Japan Expos.
See Peng, Huiyuan. "The Reappearance and Expansion of 'Colonial Taiwan' in the Early Period of Japanese Occupation: A Study Centered on the 'Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association' (1916)." Master's thesis, Department of History, National Cheng Kung University, January 31, 2006.

[66] Lu, Shaoli. "Showing Taiwan: A Study of the Taiwan Pavilion at the 1903 Osaka Industrial Exposition." Taiwan History Studies, 1997. 108.

From April 21 to June 19 of the following year, the "Meiji Commemorative Colonial Exposition" was once again held in Tennoji Park, Osaka, Japan. Its buildings include art galleries, machinery halls, mansions, vocational halls, landscape halls, etc. At the entrance of the vocational hall, there is a bungalow building surrounded by bamboo walls, which is used as a Taiwanese cafe; at the same time, the store hired 14- and 15-year-old Taiwanese girls as receptionists.

Figure 16. Taroko Woman[67]

The postcard of the Atayal weaving shown in Figure 16 has the stamp of the "Meiji Commemorative Colonization Exposition" in the second year of the Taisho era. Tokyo Imperial University anthropology professor Shogorō Tsuboi served as an advisor for the event, and unlike the “Anthropology Pavilion” set up during the Fifth National Industrial Exposition (1903), this event was “the first in Japan” and was full of

[67] "Taroko Woman." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360547.

anthropology. A group of Taiwanese aboriginal tourists was invited to report on the event, and as part of their visit, they were arranged to meet the aboriginal people living in the park (October 12). A group of tourists from the Kanto Concession (now Port Arthur and Dalian areas) visited various pavilions in the park, and the next day they were invited to Ueno Seiyoken, where they were warmly entertained by officials such as the director of the Colonial Bureau. In addition, other events, such as interracial meetings, were held and reported in newspapers every day.[68]

In addition, in 1914, Japan held the Taisho Exposition in Tokyo, and the expanded International Pavilion arranged a variety of novel and interesting live performances. Influenced by the trend of the exposition becoming a "park", the Taiwan Pavilion planned by the Taiwan Governor's Office also arranged three "Taiwan Day" activities, using airplanes to distribute leaflets, send flags printed with "Taiwan Day", parade General Fan Xie puppets, hold fireworks festivals and other activities to promote Taiwan.[69]

The 1916 "Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association" was the first large-scale exhibition in Taiwan during the early period of Japanese rule, held by the Taiwan Governor-General's Office to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the government. The planning process was very thorough, and the exhibits on display came

[68] *Colonial Exposition Administrative Report*, 1912. Modern Digital Library, 166.
[69] Peng, H. Y. "The Reappearance and Expansion of 'Colonial Taiwan' in the Early Period of Japanese Occupation: A Study Focusing on the 'Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association' (1916)." Master's thesis, Department of History, National Cheng Kung University, January 25, 2006.

from Taiwan, various prefectures in Japan, Korea, Kwantung, Karafu, China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia. Although it was held in the name of the "Progress Association", it was like a world exposition. At this expo, the "Aboriginal Customs Museum" established by the colonial government displayed a large number of Aboriginal photos, real objects, models, and paintings in a series of exhibitions to highlight the phased results of "Aboriginal governance." These exhibitions are not random collages, but are systematically arranged as a development route from “barbarism to naturalization”, and postcard images become key visual materials. In the display cabinets in the museum, some postcards are labeled as “Daily Life of Amis Women”, “Tattooed Women”, “Atayal Women Spinning”, etc., and together with pottery jars, back baskets and other objects, they form a “museum-style gaze system”, like a living ethnographic archive (Clifford, 1988). Through this spatial arrangement, the colonial government not only presents the "life of the aboriginals", but also incorporates it into a political narrative that is phased, governable, and observable. What visitors receive in the exhibition hall is not the display of a single ethnic culture, but the cultural classification and political rationalization imposed by the Japanese Empire on the path of "modernization".

