

PREFACE

Kenting National Park, on the Hengchun Peninsula at Taiwan's southern tip, boasts beautiful beaches, which are now favorite destinations for domestic and international tourists. Few people, however, know that this area was a battlefield where U.S. soldiers and Taiwanese indigenous peoples clashed about 150 years ago.¹

The battle broke out on June 13, 1867, when Rear Admiral Henry H. Bell, commander of the United States Asiatic Squadron, sent a troop of 181 officers, sailors, and marines to land on a beach in Kenting. The American force was, however, defeated by the warriors of the Paiwan people. Major Alexander Mackenzie, lieutenant commander of the troop, was the first officer to sacrifice his life in America's first military operation in Asia after the Civil War.

This American expedition to Formosa originated from an accident on March 12, 1867, when the American merchant ship *Rover* was shipwrecked near Kenting. Fourteen survivors managed to row small

¹ On April 13, 2019, at a conference on the history of Liangkiau, I had the honor of meeting Dr. William Stanton, former director of the American Institute in Taiwan. When I mentioned to him the 1867 American Expedition to Formosa, Ambassador Stanton was greatly surprised, because he had never heard of this incident. He acknowledged, however, that it was certainly an important event in the history of U.S.-Taiwan relations.

boats to a beach close by. All except one were killed by local aborigines. This “*Rover Incident*” not only triggered Bell’s invasion but also set the stage for the future engagements of Charles W. Le Gendre (1830–1899) with Taiwan. Le Gendre, a French-born American diplomat, would later become a legendary figure in modern East Asian history.

The fact that only a very limited number of people know about these historical events and their successive repercussions in Taiwan motivated me to write a historical novel featuring Charles Le Gendre, with the Hengchun Peninsula (formerly “Liangkiau”) as the main backdrop and the *Rover Incident* as the pivotal event. The novel I had in mind aimed to illuminate the long-neglected and little-known aspects of Taiwan; to manifest the ethos, lifestyles, social structures, religious practices, and worldviews of Taiwan’s inhabitants at that time, and to highlight the island’s distinct and unique culture, its intricate multilingual and multiethnic elements, and its cross-connections with the outside world. *Puppet Flower: A Novel of 1867 Formosa* is the result of my efforts.

Ever since its publication in 2016, *Kuilei hua*, the Chinese-language edition of *Puppet Flower: A Novel of 1867 Formosa*, has been luckily well received at home and abroad. It won the Golden Award for Taiwan Literature in 2016 and was selected by Taiwan’s Public Television Service to be adapted into a twelve-episode drama series, aired and streamed in August 2021, with the title *Seqalu: Formosa 1867*. Professor Shimomura Sakujiro of Tenri University, Nara, has rendered my novel into Japanese, and his translation was published in 2019.²

The present English-language version was conceived specifically for English-speaking audiences, academic and nonacademic. Through the dramatic narrative of the *Rover Incident* and its subsequent developments, I hope to give readers a glimpse into the

² The Japanese title is フォルモサに咲く花 (literally, “Flowers Blooming in Formosa”).

variegated life of that era and to entice them to further explore the vibrant and pluralistic culture ever present in Taiwan society.

While preparing this English edition, I found it not easy to transliterate the names of the historical figures, aboriginal tribes, and geographical locations associated with the story, because variants abound. In 1860s Taiwan, various ethnic groups used such languages as Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, and local aboriginal languages to interact with each other. Ways of transliterating proper names differ from author to author. Since the novel is set mainly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, I decided to adopt some of the proper names used by Charles Le Gendre in his *Notes of Travel in Formosa*, with a view to re-creating an aura of the era. For other names, I elected to use the pinyin system for transliteration, with some exceptions.

This is admittedly *not* a verbatim translation of my original novel; it has been deliberately tailored for English-speaking audiences. However, I have taken special care to present historical facts as accurately as possible and to craft the novel artfully so as to make it at once interesting and informative.

