

## **Taiwan Historical Research in 2012-2013: Retrospect and Prospect**

Su-bing Chang

### **ABSTRACT**

Reviewing the essays delivered at the “2012-2013 Conference on Taiwan History Research,” jointly organized by the Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, National Museum of Taiwan History, the Graduate Institutes of Taiwan History of both National Taiwan Normal University and National Chengchi University, this article classifies the Taiwan history research findings of 2012-2013 into three main categories, namely general works, social culture and arts. The article includes not only important dissertation comments, overall analysis and future outlook, but also a speech made by Professor Hsu Hsueh-Chi on Taiwan history research over the past decade.

Analysis of the trends of Taiwan history research in 2012-2013 revealed the following. Regarding the number of studies on different historical periods, the majority of research works have been on the post-war years, followed by the Japanese colonial era, the Qing Dynasty and earlier times under the Dutch and the Spanish. Historical materials have become more diversified and there have been important breakthroughs in their applications. That is, apart from public documents and files, diaries, travel notes, collected literary works, images, school histories, monuments, and arts have now become the source of historical materials. Digital databases and online research have also provided easier access to relevant information. In terms of research themes, cultural history has made great advances and initiated various interesting topics. With regard to research methodology, techniques from different disciplines including geographical information systems (GIS), science technology and society (STS), anthropology, cultural studies, and building restoration have been integrated into historical research. As for research perspectives and points of view, both micro and macro perspectives, displacement of the narrative body, and contrasting views have been adopted.

The decade from 2004 to 2013 has seen significant development in Taiwan

historical research with expansion in research perspective, extension in research breadth, diversification in topics, as well as an increase in cross-border and transnational studies. However, there are still some hidden concerns. First, academic research came under political interference. Second, applicants for postgraduate studies in historical research were on the decline, also affecting the quality of students. Third, research topics have become very specialized, sometimes too narrow and even trivial. Intense competition and erosion from other social science disciplines also have a negative impact on historical research. Despite all these challenges, efforts in promoting dialogues and cooperation among various disciplines will still infuse hope into the future of Taiwan historical research.

**Keywords:** Taiwan History, Review of Studies, Trend of Research , Historical Materials, Socio-cultural History, History of Arts