Figure 17. Guest Reception Hall at the Second Venue of the Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association[70]

Figure 17 is a postcard with the theme of the second venue of the Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association, the Guest House. The front of the postcard is a black and white photo of the Guest House, which shows a two-story Japanese-style building with many pedestrians walking on the road in front of it. The label below the image is "The Guest House, the Second Venue of the Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association". The Guest House is located at the second venue and is a reception place for major guests and VIPs. The entire building is built with Alishan cypress wood. The sponsorship association spent 120,000 to build a two-story building imitating the Kinkakuji Temple in Kyoto,

[70] "Guest Reception Hall at the Second Venue of the Taiwan Industrial Promotion Association." Taiwan Historical Collections, 1912–1926. Accessed March 20, 2025. https://collections.nmth.gov.tw/CollectionContent.aspx?a=132&rno=2002.007.1140.

Japan. What is worth learning? What should be "classified" and "led"? The expo presents the answer in a visual language.

Such exhibitions are a strategy of visual reproduction, which not only shapes the public's imagination of "Taiwanese aboriginals", but also provides visual legitimacy for colonial policies as "the results of aboriginal governance". As Timothy Mitchell pointed out: "Exhibition is not a tool for reproducing reality, but a way to create reality" (Mitchell, 1991). Postcards are used in expositions, but postcards themselves are also a micro-theater of Mitchell's "exhibition logic". The two share the same logic, transforming Taiwan into a consumable colonial landscape through classified display, ordered space and one-way gaze. From single presentation to classification to display, images gradually became carriers of colonial cognitive violence, profoundly shaping the power relationship between the empire and the colony.

4.2 Imperial communication and visual commodities: the daily circulation of postcards

The widespread sales and mailing mechanism of postcards made them one of the most common visual commodities in the daily life of the colony. During the Japanese colonial period, in addition to official agencies such as the Taiwan Governor's Office and its subordinate units (such as the Ministry of Railways and Kaohsiung City Hall), postcards were issued in Taiwan by social groups mainly composed of various industry associations, such as the Taiwan Branch of the Japan Travel Association and the Japanese Leaf Book Club; private printing was mostly done by bookstores and

publishing houses such as Xin Gaotang, Shengfanwu, and Akaoka Brothers Chamber of Commerce in Taipei, and Nanli Store in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan.[71]During the Japanese occupation, as exchanges between Taiwan and Japan became closer, postcards became more frequently used.

In the Japanese domestic market, images of Taiwan's aboriginals formed a unique consumer category with their cultural imagination of "exotic customs" and "imperial adventure". These images were not limited to education and display, but also entered the drawers and albums of ordinary citizens, becoming "symbolic trophies" to commemorate the journey.

Figure. 18. Zou ethnic woman and her backpack[72]

The postcard shown in Figure 18 is titled "Zou ethnic woman and her backpack", taken in front of the Dabang Exchange in the 1920s (Dabang is now Alishan Township, Chiayi

[71] Chen, Zongren, ed. Faces of the Century: Folk Portraits of Taiwan's Aboriginal People 100 Years Ago, Vol. 1, 8.
[72] "Zou ethnic woman and her backpack." Taiwan Memory System, National Central Library, 1920. Accessed February 26, 2025. https://tm.ncl.edu.tw/article?u=001_001_0000360542.

County), and is stamped with "Alishan Mountain Climbing Commemoration on September 10, 1947". This is a postmark given to tourists who climbed Alishan to commemorate the time. The aforementioned Figure 4 also has a landscape postmark (October 25, 1948). [73] In addition, as illustrations for popular science and commemorative albums, "Taiwan Aboriginal Outlook" also included these postcard images (such as Figure 8 in the previous article). In addition to display and collection, postcards have been widely used as souvenirs for travel and sightseeing. The form of photos also makes them the most "local characteristics".

[73] The so-called scenic postmark refers to a postal stamp with a local scenic spot and date. It was first created in Japan on April 1, 1931, and then gradually became popular in various parts of Japan. As the scenic postmark became popular in Japan, the Taiwan Governor-General's Office's Department of Communications also began to discuss the formulation of Taiwan's scenic postmark in May 1931. At that time, the Taiwan scenic postmark pattern was commissioned by the Post Office to be drawn by "Yan Yue Taofu", an important figure in the Taiwanese painting world at the time. 30 postmarks of beautiful scenery in different places in Taiwan were gradually issued on January 1, 1932. Many Japanese stationed in Taiwan and local residents would not only mail postcards when traveling, but also attach the scenic postmarks of the time as a souvenir.
See Hashimoto, Toshiharu. "Taiwan's Famous Places Postal Stamp." Taiwan Post Association Magazine, 1932.

