

# TAIWAN

## A New History

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EDITOR



**An East Gate Book**

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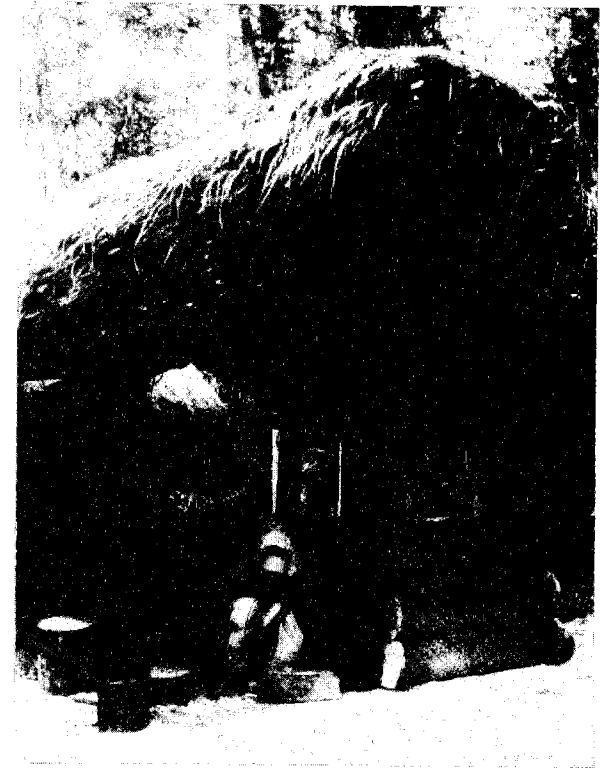
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# The Politics of Taiwan Aboriginal Origins

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*Michael Stainton*



An “Aborigine” practicing traditional crafts at the Formosan Aboriginal Cultural Village.

The past exists only in our present. This means that it is problematic both as history and as "history"—not just what we can know about the past but how our own cultural structures and intentionalities lead us to represent and interpret it. Malinowski's insight that history as myth is a charter for social action is now a standard assumption in the social sciences, especially anthropology.

Maurice Halbwachs noted: "The past cannot be reborn, but we can fathom what it was like, and we are most successful if we have at our command well established landmarks" (1997: 103). This reminds us that, while history as myth may be labile, there is a bedrock of somethingness—"landmarks"—that limits even as it becomes the basis for the inventedness of our constructions. When we deal with prehistory (or, more accurately, pretextual history) the problem is more complex in that we often do not have many well-established landmarks. Writing about the prehistory of the Pacific, John Terrell (1986: 9) highlights the problems of "landmarks" in his "rules of model building": "First we have got to decide what is important, that is, which features of the situation or problem being represented need to be included. Second, we must explain how all the features selected are believed to go together."

The question of the origin of the Austronesian languages and peoples of Taiwan is just such a case. Indeed, even the extent to which either of these exist as useful categories, or can be equated, is a matter of debate.<sup>1</sup> When landmarks are so contested, we do well to address models as a category of Malinowski's myths. Models or metaphors of science, or the social sciences, are like myths in that "they provide human beings with a representation of the world and the forces which are supposed to govern it" (François Jacob, quoted in Terrell 1986: 4).

This chapter explores theories of Taiwan aboriginal origins. My topic here is not the empirical "landmarks" but, rather, the social fact of how these contested landmarks of the distant past are used as charters for the present in Taiwan and China. I call this usage "the politics of Taiwan aboriginal origins." Nonetheless, there are landmarks, and it would be disingenuous to say that the linguistic and archaeological discoveries of the past sixty years in Taiwan and China have provided us with no landmarks on which constructions of Taiwan aboriginal origins can be based. However, readers who wish to pursue "the facts" are advised to read the debates raised in the books included in the reference list.

### Just the Facts

Some uncontested landmarks are the following. There are today at least 380,000 people in Taiwan, now officially called "Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples," who are speakers of Austronesian languages. Their dozen extant, and dozen extinct, languages are agreed to be the most archaic of the Indonesian branch (at least) of that vast language family. Their cultures and physical attributes, which are quite

varied, also identify them as Austronesian peoples. There have been human settlements in Taiwan since at least fifteen thousand years ago, in the palaeolithic age. By the seventeenth century there were several ethnolinguistically distinct groups settled in Taiwan. However, we cannot yet explain the development of such ethnic diversity.

In the early 1960s a series of site finds in Taiwan enabled archaeologists to organize these landmark discoveries into a pattern paralleling developments in ceramics in Southeast China, up to the beginning of the bronze age in China, after which the patterns diverge. This progression of "prehistoric ceramic horizons" from "corded ware" through "Lungshanoid" to "geometric"<sup>2</sup> is now generally uncontested. Clearly, contemporary model builders have more information on which to build models, but this still brings us back to the world of models as myths.

Three models of Taiwan aboriginal origins are presented here, as are two or three representative proponents for each model. These are not evaluated or deconstructed, but simply have their "politics" summarized at the ends of the sections.