The term *Liangkiau* used to refer to the area south of present-day Fangliao Township, Pingtung County, Taiwan. Like the rest of the island, this was once a territory solely inhabited and controlled by Taiwanese indigenous peoples (formerly “Formosan people” or “Taiwanese aborigines”). Their ancestors had been living on the island for a very long time before the major migrations of Han people from mainland China. As Jared Diamond, author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1998), pointed out, their ancestors started to migrate out of the island about 5,500 years ago and consequently had historical connections with the Maori and other Pacific islanders. Polynesians may have originated from Taiwan’s indigenous peoples. Languages of the Austronesian peoples are spoken from Taiwan to Hawaii to Easter Island to New Zealand to Jakarta to Madagascar. According to Robert Blust, a Hawaiian linguist, among the 1,200 Austronesian

languages, nine of the ten subgroups (containing twenty-six languages) are spoken only by the non-Chinese aborigines of Taiwan. They are truly Taiwan's precious gift to the world.³

The migration of Han Chinese people to Formosa began in late 1500s or early 1600s, no more than 500 years from the present. In 1867, the eastern half of the island was outside of Qing China's administrative control.

For centuries, Taiwan's indigenous inhabitants have experienced economic competition and military conflict with a series of colonizing newcomers. Through trade, intermarriage, and other intercultural processes, they have gradually suffered the loss of their tribal languages and cultural identity. Officially, there are sixteen indigenous peoples or groups in Taiwan, living mostly in the rugged mountains or alluvial plains. Nowadays, more and more people move out to work and live in the urban areas. Currently the indigenous people number around 569,008, constituting roughly 2.38 percent of the population.

During the Qing dynasty, Taiwan's aborigines were categorized into two kinds: raw savages (*sheng fan*) and cooked (tamed) savages (*shou fan*), based on the degree of their adoption of the Han Chinese lifestyle. Those living in the high mountains were generally marked as "raw" and those on the plains as "cooked."

Liangkiau was once part of the Qing Empire and yet not exactly under its jurisdiction. Its inhabitants enjoyed autonomy, without being levied taxes by the Qing government. In 1867, Taiwan was actually divided into two parts: immigrants from mainland China living on the plains and ruled by the Qing Empire, and self-governing Formosan mountain aborigines. Not until the Japanese expedition to Formosa in 1874 (the "Botan Tribe Incident") did the Qing government start to take fuller control of the island.

³ See Jared Diamond, "Taiwan's Gift to the World," *Nature* 403 (2000): 709–710; <https://doi.org/10.1038/35001685>.

The name *Liangkiau* can be traced back to the Dutch colonial era (1624–1662), when both the Dutch and the Han Chinese called this place Liangkiau. Interestingly, the name could also have come from Paiwan, referring to a species of orchids. It was believed that Han Chinese immigrants had used it to refer to a plant native to that area: the butterfly tail flower.

“Puppet Mountains” and “Puppet Savages” were official terms used on Qing-dynasty maps and bureaucratic literature. The ancient maps show that to the east of the Hengchun Peninsula was the Pacific Ocean; to the south, across the Bashi Channel, was Luzon Island. In the center of the peninsula were the Puppet Mountains, now the Dawu Mountains, home to the “Puppet Savages” (*kuilei fan*).⁴

In this novel, the term “Puppet savages” is used for the indigenous groups living in Liangkiau, nowadays called the Paiwan and the Rukai. When Han Chinese immigrants saw them running through the mountain forests as if on level land, they thought the aborigines’ nimble movements resembled those of bouncing puppets they remembered from their homeland. That might be the reason they called them “Puppet Savages.”

However, the term may also have a different derivation. When Han Chinese immigrants were still small in number, the indigenous would greet them with an enthusiastic “*Kaliyang*.” The sound of this greeting led the newcomers to call the natives “*Ka lei*” or “*Ka lyi a*.”⁵ Unfortunately, as more Han Chinese people arrived and settled down, they began cheating the aborigines out of their land and

⁴ From a present-day perspective, it is of course offensive and inappropriate to use the term “savages” (*fan*) to refer to Taiwan’s indigenous peoples. Yet, when writing this historical novel, I elected to use terms in line with those appearing in the official documents or maps, such as “Kangxi Taiwan Map” (*Kangxi yutu* 康熙台灣輿圖). I beg readers’ indulgence if they feel offended.

⁵ Han Chinese immigrants used to call aborigines “*Ka lei*” or “*Ka lyi a*,” which is rendered into Chinese as 傀儡 (*kuilei*), 嘉禮 (*jiali*), or 加禮 (*jiali*), all pronounced “*Ka lei*” in Hokkien. “*Kalees*” is the term used by the Paiwan people, meaning “friends.”

property. Thus, the aborigines' opinion of them turned sour, and they started to take revenge through the practice of beheading. The immigrants in turn started to call Ka lei people "Puppet Savages," as the two terms sounded similar in Hokkien.

