

Settler Colonial Epistemology?
定居殖民知識學？

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In settler societies such as today's Taiwan, the Sinophone, whichever Sinitic language it speaks (Mandarin, Hoklo, or Hakka), constitutes the hegemonic presence that seeks to pressure and suture the indigenous and minoritized populations who speak a variety of other languages into its fold. But in its relationship with China, the old/new colonial metropole, and within the new world order where China is increasingly dominant, Sinophone Taiwan as such has an ambiguous identity, with rich cultural imaginaries intent on producing its own national culture on the ground but lacking the status of a political state recognized by the United Nations. Typical of settler colonialism, different groups of settler colonizers—Mainlander, Taiwanren or Hakka—have made contradictory sovereignty claims in the past century. On the one hand, as a peripheral settler colony, some have favored a sympolitical relationship with China where “there is no separation between the colonizing metropole and colonizing locale.”¹ On the other hand, resisting China's containment, some have struggled to be an isopolity, that is, to be sovereign unto itself and independent from China. Whatever the struggles among the Taiwanren, the Mainlanders, and the Hakkas, however, they constitute a settler colonial polity vis-à-vis the indigenous, Austronesian peoples. In other words, settler colonialism evinces a triangular structure (colonial metropole, settler colony, and indigenous populations) unlike most colonial situations where the reigning structure is the dualistic one between the colonizer and the colonized. Any study of Taiwan must therefore recognize this triangular structure: critical of and uneasy about Chinese hegemony and yet holding onto cultural contiguities with China, desiring to stay within the Chinese sphere of influence yet wanting autonomy from China, while at the same time maintaining a settler colonial polity that has systematically marginalized indigenous peoples. Recognizing the fact of settler colonialism and understanding how settler colonial knowledge works may be the first steps towards a true decolonization, which does not displace the history and experience of the indigenous peoples. In this regard, we may want to unpack the history and content of settler colonial epistemology in Taiwan.

¹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 69.