### Theories of Southern Origin

In 1889 the Dutch Indologist Hendrik Kern proposed the "southern origin" theory of the Austronesian languages. He suggested the bearers of this language family came from peninsular Southeast Asia and moved eastward through the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos, northward to Taiwan, and eastward into the Pacific. In Kern's time Indonesia was a Dutch colony. Is it simply by coincidence that the suggestion of a Dutch Indologist privileges this area and ignores China? In the southern origin theory Taiwan is a dead end, valuable as a living museum of archaic Indonesian languages.

The southern origin theory was convincing to Canadian missionary George Leslie Mackay, who lived in Taiwan from 1872 to 1901. It is not likely that Mackay had time to read Kern, so we assume that he came to his conclusions independently. Mackay had a lively and informed interest in the ethnology of the island, especially its aboriginal inhabitants. He states that "the aboriginal tribes . . . are all descendants of settlers from around the Malay Archipelago" (1895: 94). He presented five arguments for this:

1. "Aboriginal tradition" of legends "that their forefathers came from a southerly direction";
2. "Consensus of foreign opinion" that "travelers see in the various tribes of Formosa the features and manners of the inhabitants of Luzon, Polynesia, the Malay Peninsula";
3. "Natural migration" of northward-flowing ocean currents, illustrated with instances of boats from the Philippines and Pelau washed onto Taiwan's shores;

4. "Habits and customs" including headhunting and tattooing;
5. "Physical features . . . characteristic of the islanders belonging to the lower races."

Mackay conjectures "that numerous adventurers, fishermen, and traders from the islands south and east of the China Sea, and others from the north and east of Formosa, with perhaps a few from the mainland, entered the island at intervals, and formed what is now called the aboriginal race, and that race is Malayan" (1895: 98).

Anthropologist Janet Montgomery McGovern, a student of R.R. Marett, spent the years 1916 to 1918 in Formosa.<sup>3</sup> She argued for "an Indonesian origin of the aborigines of Formosa" in similar terms. She mentions Amis legends and rituals commemorating the landing of ancestors in boats "from the south" (1922: 132). McGovern goes on to suggest that, because of centuries of isolation from their original stock and loss of seafaring skills, the Formosan aborigines are a "decadent" people. She further predicts, as did Mackay, that:

It seems probable [that] under the dominance of the Japanese, the aborigines of Formosa will in a few decades, or, at the longest, in a century or two, cease to exist as a people. Unless, indeed, their dream of being rescued from the rule of both Chinese and Japanese by "White Saviours from the West" ever comes true. (1922: 198)

The Japanese saw themselves as saviors of these same aborigines, whom they fenced off from the Chinese areas of Taiwan, restricting all communication between the "savage areas" and the rest of Taiwan. Japanese anthropologists continued the southern origin tradition. Mabuchi Toichi did his life's work in Taiwan and is buried there. Mabuchi (1974: 66, 90) argued that waves of peoples migrated from Southeast Asia and that "aboriginal Formosa seems to represent an earlier, if not the earliest, phase of Malaysian cultures" (1974: 66). He recounts an Amis origin myth that says their ancestors came from Lan-yu, a small island southeast of Taiwan.

Miyamoto Nobuto also spent most of his working life in Taiwan. Miyamoto suggests that, while archaeological evidence is not yet conclusive as to the relationship between ancient culture sites and contemporary Taiwan aborigines, it seems likely that the ancestors of Taiwan's aboriginal people immigrated to Taiwan in the stone age (1985: 40).

Miyamoto also uses Ketagalan and Amis migration voyage myths to support the southern origin theory and notes that the Kavelan tribe of Ilan had similar accounts (1985: 74-75, 212). He recounts the origins of the Yami from the Batanes Islands north of Luzon and the convenience of the chain of islands from Luzon to Taiwan for ancient voyagers. He concludes: "Because of this we can affirm that all the aboriginal people of Taiwan immigrated to Taiwan via the

aforesaid route. But if we wanted to propose which tribe immigrated at what time, we would have great difficulty." Like Mabuchi, Miyamoto had a strong emotional link with Taiwan; he wrote, "in the field of scholarship Taiwan is my birthplace" and to be among aboriginal people "is like returning to my own hometown" (1985: 222).

There are some common points of discourse between the Japanese and the Westerners, which I call the politics of the southern origin theory:<sup>4</sup>

- Taiwan as an isolated island, at the margins, an end of the line
- Aboriginal myths of origin as important evidence
- Successive waves of immigration, mainly from the south
- Aboriginal people as ancient remnants (even a doomed race)
- A discontinuity of present with ancient past
- The Asian (Chinese) mainland as generally irrelevant
- A conceptual and historical separation between China and Taiwan
- Aboriginal people as non-Chinese needing help from non-Chinese against the Chinese invaders
- Taiwan as home.

The southern origin theory thus arose and was promoted in situations in which an ethnic and political border was drawn between Taiwan and China, and more specifically between Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples as non-Chinese against the Chinese of Taiwan. This was clearly congenial for the Japanese colonial era, and for missionary or anthropologist foreigners who see themselves as friends of the oppressed.