Over the centuries, Taiwan has experienced a series of colonial periods. Starting in the sixteenth century, Han Chinese immigrants came to settle on the island in increasing numbers. The Spanish colonized the northern part of Taiwan from 1626 to 1642, and the Dutch occupied a large part of it from 1624 to 1662, when Koxinga (Zheng Chenggong) led an army to attack the Dutch in Tainan and drove them away. Koxinga's was the first government founded by Han Chinese in Taiwan. In 1683, his grandson was defeated by troops sent by the Qing government, which annexed the island into Fujian Province.

In the nineteenth century, the Qing government forbade people from crossing the Black Water Channel (i.e., the Taiwan Strait) to Formosa. To avoid being caught, Han Chinese people (mostly Hokkien and Hakka) smuggled themselves and landed in Liangkiau, a safe haven for them then. With the influx of these immigrants, Liangkiau became a habitat for diverse ethnic groups. In addition to the original inhabitants, there were Hokkiens, Hakkas, Peppos (or plains aborigines), and *tushengzi* (or "hybrids," to use Le Gendre's term, referring to the half-Peppo, half-Hokkiens). Coming from different backgrounds, they started to develop intricate relationships among themselves.

With the signing of the Peking Treaty in 1860, Taiwan was forced to open its ports to Western merchant ships. From then on, more and more Westerners came to the island, bringing with them—among other influences—Christianity and Western medicine. The Formosa of 1867 was thus full of exciting scenes, with foreigners mingling with local officials, landlords, businessmen, peasants, and others. Charles Le Gendre apart, there was, for instance, a British physician

Dr. Patrick Manson (1844–1922), who worked at the Customs House in Takao (present-day Kaohsiung). Because of his great contribution to the study of tropical diseases, he was later honored as the “Father of Tropical Medicine.” There was also a well-known English businessman, William A. Pickering (1840–1907), who wrote *Pioneering in Formosa: Recollections of Adventures Among Mandarins, Wreckers, and Head-Hunting Savages* (London, 1898). He could speak Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Mandarin, and some Formosan aboriginal languages, among others. These foreigners, who worked in the public or private sector, appear in the novel as main or minor characters.

Le Gendre was born in France in 1830. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen after marrying a daughter of a prominent New York lawyer. He joined the Union Army to fight in the Civil War and was promoted to brigadier general when he was honorably discharged. After the war, he was stationed in Amoy (present-day Xiamen) as a U.S. consul. It was he who helped resolve the complicated issues surrounding the *Rover* Incident, and it was he who signed—along with Tauketok, a great leader of Formosan aboriginal peoples—the South Cape Agreement, which henceforth safeguarded all sailors navigating the Taiwan Strait.

The South Cape Agreement was signed by Le Gendre and Tauketok on February 28, 1869, sixteen months after their historical meeting at Volcano in Liangkiau in 1867. As recorded in Le Gendre’s *Notes of Travel in Formosa*, its text goes as follows:

TERRITORY UNDER TAUTEKOK

Village of the Sabarees February 28, 1869

At the request of Tauketok, the ruler of the eighteen tribes south of Liangkiau, and between the range of hills east of it and the Eastern Sea, including the bay known as the Southern Bay of Formosa, where the crew of the American bark *Rover* were murdered by the Koaluts, I, Charles W. Le Gendre, United States

consul for Amoy and Formosa, give this a memorandum of the understanding arrived at between myself and the said Tauketok in 1867, the same having been approved by the United States Government and assented to, I believe, by the foreign ministers at Peking, viz:

Cast-aways will be kindly treated by any of the eighteen tribes under Tauketok. If possible, they are to display a red flag before landing.

Ballast and water.—Vessels requiring supplies are to send a crew on shore, displaying a red flag, and must not land until a similar token has been shown from the shore, and then only at the spot indicated. They are not to visit the hills and villages, but, when possible, are to confine their visit to the Tuiahsockang, being the first stream on the east coast, north of the southeastern cape of South Bay, and to the Toapangnack, to the west of the rock where the Rover's crew were murdered, the latter being the better watering-place in the northeast monsoon. Persons landing under other than these conditions do so at their own peril, and must not look, I believe, for protection from their government if molested by the natives, who, in such case, will not be held responsible for their safety.