Figure 19. Taiwan Governor-General's Office1 (left)

Figure 20. Taiwan Governor-General's Office2 (right)[74]

The postcard shown in Figure 19 is a drawing of the Taiwan Governor's Office published by Taipei Shin-Kodo Publishing House in the late 1920s. The back of the postcard is shown in Figure 18. The postmarks are purple, "10.3.24," and black, "10.3.25." Judging from the content of the mail, the postcard was sent by Ishii, a Japanese stationed in Taiwan, to Iwai Saburo in Chiba Prefecture, Japan. The content of this postcard is as follows:

> The weather has gradually warmed up. Are you and your family all well? I am still working in good health and high spirits as usual, please rest assured. I exercise every day. Suzuki Teruo works at the Commercial and Industrial Bank in the city. He is also a member of the baseball team there, so sometimes I play games with him in the park. Taiwan has become very hot now, and the planting of seedlings has basically ended. People who are older have already started to wear summer clothes. The conscription examination has been decided to be held on April 1st, and the results will be reported to you then. How did you do in the school year exam? It should be fun now that it is vacation time. The alumni association magazine was received from the school.

[74] "Taiwan Governor-General's Office (台湾総督府)." National Museum of Taiwan History Collections, 1921. Accessed March 8, 2025. https://ldr.lafayette.edu/concern/images/2801ph01k.

Figure 21. Taiwan Governor-General's Office Civil Engineering Bureau1 (above)

Figure 22. Taiwan Governor-General's Office Civil Engineering Bureau2 (below)[75]

Similar to this is Figure 21, a postcard of the Civil Engineering Bureau of the Taiwan

[75] "Taiwan Governor-General's Office Civil Engineering Bureau (台湾総督府土木局)." National Museum of Taiwan History Collections, 1919. Accessed March 8, 2025. https://ldr.lafayette.edu/concern/images/rn3011916.

Governor's Office published by Sugita Shoten. The letter on the back reads:

> Dear Friend:
>
> Won't you kindly give me a picture card in exchange for this? I am a Japanese boy at the age of seventeen.
>
> Yours Truly,
>
> HCE. 1972. T. Kagata227. Rukoko-sho, Taihoku
>
> Taiwan. Japan.

As postcards were passed between relatives and friends, the image of the Taiwan Governor's Office, the most famous colonial government of Japan in Taiwan, was also circulated. Postcards were purchased and mailed by Japanese soldiers, administrative personnel, and tourists stationed in Taiwan, and the combination of colonial images and texts on them was therefore carried, exchanged, and widely circulated, with the scope of dissemination constantly expanding, constructing a common "imperial other experience". Benedict Anderson's Imagined Community theory holds that the formation of modern nations is "imagined" as a limited, sovereign, and collective entity with a common destiny through shared cultural media and symbolic systems (such as print capitalism, maps, and museums) (Benedict Anderson, 1983). Nations are not naturally existing entities, but products that are "imagined" by members through cultural practices, and their boundaries are visualized and solidified through systems such as maps, censuses, and museums. This theoretical framework may be extended to colonial context analysis: images can also help construct a common imagination of "others."

The postcards of the Governor-General's Office in Taiwan shown in Figures 17 and 19 are a type of postcard from the colonial period: they are not real shots but colored pencil drawings, which further divide the original scene with blocks of color and lines, simplify it, and modernize it to create a visual effect of Taiwan being "more civilized" and "cleaner" under Japanese colonial rule. The aboriginal postcards shown above are selectively presented in the form of "original specimens" to present a "barbaric" and "dirty" visual effect as much as possible. The postcards that were mass-printed and disseminated by the people of the Japanese Empire shared the visual experience of the "barbaric other," and colonial violence was glorified as a "civilizing mission." Imperial readers imagined the conquest of the "barbaric other" in their reading. Images are not only a tool of reproduction, but also a technology of power. By classifying others and activating emotions, abstract political entities are transformed into perceptible collective identities.