I must confess that I have also supported the southern theory, so fitting neatly into this pro-Taiwan/help the aboriginals foreigners box! In my master's thesis in 1995 I wrote:

The non-Chinese indigenous people of Taiwan are over 20 different Austronesian peoples who came to Taiwan in several migrations, most from the Philippines, over the past six thousand years. The archaeology, linguistics and anthropology of Taiwan Aboriginal peoples is voluminous in Chinese and Japanese, and it is not within the scope of this thesis to review this literature except to note how the very issue of origins has long been a part of the hegemonic discourse on Aboriginal people in Taiwan.

For aboriginal people in Taiwan, establishing the boundary between themselves and the Chinese was a constant issue in the period up to the early 1990s. ROC nationalist "history" insisted that they were "a branch of the Chinese nation." It is in this context that an article in the short-lived *Tai-yuan-jen* (Taiwan Indigenous People Alliance) published by Wu Ming-yi, an Amis historian and Presbyterian minister, presents the southern origin theory as fact (1988: 30).<sup>5</sup> The writer recounts the cultural similarities with local people encountered by Amis

soldiers serving the Japanese in Southeast Asia, reports another Amis legend of origin about a couple blown to Taiwan from the south by a great flood, who "became the ancestors of the Taiwanese." Linking ancestors of the Amis to the Pei-nan culture stone coffin sites of east coast T'ai-tung, the article concludes that the direct ancestors of his Amis people were in Taiwan at least forty-five hundred years ago.

Drawing a line between Taiwan's prehistory and China is also a counterargument to Chinese claims that "Taiwan has been a part of China since ancient times." It should not be surprising, then, that Shih Ming, the doyen of Taiwan independence, who spent most of his life in exile in Japan, argued strongly in favor of the southern origin theory. In his *Four-Hundred-Year History of the Taiwanese People* Shih Ming pours contempt on theories of northern origin:

To simply rely on [cultural similarities] is not enough to conclude that Taiwan aborigines without exception migrated from mainland China. If we look at the background of all these arguments, rather than saying they are seeking truth we should say that they are imitating scholarship in the mythogenesis of a political agenda. They arbitrarily seek to make out that from prehistoric times Taiwan has had a continuing and close relationship with mainland China. This kind of false scholarship, which tends to political advocacy is not worth discussing, and should be strongly refuted. (1980: 15)

We should note that Shih Ming's belief in southern origin also arises from his own "scholarship that tends to political advocacy," and this is exactly what makes it worth discussing here.

### Theories of Northern Origin

In 1996 *People's Daily* (overseas ed., April 19, 1996, p. 5) carried a photo of and brief article on "A dugout canoe that drifted from Taiwan" and was on exhibit in the "Fukien and Taiwan Prehistoric Cultural Links" exhibit hall in the Tuang-shan Museum. The article suggests that "this canoe is probably several decades old, proving that Taiwan still has dugout canoes." In the text we also find the assertion:

Anthropological data proves that the ancestors of the *Kao-shan-tzu* [high mountain people] in early times used dugout canoes as their maritime means of transport, coming from the continent [*ta-lu*] to Taiwan. The Ami people of eastern Taiwan still preserve ancient dugout canoes, and have legends that their ancestors came in this dugout canoe from the south of the continent.

While this popular report cannot represent serious Chinese scholarship, it does demonstrate in the extreme Terrell's "reduced amount of information believed to capture the essence of the situation" (1986: 9). The only dugout canoes

in Taiwan are for tourist purposes on Sun Moon Lake; the Amis use bamboo rafts, and the Amis origin legend says they came from the south, or from Lan-yu. The dugout in question, if we accept the story, floated from the southeast toward China. None of this really matters since the story supports two a priori truths constant in Chinese minorities discourse, which, in circular form, validate this "evidence." The two truths are the continuing primitive nature of the "*Kao-shan-tzu*," as ethnographic fossils, and their Chinese origin.

In 1929 Lin Hui-hsiang, an anthropologist at Amoy University, visited Taiwan and wrote a monograph for the *Academia Sinica*.<sup>6</sup> *The Primitive Aborigines of Formosa* is important as the first Chinese research on Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples. Lin's conclusions on their origins concur with Japanese views of his day—the primitive nature of the aborigines, and their southern origin:

Taiwan's savage tribes [*fan-tzu*] migrated to the island in the stone age from the south seas [*Nan-yang*]. Having had very little contact with outside cultures until recent times they have preserved many original features, so truly are excellent representatives of primitive peoples [*wei-k'ai min-tzu*]. By studying these tribes we can hope to learn much about the situation of primitive peoples. (1930: Introduction)

The savages belong to the Malay or brown race . . . and the legends of the savages also talk about coming from the south, which confirms this. Most Japanese scholars hold this view, and from my own observations I firmly believe this is correct. . . . The savage tribes definitely have migrated from the south seas, but their time of arrival must have been very early, because the whole island has stone age sites, both on the plains and in the mountains. Among the stone tools there is one kind of stone adze very similar to those discovered in Shensi, which might prove that the savage tribes who did not enter Taiwan have some relationship with the Han people of the continent. (1930: 1, 4)

Lin's acceptance of the southern origin theory seems unremarkable considering his training in the Philippines, and the fact that he based his conclusion mainly on Japanese materials. It is significant, however, that he clearly expresses one of the two basic assumptions of later Chinese discourse—the primitive nature of the "savage tribes" of Formosa. While he notes similarity between Taiwan and Shensi adzes, he places this information within his southern origin model. This again seems natural given the hegemony of this theory in 1929, but is significant in that he is working from his data and not from a "Chinese" nationalist program. Later Chinese writers take such similarity as immediate and unproblematic "proof" of the Chinese origins of Taiwan's peoples.