CHAS. W. LE GENDRE

United States Consul.

Witness: I. ALEX. MAN, *Commissioner of Customs for Southern Formosa*

Witness and interpreter: W. A. PICKERING⁶

Le Gendre later became a well-known expert on Taiwan and the Far East. Nevertheless, by 1872 his attitude toward Taiwan had

⁶ The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. now houses a sizeable collection of Le Gendre documents and letters. In July 2019, I made a special trip to this library and saw many letters and documents in the files labeled *Le Gendre*, but for some reason was unable to look at the original copy of the South Cape Agreement.

changed from hopeful expectation to disappointment. In December of that year, on his way back to the United States, he stopped over at Yokohama, Japan. While there, he decided to accept the Japanese government's invitation to serve as their diplomatic consultant. In this role his chief mission was to help Japan draw up a plan to attack and occupy Taiwan. Some historians even claim that he was the initiator of Japan's ambitious scheme to develop a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

For the following twenty-seven years, until his death in Seoul in 1899, Le Gendre lived in Asia. Eighteen of these years were spent in Japan and nine in Korea. He never again set foot on American soil.

Seven years after the 1867 American expedition to Formosa, a similar expedition was launched—by Japan. It too was a failure. The details of this 1874 Japanese expedition can be found in *The Japanese Expedition to Formosa* (1875) by Edward Howard House, the only foreign journalist who accompanied the Japanese forces. Not until 1895 did the Empire of Japan defeat the Qing Empire and take control of Taiwan, remaining there until the end of World War II in 1945.

The *Rover* Incident and the consequent American expedition to Formosa, the Japanese expedition to Formosa, and Taiwan's annexation by Japan in 1895 at the end of the first Sino-Japanese War all might well be attributed to the "butterfly effect" caused by this germinal figure, Charles W. Le Gendre.

When writing *Kuilei hua*, I tried to give historically faithful accounts of the diplomatic negotiations, international wars, and love-hate relationships among various ethnic groups in Qing-dynasty Taiwan. For dramatic effect, however, I deliberately fictionalized the complex interracial connections between Le Gendre and Butterfly.

The relationship between Le Gendre and Butterfly is complex. One is a handsome, urbane, and powerful foreign diplomat, the other a young, brave, and intelligent local girl. As the plot develops, a subtle mutual attraction slowly evolves. Le Gendre at the age of thirty-seven is obviously very much charmed by Butterfly. Readers may be

disturbed (or even upset) by a scene in which Butterfly is forced to have an intimate relationship with him. It is on the eve of his first meeting with Tauketok. Like a new recruit about to join combat, Le Gendre feels much agitated and anxious, yearning to have Butterfly's company. On that evening, Butterfly, however, is desperately attempting to seek peace and save her people's lives. After some hesitation, she braces herself to enter Le Gendre's tent and beg him not to engage in war against the local aborigines. After consenting to her request, Le Gendre loses control of himself and takes Butterfly's body by force, despite her protests. This scene is devised to dramatize Le Gendre's complex feelings and intense yearnings at that moment in a remote southern Taiwan village. It clearly demonstrates the unbalanced but likely power relations between them. Having grown up in a family strongly influenced by her Chinese-educated Hakka father, Butterfly, under the dictates of Confucian ethics and religious beliefs, is unwont to expressing her true feelings publicly. After this crucial incident, she eventually chooses to take the middle-of-the-road approach and accept her lover Chinya as he is, despite his previous misdeeds and flaws.

In the novel, Butterfly, a woman of mixed ethnic heritage, time and again demonstrates that she is a strong person with such laudable qualities as diligence, resilience, intelligence, modesty, adroitness, resourcefulness, self-sacrifice, and stoic dignity. In a sense, she is an avatar of Taiwan. In view of the supreme significance of the role she plays, I decided to use her nickname, *Kuilei hua* (literally, "Puppet Flower," meaning "demure or admirable young lady from the Puppet Mountains") as the title for the Chinese-language version. For the English-language version, I chose *Puppet Flower: A Novel of 1867 Formosa* with the same view to highlighting Butterfly as the female protagonist in this historical novel.