4.3 Images and educational governance: cultural violence in daily life

Colonial images not only exist in display and communication media, but are also deeply embedded in the education system, becoming a cultural tool for governing indigenous peoples. Bourdieu clearly pointed out in *La Reproductio* that pedagogic action is essentially a kind of symbolic violence, because it imposes a kind of cultural arbitrariness and conceals the basis of its power relationship, so that the dominated

accept the legitimacy of this arbitrariness.[76]

Figure 23. Jiaobanshan's Aboriginal Children's Educational Institute[77]

Under Japanese colonial rule, "education of aboriginal children" was an important part of colonial policy. As early as 1896, the Taiwan Governor's Office established Japanese language schools in Hengchun, Taitung, and other places, and began to implement language and life etiquette education for aboriginal children. In 1897, the Aboriginal Government Conference formally confirmed "simple education" as the basic policy for the education of Aboriginal children.[78] After entering the early 20th century, Japan set up police stations and "aboriginal education schools" in various places in the south. In addition to language and living habits, the curriculum also included farming, animal husbandry, money usage, and military physical training.[79] These educational policies

[76] Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. Translated by Richard Nice. London: Sage, 1977, 5.
[77] "Jiaobanshan's Aboriginal Children's Educational Institute" (角板山蕃童教育所, Present-day Fuxing Township, Taoyuan County)." Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 1909.
[78] Wen, Ji. Taiwan Aboriginal Political History (II). Nantou: Taiwan Provincial Literature Committee, 2002, 821.
[79] Ibid., 823-824.

are closely linked to image governance: As shown in postcard Figure 23, this picture shows the "Aboriginal Children's Education School" opened by Japanese colonists in Jiaobanshan, Taiwan.[80] At the top of the classroom in the picture is a row of world flags, with the Japanese flag hanging in the middle. A magnified map of Japan with clothes hung on the back wall of the classroom. The image of indigenous children wearing school uniforms that are a modified style of traditional Japanese kimonos, sitting upright and reading, actually shows how the indigenous people's bodies were trained into a visual representation of "modern subjects" under the colonial education system. In contrast to the solemn expressions in Figure 24, the students of Huoyao Island Public School, which is run by the locals, are crowded in front of the camera and smiling, not even realizing that their buttons are unbuttoned.

[80] In 1895, Jiaobanshan was described as a mountain tribe full of "savages", but by 1920, Jiaobanshan had become a very popular tourist attraction, and tourists could buy many postcards with the tribesmen printed on them in souvenir shops. Reference Paul D, Barclay, and Mayaw Kilang. 2014. Review of The Birth of "Primitive Society" in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Picture Postcards, Ethnogenesis, and Indigenous Peoples under Japanese Colonial Rule.
See Barclay, Paul D., and Mayaw Kilang. "Review of The Birth of 'Primitive Society' in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Picture Postcards, Ethnogenesis, and Indigenous Peoples under Japanese Colonial Rule." 2014. Accessed March 18, 2025 . http://nccur.lib.nccu.edu.tw/handle/140.119/80328.

Figure 24. Review of The Birth of ‘Primitive Society’[81]

Postcard images and educational policies are mutually reinforcing: on the one hand, the images serve as classroom teaching materials and visual models, helping teachers shape the standardized image of "civilized barbarians"; on the other hand, the "civilized" bodies in the images also flow back into society, becoming visible evidence of the achievements of colonial education.

[81] US Consul to Taiwan Gerald Warner and his wife Rella created this photographic negative between August 26, 1937 and March 8, 1941.