Lin's monograph also exhibits a significant feature that becomes standard in Chinese discussion of Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples. In an appendix he reviews the classic Chinese texts that appear to relate to Taiwan (presumably the referent of "Yi-chou" and "Liu-ch'iu"). Lin shows that he is more of a scholar than later

Chinese authors because he does not immediately draw a direct line to the present and conclude that this proves that Taiwan has been linked to China since ancient times. But this also relates Lin neatly to the politics of theories of origins—in 1929 China was not at war with Japan, and Taiwan was not considered a lost province of China. The ancient link was an interesting possibility raised in these texts, not a dogma to be affirmed.

By 1936 research into national minorities was a major theme of Chinese anthropology, and Lin wrote *Chinese Ethnohistory* (Chung-kuo min-tzu-shih). In Chapter 6, in his discussion of “which modern people are the Pai Yueh,” he reviews a number of different possibilities (Lin 1936: 115ff). Among them are the possibility that their descendants are found in the southern Min people, who have many physical features different from those of northern Chinese (*Chung-yuan jen*). He then makes a new and interesting suggestion:

So is it possible that there is a relationship between the Pai Yueh and the Malay race? While the Malay race must have moved south from the continent in early times, is it possible that some stayed? Today in Taiwan the savage tribes still retain the custom of tattooing, and belong to the Malay race. Their physical appearance has many similarities to modern Min-Yueh people, so might they be related to the ancient Yueh peoples? . . . Today in riverine estuaries of Fukien and Kwangtung are another Yueh people, the Tanka (“boatpeople”). Might some of them have left the Yueh tribes and set out on the seas? (1936: 117)

Lin presents this as conjecture, and is the first person to raise this possibility, now seriously pursued by linguist Robert Blust (Blust in Goodenough 1996: 117–137).

After liberation, Lin also published an article, “Research into Taiwan Stone-age Tools,” which stated that one could conclude that Neolithic man in Taiwan had close relations with the southeast continental coast, and floated across the sea from the southeast continental coast (*Kao-shan-tzu chien-shih* 1982: 11). Taiwan was by then the unliberated province across the sea from that coast. It is to Lin’s credit that he uses the geographic “southeast continental coast” rather than the nationalist “continental motherland,” for which the Chinese nationalist “history” is taken to task by a Taiwan aboriginal voice (see the end of this chapter).

In Lin Hui-hsiang we see the development of the northern origin model as new data and new ideas are entered into the selection process. But we also can see that this development parallels the change in the political position of Taiwan in relation to China—from an island of no special import in 1929, to the search for roots of the Chinese nation in a period of nationalism being constructed against Japan in 1936, to the position of Taiwan as the unrecovered province of China after 1949.

That Taiwan is a timeless part of China has now become the basis of all Chinese “history” of aboriginal origins, both in China and Taiwan. For example,

Lin’s research is presented in the 1982 *Kao-shan-tzu chien-shih* (Brief History of the Kao-shan Tribe), but the evolution of his ideas is elided, and a reader is given the impression that his 1930 monograph also argues the northern origin theory. How origins become teleology in PRC discussion of Taiwan aboriginal origins is neatly illustrated in the chapter headings of this 1982 work. Chapter 3 is “The Origin of the Kao-shan-tzu,” while Chapter 8 is “The Kao-shan-tzu will ultimately return to the bosom of the motherland.” A timeline at the end of the book also confirms the essential teleology of Chinese “history” of Taiwan (1982: 131). It begins in A.D. 230: “Sun Ch-uan of Wu sends Wei Wen and Chu-ko Cjoj with 10,000 people to Taiwan, and brings back several thousand Kao-shan-tzu.” It ends in 1945 with “China recovers its own territory, Taiwan.”

While we may see through the transparency of Chinese “history” of aboriginal origins, this is not the same as rejecting the northern origin theory as history. There is by now an accumulation of evidence to support arguments of “clearly defined Neolithic inputs from Fukien, and isolation beginning in post-Neolithic times,” as archaeologist Richard Pearson says (in Chang et al. 1989: 111–136). Pearson also notes the many differences along with similarities in the evidence, which “suggest strong ethnic differentiation.” He concludes cautiously that while “in general there does seem to be some continuing confirmation that Austronesian speakers did live in the Fukien area . . . the linguistic picture remains confused.”

There is, however, no confusion whatsoever in the chapter on “*Kao-shan-tzu*” in *Chung-hua min-tzu* (Tian 1991). It begins by noting that “in ancient times Taiwan was (geologically) linked to the continental motherland [*tzu-kuo ta-lu*],” thus transforming geology into teleology. The first section of the chapter also proclaims: “Taiwan is an indivisible part of the territory of the motherland, the Kao-shan-tzu are a member of the great family of the Chinese nation [*Chung-hua min-tzu*].”

