

Red-Haired Ancestors: Dutch Experiences and Memories of Sinkan People

Peter Kang

ABSTRACT

The paper discusses why the Sinkan descendents in the late nineteenth century were able to either construct their “red-haired connection” or imagine their “red-haired ancestors” in a more subtle and detailed manner, when compared with other Austronesian tribal peoples once under the seventeenth-century Dutch regime. The paper argues that the Dutch experiences of the Sinkan people were quite different from those of others, including their other Sirayan ethno-linguistic counterparts. The differences include interaction experiences, conversion processes, tribal hierarchies, church district demarcation and intermarriage patterns. The Sinkan people, however, suddenly lost their potential status as the cultural broker in the European colony when the Dutch were ousted from Taiwan, and their relatively intimate “red-haired connection” can only serve as a colorful text for their offspring to appropriate and imagine.

Keywords: Dutch East India Company or VOC, Sinkan, Red-haired (Dutch) people