Figure 25. Textbook for Taiwan Education, Vol. 5[82]

The image shown in Figure 25 is an illustration of Lesson 9 <raw aboriginals> in *Volume 5 of Taiwan Textbook Chinese Reading*. The building shown is a thatched hut in the dense forest. The people in the picture are still wearing traditional animal skin fabrics, which seem to be far away from modern civilization and technology. In the specific content of this textbook, the people are introduced as follows:

> Taiwan has a different race, called raw aboriginals, who are ferocious, uncivilized, illiterate, scattered in the mountains and valleys, and use bamboo, wood, earth, and stone frames to build houses. They are ugly, dark-skinned, with broken hair and tattoos on their faces and hands and feet; they generally use bows and arrows or fire guns to hunt birds and beasts, and grow rice and potatoes as their teachers. They are really a pitiful race. But they think that killing people is prestige, sometimes they attack each other within their own race, and sometimes they ambush in the dense forests and bushes on the mountain roads, waiting for people to pass by and then shooting these passers-by in the dark, taking off their heads,

[82] Taiwan Governor-General's Office. Han Language Reader: Textbook for Taiwan Education, Vol. 5 (臺灣教科用書漢文讀本). Taipei: Taiwan Governor-General's Office, 1913, 8. https://www.tulips.tsukuba.ac.jp/opac/search?barcode=10088013926.

and boasting about their abilities in front of everyone based on taking more heads. This is an extremely abnormal custom and cannot be tamed at all.

Such images and descriptions are obviously oversimplified. They combine the behaviors of ethnic minorities in different regions, ignore cultural significance, and magnify and construct a complex of wonders that is completely contrary to "modern civilization."

Figure 26. Japanese school for savage children[83]

The English title of the postcard shown in Figure 26 is JAPANESE-SCHOOL FOR SAVAGE-CHILDREN, MT. KAPPAN. The image content is still showing the Japanese-run school for savage-children in Jiaoban Mountain for the Atayal people. Compared with Figure 24, the Japanese description in the upper left corner is added:

The police count the days there; this is a place far away from the village, with endless

[83] "Japanese school for savage children." National Taiwan University Postcard Collection, 1934. Accessed March 5, 2025. https://dl.lib.ntu.edu.tw/s/postcard/item?Search=&property%5B0%5D%5Bproperty%5D=1&property%5B0%5D%5Btype%5D=eq&property%5B0%5D%5Btext%5D=%5B%E6%B3%B0%E9%9B%85%E6%97%8F%5D%20(%E8%87%BA%E7%81%A3%20%E8%A7%92%E6%9D%BF%E5%B1%B1)%20%E8%A7%92%E6%9D%BF%E5%B1%B1%E6%95%99%E8%82%B2%E6%89%80.

mountains; living with the barbarians is heartbreaking; use patience and effort, and believe that civilization will surely sprout... (the last sentence is unrecognizable).

In addition to the scene display of Atayal children wearing modified kimonos being asked to learn Japanese and read; the postcard also deliberately provides a descriptive view: the Atayal settlement is far away from the "civilized" city center, the children are difficult to get along with, and teaching work "requires patience and effort", which deepens the stereotype that they are difficult to educate and have barbaric habits.

Through editing, scene selection and shooting angles, Jiaobanshan was portrayed as a successful civilized tribe in the postcard. The performance of these images constructed an "indigenous people" that was internally homogeneous but different from the Han people. This classification also cooperated with the policy of governing the aboriginal lands: the policy of governing the aboriginal lands established a cultural defense line and, on this basis, separated the land transactions and personal taxes of the aboriginal people, making it more difficult for the aboriginal people to migrate to the "ordinary administrative districts" of the colonial government, such as plains, ports or cities.[84] The interweaving of images, constructed knowledge, and institutions makes education no longer a transmission of objective knowledge, but a biased visual governance.

[84] Paul D, Barclay, and Mayaw Kilang. 2014. Review of The Birth of "Primitive Society" in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Picture Postcards, Ethnogenesis, and Indigenous Peoples under Japanese Colonial Rule. http://nccur.lib.nccu.edu.tw/handle/140.119/80328.