It then affirms that the 30,000-year-old “Tso Chen man” site near Tainan “belongs to a branch of Peking man, and they had paternal cousin links” (1991: 654). Contemporary Kao-shan-tzu are a branch of the ancient Yueh peoples, as proved by a long list of cultural similarities. This amazing linking of pre-sapiens Peking man of more than three hundred thousand years ago with a homo sapiens of thirty thousand years ago is a feat of genealogy exceeding even biblical begats, but is true in the same sense as sacred books are—revelations of higher truths.

Chinese anthropologists on Taiwan have also tended to support the northern origin theory.<sup>7</sup> One Taiwanese anthropologist, Chen Chao-ju, characterizes them:

After these strongly nationalistic anthropologists came to Taiwan, their emphasis on “origins” [*yuan-liu*] did not weaken . . . their research interests in relation to *Kao-shan-tzu* fieldwork came out of the same mold as their ethnology on the mainland. Naturally their goal was hoping to demonstrate the genealogical and cultural relations of the *Kao-shan-tzu* with the Chinese nation [*Chung-hua min-tzu*]. . . . Such as Ling Shun-sheng, who, after coming to Taiwan, continued to advocate his so-called Circum-Pacific Cultural Contact hypothesis.

From the mainland period, when their efforts were to attach minorities to the Chinese nation, to Taiwan, where they worked at demonstrating the connections between *Kao-shan-tzu* and Chinese minorities, we can draw a sort of line of ethnic evolution:

Taiwan *Kao-shan-tzu* →

Chinese minorities →

Chinese orthodox traditions →

Han chauvinism. (Chen 1994: 27–36)

As Chinese, they also use historical records as evidence. A good example of this is archaeologist Huang Shih-chang (in Chang et al. 1989: 59–97):

The prehistoric archaeological record of Taiwan is marked by a seeming discontinuity between what may be termed an earlier stage of widespread cultural homogeneity, and a later stage of increasing heterogeneity through time . . . and that settlers came to Taiwan from a number of different points of origin. The archaeological record reveals the fact that these origins were from different parts of the greater southeastern coastal mainland. Historical records tell us that in ancient times this region was inhabited by the so-called “Pai Yueh” peoples.

Huang then uses references from *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Huai-nan tzu*, *Han shu*, and *Shih chi* to construct this history:

Following Chin Shi-huang’s unification of China he subsequently launched a military campaign to subjugate the Nan Yueh peoples in the south. During the reign of Han Wu Ti, a military campaign was again launched to attack the various Yueh peoples. Such internal and external military strife . . . created the conditions under which the Pai Yueh peoples may have been compelled to undertake large scale migrations. . . . Not only were the Pai Yueh Indonesian speaking peoples, I also believe this explains the origins of the native inhabitants of Taiwan. In fact, Ling (Shu-sheng) also stated: “We may now say with a certainty that as early as the pre-Christian era, the Yueh peoples migrated from the mainland to Taiwan.”

On the other hand, in fieldwork, Taiwan anthropologists do not let “history” overdetermine their conclusions. The Taiwanese-born, but Shanghai-educated Chen Chi-lu presents an analysis of Paiwan glass beads and concludes that the “migratory date of the Paiwan into Formosa cannot be prior to the birth of Christ [during which chemically similar glass beads were prominent in Southeast Asia]. I do not consider China to be the source of Paiwan glass beads, because . . . other culture traits of the Paiwan also show close southern affinity” (1968: 366). Nonetheless, Chen follows that monograph with another supporting Ling’s circum-Pacific cultural contact hypothesis, quoting Li Chi that “the source of the major art tradition of the whole Pacific basin is most probably to be found in the lost art of wood carving of China’s past” (1968: 391).

The idea of Chinese origins has sometimes entered into aboriginal self-construction. An article in *Yuan-chu-min*, the paper of the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (see below), reported according to Kavalan’s own legend, their ancestors drifted to Tamsui from Shanghai. However, before 1992 aboriginal elite opinion supported southern origins. The Chinese hegemonic project of making Taiwan aborigines part of the Chinese nation was incompatible with the developing counterhegemonic aboriginal project of affirming their distinct identity and political rights as indigenous people.

The politics of the northern origin theory, as developed through Chinese anthropologists, can be summed up as follows:

- China at the center, and a place of origin for cultures across the Pacific
- Taiwan as linked to the motherland from prehistoric times
- Chinese historiography as important evidence
- Migration from China bringing diversity
- Continuity of Taiwan’s Austronesian past with the Chinese present
- Taiwan aborigines as part of the story of the expansion of the Chinese nation and destined to be reunited with it.
- Telescoping of time and space into a nationalist teleology.

The northern origin theory serves the needs of Chinese nationalist “history.” More particularly, the theory as promoted in the People’s Republic of China explicitly serves the project of reuniting Taiwan with China. Mainland Chinese research interest in Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples continues to grow as avenues are sought to use aboriginal concerns to promote reunification. Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples attend conferences and cultural festivals in China, and examine Chinese minorities policy as a way of critiquing the policies of the government on Taiwan. But most would agree with aboriginal legislator Lin T’ian-sheng, who in 1987 proclaimed in the Legislative Yuan that aboriginal people are the only true “Taiwanese.” And this brings us to the third theory of Taiwan aboriginal origins.

