

Colonial Archives and Imperial Formation: The Representation of Taiwan “Civilized” Savages in Qing Manchu Palace Memorials

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that the Qing Dynasty can be seen as a colonial empire in the context of comparative imperial history. From this perspective, palace memorials can be viewed as a kind of colonial archives reflecting the effort of the Qing Empire in governing its colonies. Three Manchu palace memorials concerning Taiwan’s “civilized” savages during the Kangxi reign (1662-1722) using the methodologies of historical anthropology and postcolonial theory were examined. The Qing Empire classified ‘barbarians’ into civilized (*shou*) or “cooked” and uncivilized (*sheng*) or “raw” people, according to their relative distance from the central, dominant culture. I will analyze the representational and rhetorical features of three Manchu palace memorials, dated from 1717 to 1722, and compare them with the Chinese local gazetteers, a different type of document. Even though palace memorial and gazetteer are both colonial archives of the Qing Empire, their narrative and rhetoric constitute essentially different genres. Through comparing these different genres in Manchu- and Chinese-language archival materials, we can breakthrough the limitations imposed by using Chinese-language materials exclusively. Analyzing a diversity of documents further highlights the multiplicity of Qing colonial discourse and rhetoric. The themes of this paper are in dialogue with contemporary *Pingpu* (civilized, or “cooked” savage) studies; at the same time, I also endeavor to draw Manchu-language documents into the mainstream of academic discourse.

Keywords: Qing Dynasty, Taiwan, civilized savages, Manchu palace memorial, colonial archive