The education of adult Aboriginal people also reflects the flexible penetration of colonial power. The colonial government established parents' associations, women's associations, and autonomous groups, and collaborated with the police to implement "social enlightenment" work in the aboriginal communities, promoting health knowledge, agricultural technology, and savings concepts.[85] At the pictorial level, these changes were often photographed as images of "progress of the barbarians" and "improvement of their lives," such as wearing Chinese-style clothing, using bowls and chopsticks, seeking medical treatment and taking medicine, as if visually proving the "success" and "modernity" of colonial governance.[86]

As mentioned above, after Japan took control of Taiwan, it often held various exhibitions in order to promote various systems in the colony. In addition to product exhibitions in the early days of Japanese rule, educational exhibitions were also held very early. For example, in 1899, an educational exhibition was held at Chiayi Public School, exhibiting students' calligraphy and embroidery works by students in the women's department, flower making and weaving by students in Bazhilan Girls' School, and various scientific instruments and specimens of animals, plants, minerals, and wood. It was an exhibition that combined educational products with products, and the number of visitors reached 2,564, which was a grand occasion.[87] In 1900, the following year, taking advantage of the second general meeting of the Red Cross branch, an exhibition

[85] Wen, Ji. Taiwan Aboriginal Political History (II). Nantou: Taiwan Provincial Literature Committee, 2002, 836.
[86] Ibid., p. 823.
[87] "Miscellaneous News and Meeting Affairs." Taiwan Daily News, December 14, 1899, 2.

of school and art products was held at Hsinchu Public School, exhibiting a total of 9,834 pieces of school and art products such as calligraphy, drawings, and handicrafts by students from elementary schools and public schools in Japan and Taiwan. The exhibition is a means of "instilling new education in the natives (Taiwanese) and developing new knowledge."[88]

The ultimate extreme of the colonial education image was reflected in the "Imperialization" policy promoted in the 1930s. The "Standards of the Rules of the Takasago Self-Help Association" and "Outline of Social Education" implemented in 1939 advanced the goal of image management from "civilization and enlightenment" to the comprehensive shaping of the "Imperial Spirit". At this time, postcards not only show changes in clothing, etiquette and language, but also imply an internalized national identity: "Takasago people" are proud to speak Japanese, change their names, wear uniforms, and join the army. They are reproduced in images as a symbol of "loyal subjects."[89]

When analyzing how cultural consumption solidifies class differences, Bourdieu indirectly involved the symbolic power of vision and images. He proposed that aesthetic judgment is a socialized perceptual mode that is engraved in the body through the education system and becomes a class mark that distinguishes "elegance" from "vulgarity".[90] The effectiveness of symbolic violence lies in the fact that it does not

[88] "The Second Meeting of the Red Cross Branch (Part 2)." Taiwan Daily News, May 4, 1900, 4.
[89] Wallace Nogan and Yu Guanghong. History of Taiwan's Aboriginal Peoples: History of the Atayal Tribe. Nantou: Taiwan Literature Museum, 2002, 165.
[90] Bourdieu, Pierre. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, 6.

require physical coercion, but is achieved through the misrecognition and collusion of the dominated with the dominant structure.[91]

As he said, the most powerful form of symbolic violence is to make the dominated internalize subject identity. The political function of image education is to let the indigenous people learn what "civilization" and "modernity" are in the process of viewing, and internalize this viewing as the goal of self-transformation. Colonial education and image governance intersect here, making images a "carrier of cultural violence" that permeates every aspect of daily life and silently reshapes the cognition and body of the colonized.

4.4 Summary: How images become "soft weapons of colonial governance"

In the history of visual research, early cameras are often described as a potential offensive weapon or tool used to raid, occupy, and execute aggressive visual viewing desires. From the context of image viewing, the circular images on the above postcards do concretely and microscopically implement a control relationship that is reflected through viewing. Images have also become a form of reproduction and public discussion of alien cultural images, and a medium for relatively defining "our group" and "other groups". Photography, as a disciplinary intermediary tool, has the power to operate and used in the hands of the colonizers. The indigenous people, as the objects to be interpreted and recorded, are absent and silent. As the subjects of the photo, the

[91] Bourdieu, P. (1991). Language and symbolic power (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press, 51.