### Taiwan as Austronesian Homeland

In 1963 Isidore Dyen proposed that Formosa might be the place from which the Austronesian languages originated (in Chang 1963). He proposed that the place of origin of the Austronesian languages should be the place where the greatest number of language families is concentrated. With more than twenty languages in an area the size of Vancouver Island that constitute three of the oldest branches of the Indonesian group, Taiwan is logically the place to look for the origin of this language family. Dyen’s proposal did not attract attention in Taiwan beyond linguists<sup>8</sup> until Peter Bellwood published “The Austronesian Dispersal and the Origin of Languages” in *Scientific American* in 1991.<sup>9</sup> Within a year, this theory was being advocated in aboriginal circles in Taiwan.

Bellwood's map in *Scientific American* has been reproduced in several aboriginal publications, and in a book on Taiwan prehistory published by the East Coast Scenic Area Administration. The map has become almost canonical in Taiwan.

This Dyen/Blust/Bellwood theory is essentially a refinement of the northern origin theory, positing an early neolithic immigration from southeastern China, and then independent development in Taiwan:

one must consider very seriously the possibility that the expansion of the Austro-Tai language family began among Neolithic coastal rice-cultivating communities in south China. . . . Moving forward in time from Austro-Tai to its daughter, Austronesian, Robert Blust . . . favors a geographic expansion that began in Taiwan (the location of the oldest Austronesian languages, including Proto-Austronesian), then encompassed the Philippines, Borneo, and Sulawesi. (Bellwood 1991: 91)

How is it that a modified northern origin theory, proposed in the early 1980s, suddenly became canonical in Taiwan aboriginal discourse in 1991? A few landmarks of Taiwan's recent past can help explain this.

In December 1984 aboriginal activists organized the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA, Yuan ch'uan hui). This marks the organizational beginning of the Taiwan Aboriginal People's political movement. The next year, the Government Information Office refused to let the ATA register its publication *Yuan-chu-min* (the Aborigine), because it had an "inappropriate title." These people were *shan pao* (mountain compatriots), *shan-ti-jen* (mountain people), "*Kao-shan-tzu*" or even "*Taiwan t'u-chu min-tzu*" (Formosan aborigines),<sup>10</sup> but not "Yuan-chu-min" (aboriginal people).

But "Yuan-chu-min" was here to stay, and soon became the center of contested discourses of origins. In a 1992 issue of *Lieh-jen Wen-hua* (which carried the Bellwood map), Tayal activist Walis Yugan reviewed the struggle over naming, which was at its height as he wrote:

The first concern of the government is that this term "aboriginal people" will be used to oppose Chinese [Hua jen] immigrants and a Chinese government, and develop a trend to separatism. Secondly, it worried that the term "aboriginal" will involve xenophobia, using this name to act against Chinese immigrants, injuring the status and rights of the Chinese immigrants. Third, a foreboding that the term "aboriginal" already implies some political and empirical rights. (*Lieh-jen Wen-hua*, 18 [June 27, 1992]: 33)

While the first two fears were exaggerated, the third certainly was not. In 1988 the first national mobilization of aboriginal people, the Return Our Land movement, issued a statement beginning:

The Aboriginal People of Taiwan ("Mountain People") are the first peoples to have lived on this island of Taiwan. Because of this, our right to the land is

absolute and a priori. Those lands which have been robbed by violence or deceit by the later occupying Han Chinese, or taken by successive governments by legal force, should by right be returned to us.

In the same year the first Taiwan aboriginal delegate took part in the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations meeting in Geneva. He fought off an attempt by the PRC to make him change his title from "Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines" to "Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines, Province of China" and condemned the human rights abuses of the ROC against aboriginal people, including not letting them call themselves "aboriginal."

It was time to bring out the anthropologists. A chorus of senior anthropologists, mostly of Chinese rather than Taiwanese origin, argued that using *Yuan-chu-min* in place of *shan-ti-jen/shan-pao* was highly inaccurate. They advocated the term *hsien-chu-min* (first residents) or *tsao-chu-min* (early residents), to remove implications of "ab origio" and emphasize that the Austronesian inhabitants of Taiwan were only first in order of time. The implication of this unsuccessful attempt to block use of the term *yuan-chu-min* was that no special claims of aboriginal rights can be made, since everyone was an immigrant. The anthropologists appealed to archaeological record that there had been other peoples in Taiwan since the Palaeolithic age, and to the Saisiat myth, commemorated in their biennial "Dwarf Sacrifice" ritual, that their ancestors had destroyed a race of small people. This putative Negrito race, the anthropologists argued, were the real "aboriginal" people of Taiwan.

By mid-1991 the Return Our Land movement had evolved into an "Aboriginal Constitutional Movement" demanding use of the term "Taiwan Yuan-chu-min" and constitutional guarantees of aboriginal rights as proposed by the UN Working Group. All of Taiwan was now in the post-martial law, Lee Teng-hui era of democracy and political transformation. The law penalizing advocacy of Taiwan independence had been repealed. Taiwanese nationalism was in full flower, driving the political transformation.