indigenous people are like bodies without subjectivity, and they submit to the colonizer's lens with a tamed and submissive posture. Indigenous people have almost no possibility of appearing in the images, let alone the right to speak. Through image records and the textual descriptions of anthropologists, the production of indigenous images is placed in a knowledge discipline framework that represents progress and rationality, and is reduced to the position of an object of knowledge, which is at the mercy of the colonizers to shape and appropriate. The subsequent product life-oriented and dissemination reuse is also a step towards the social penetration of culture. The images carried by postcards are neither passive records nor cultural commodities, but a visual governance tool arranged by the system.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

In examining colonial postcards of Taiwan's indigenous peoples during the Japanese occupation, we are not simply admiring quaint relics, but rather engaging with a powerful visual archive that reveals how colonial power operated not only through military force or administrative control, but also through subtle and pervasive acts of seeing, categorizing, and displaying. Published across the Japanese Empire and beyond, these postcards capture more than just faces or landscapes; they carry profound structures of meaning that reflect and reinforce the gaze of the Japanese Empire.

These images show more than indigenous peoples; they depict indigenous peoples as imagined, constructed, and performed for specific audiences. Whether posed portraits, labor scenes, ritual depictions, or staged family life, the production of these photographs reflects multiple institutional intentions: anthropologists, police, postcard publishers, exhibition designers—all of whom collaborated, consciously or unconsciously, to shape images of indigenous "others" that were legible, consumable, and ultimately governable.

Through this visual economy, indigenous peoples became both ethnographic specimens and picturesque souvenirs. Their bodies, homes, rituals, and labor were reorganized into aesthetic compositions that conformed to the expectations of modern imperial viewers. From mountain villages in Taiwan to showrooms in Tokyo, these images became evidence of "progress," "taming," and "modernization"—all key concepts in colonial narratives of benevolent rule.

But these images are also deeply unsettling. They reveal the intimate and invasive nature of colonialism: it penetrated the private spaces of indigenous families, documenting the pain of tooth extraction and the spectacle of ritual, and even transforming the act of drawing water into a primal symbol. The very ordinariness of these images—their circulation in shops, albums, and family letters—made colonial ideology part of everyday life.

Ultimately, this study argues that these postcards are more than just records, they are visual acts of power. They construct a "shared vision" of empire that relies on stereotypes, ellipses, and aesthetic norms to normalize inequality. By analyzing them not only as images but as cultural objects embedded in systems of production, circulation, and meaning, we can better understand how empire was imagined—and how these imaginaries continue to shape how we see others and ourselves, even long after empire has fallen.

Understanding the politics of these postcards is not just about critiquing the past, but about recognizing how visual systems still operate today in museums, textbooks, tourism, and the media. It is about learning how to understand how images shape the stories we tell about difference, history, and identity. It is about listening more closely to those who have long been represented but rarely allowed to speak in their own image.

References

Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Verso, 1983.

Bourdieu, Pierre. Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Bourdieu, Pierre. Language and Symbolic Power. Edited by John B. Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. Translated by Richard Nice. London: Sage, 1977.

Clifford, James. The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Edwards, Elizabeth. Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums. Oxford: Berg, 2001.

Edwards, Elizabeth. "Objects of Affect: Photography beyond the Image." Annual Review of Anthropology 41 (2012): 221–34. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-092611-145708.

Foucault, Michel. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

Latour, Bruno. Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Maccgaffey, Wyatt. "Jan Vansina, Being Colonized: The Kuba Experience in Rural Congo, 1880–1960. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010, 344 pp." Africa 81, no. 3 (2011): 495–97.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972011000283.

Mitchell, Timothy. "The World as Exhibition." Comparative Studies in Society and History 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500015802.

Mitchell, Timothy. "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics." American Political Science Review 85, no. 1 (1991): 77–96. https://doi.org/10.2307/1962879.

Paul D. Barclay, and Mayaw Kilang. "Review of The Birth of 'Primitive Society' in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Picture Postcards, Ethnogenesis, and Indigenous Peoples under Japanese Colonial Rule." 2014. http://nccur.lib.nccu.edu.tw/handle/140.119/80328.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Stoler, Ann Laura. Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Stoler, Ann Laura. Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Tagg, John. The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.