In this heady time the July 1991 *Scientific American* with Bellwood's article and map arrived in Taiwan. Here, like a voice from the sky, was scientific proof that the Austronesian peoples of Taiwan were indisputably "aboriginal." Not only were they no longer immigrants, but

Over the past five thousand years, Taiwan aboriginal people have established ten or twenty nations, in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. Something we can be proud of before the whole world! (*Lieh-jen wen-hua* 18: 62)

Clearly aboriginal nationalists are equally capable of writing "history" as their Chinese interlocutors.

The best representative of the aboriginal Taiwan origin theory is a paper by Amis sociologist Tsai Chung-han, presented at a symposium in Peking in Octo-



ber 1993. Tsai is an Amis from T'ai-tung on the east coast of Taiwan, with a Ph.D. in sociology from Tokyo University. In 1986 he became a member of the legislature, symbolizing the new, democratic aboriginal face of the Kuomintang. In 1988 Tsai was one of the signers of the Return Our Land Common Statement cited above.

He begins his paper by reminding his Chinese listeners that, even if one argues that ancestors of Taiwan aboriginal people came from the continent, to which Taiwan was once linked in the ice age, "there was no Chinese mainland ten thousand years ago, only the Asian continent. So the correct statement is that Taiwan aboriginal people migrated from the southern part of the Asian continent" (Tsai 1993: 2).<sup>11</sup>

After reviewing the archaeological and linguistic evidence, Tsai critiques in detail each of the other two theories, ending with a strong attack on the "southern Yueh" hypothesis. His punch line is quite good:

If the proto-Austronesian peoples came from mainland China, how is it that today in China there is not a single Austronesian people? Ethnic migration is essentially an expansion, and not a matter of the entire ethnic group departing from its ancestral territory. In the whole world there is no example of any such ethnic migration. (1993: 8)

He then presents the Dyen/Blust/Bellwood hypothesis, critiques traditional Chinese racist attitudes and terms toward other ethnic groups, and argues for the use of the term "Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples" (*yuan-chu min-tzu*), as opposed to "people" (*yuan-chu-min*).<sup>12</sup>

Finally he asserts that the Pei-nan megalithic culture is the direct ancestor of his own southern Amis clans and predicts that future archaeological discoveries will "continue to fill in the blanks of Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples' history and prove that the Ch'ang-pin Cave Culture [the Palaeolithic culture dated from 15,000 to 8,000 years ago, near Tsai's hometown] is also a cultural site of Taiwan Aboriginal Peoples" (1993: 16).

His paper appends the Bellwood map, and a glance at it will show why this theory is so popular in Taiwan. There, at the top of a great fan of migration, is Taiwan, labeled "number 1." Between China and Taiwan is a thick, impervious line delineating the Austronesian world from China.

The Taiwan origin theory, as seen through Tsai's article, can be compared to the southern and northern theories as follows:

- Taiwan at the center and a place of origins
- Taiwan's connection with China only in remote past
- A continuous thread of Taiwan aboriginal history
- Taiwan as homeland of the Austronesian diversity and expansion
- Aboriginal people as contributors to world culture

- Autochthonous origins from the Palaeolithic age
- Argument based on linguistics and archaeology with no use of Aboriginal myth or Chinese historiography.

There are several noteworthy points in this discourse. First, although it is "aboriginal," it is not "nativist" in that does not appeal to native knowledge—traditions or myths. Second, it has appropriated the theory of northern origin and turned it into an argument against that theory. But even more significant for the politics of aboriginal origins is that it is not solely an aboriginal discourse but a Taiwanese nationalist discourse. It appeared in a period when strong Taiwanese nationalism was forming ideas about a new, multicultural Taiwanese ethnic identity, which Democratic Progressive Party chair Hsu Hsin-liang termed a new people (*hsin-sheng min-tzu*). It affirms that Taiwan is a place where creative, new things happen, that Taiwan has only remote links with China, that Taiwan is "number 1," and that aboriginal identity is the heart of Taiwanese identity. Which leads us to the latest theory.

### Aboriginal Genes Defining Taiwanese Identity

In February 1997 a message in an e-mail discussion group called the "Taiwan Future Discussion Group" made a startling assertion:

The majority of Taiwanese are descendents of Austronesians (60%) and only a minor proportion of Taiwanese are the descendants of immigrants from mainland China, no matter [whether] they are speaking Holo, Hakka, Chinese, or English today. This is also supported by the recent biological research findings indicating that the blood DNA profiles of most Taiwanese are different from [those] of Chinese.

The assertion was made by a Taiwanese scientist in the context of an appeal for solidarity of Taiwanese with the aboriginal Yami people (now reclaiming their own name, Tau) on the island of Lan-yu (which they call Pongso no Tau) who "are our brothers in blood." This assertion sparked a vigorous debate and eventually a clarification by the researcher, whose work on the presence of blood immunotypes had led him to speculate that one factor could perhaps be present in 60 percent of the population of Taiwan, as most Taiwanese do have aboriginal ancestors. The man who drew a theory of origins from this was not deterred and continued to insist that genes as well as history are equally important in the makeup of a nation. The discovery of the English "Cheddar man" genetic link more than eight thousand years old only strengthened his conviction!<sup>13</sup>

In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson discusses how nineteenth-century postrevolutionary nationalism involves the revival of the past and a search for an aboriginal essence. He called this "reading nationalism genealogically." What

could be less surprising than to hear that Taiwanese nationalism has also begun to seize upon aboriginal genealogy, based on the Taiwan origin theory, to establish an aboriginal essence for Taiwanese identity? The Internet discussant argues that "true respect to Taiwan history is the most solid basis of Taiwan nationalism, which justifies a republic to build, Taiwan."

Remembering the 1936 conjectures of Lin Hui-hsiang, and Blust's recent revival of the Austric hypothesis (in Goodenough 1996: 117–137), which suggest that both the Austronesians and the southern Min-speaking Chinese of Fukien and Taiwanese "Hoklo" are all descendants of the southern Yueh peoples, we can predict further evolution in Taiwanese nationalist "history." A new "history" might affirm a primordial "Taiwanese" identity encompassing both the Hoklo and the aborigines, and neatly exclude any "Chinese" or "Han" claims to Taiwan based on origins.

New myths arise to create new social charters, and the present continually writes new "history" to serve future desires. In April 1994 Lee Teng-hui made a speech at the first "Aboriginal Cultural Conference." In it he made the first use of the word "*Yuan-chu-min*" in official government speech, presaging the adoption of that term into the ROC Constitution a few months later. In his speech Lee said, "Aboriginal people in Taiwan must definitely not place themselves outside the whole society of Taiwan. People must have self-confidence and be far sighted, and no matter what, integrate into the larger whole of society bringing out the special characteristics of aboriginal people as part of the mainstream" (*World Journal*, Toronto, April 11, 1994, p. A15).

Depending on which theory of aboriginal origins this Japanese-educated Taiwanese-Hakka president of the Republic of China subscribes to, the implications of this exhortation are strikingly different. The politics of Taiwan aboriginal origins are ultimately the politics of Taiwan's future.

## Notes

1. In fact it is this debate about which Terrell is writing in *Prehistory in the Pacific Islands*.
2. Most of these are discussed in the special Taiwan issue of *Asian Perspectives* 7 (1963), edited by Chang Kwang-chih. What Chang and his colleagues make of this pattern is discussed in this paper in the section on "theories of Chinese origin."
3. McGovern's book is a terrible hodgepodge of inaccuracies and hearsay, and if it was not an embarrassment to Marrett it certainly is to anthropologists today. It is however still in circulation, sold in Taiwan in reprint form.
4. Not all Japanese anthropologists subscribed to the southern origin theory. Tadeo Kano (cited in Chang 1963: 199) concluded that "the prehistoric cultures of Taiwan, on the whole, are related to the mainland cultures, but closer examinations reveal that the west coast exhibits heavy Southern Chinese colours, whereas the eastern coast is connected with southern Indochina (and) iron age cultures of the Philippines."
5. And as a Taiwan Presbyterian, Wu is at once heir to George Leslie Mackay and shares in the Taiwanese nationalist sentiments of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

6. Lin began his study of anthropology at the University of the Philippines, returning to China with his M.A. in 1928.

7. Here I mean anthropologists born in China who came to Taiwan with the Republic of China. By "Taiwanese" I mean born in Taiwan, but not aboriginal. Chen's scathing attack is of course also political. Historical debate in Taiwan is sharply divided along lines of ethnic politics.

8. His article in *Asian Perspectives* (Chang 1963: 261–271) shows why. It is fairly technical linguistics, but also he mentions this as only one possible thesis and then spends most of the space trying to disprove the case, by exploring the idea that in fact all the aboriginal languages of Taiwan constitute a single family, which would mean that Taiwan does not fit his criteria for a linguistic homeland.

9. Bellwood first made this proposal in 1983. That version of his map was printed in a paper by K.C. Chang, "Taiwan Archaeology in Pacific Perspective" (in Chang et al. 1989: 93), where Chang called it a "reasonable hypothesis of migratory and diffusion routes." Chang remains true to the northern origin theory, however, emphasizing that "prehistoric Taiwan is a part of prehistoric Southeast China" (ibid.: 89).

10. While *t'u-chu min-tz'u* is usually translated in Taiwan academic publications as "Formosan aborigines," the Chinese term has a very different implication from *yuan-chu-min*, also translated as "aboriginal people or indigenous people." *T'u-chu*, literally "land adhering," is closer in sense to the older English anthropological usage "native" or "tribal," and was never used by Taiwan aboriginal peoples as a self-ascription, as was *shan-ti-jen*.

11. This is the language that was used by Lin Hui-hsiang, but not by his successors.

12. This is also the politics of aboriginality—as "peoples" they are a collectivity that theoretically enjoys the right of self-determination in UN discourse.

13. The positivist biologist commented, "British due respect to the scientific truth is sharply in contrast to ours . . . it may be fair to say that Taiwanese . . . are not used to respect to scientific truth yet."

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## Up the Mountains and Out to the Sea

### The Expansion of the Fukienese in the Late Ming Period

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*Eduard B. Vermeer*



**A view of the Fujianese countryside.** (Photo by M. Rubinstein)