

NO MORE DANCING FOR GODS: A CASE STUDY OF "ILISIN"  
(HARVEST FESTIVAL) AND ETHNIC RELATIONSHIPS IN  
TAIWAN

by

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I examine popular cultural representations of Ilisin, a traditional Indigenous festival in Taiwan, in the context of ethnic and racial power relations and identity politics in the country after 1995, the year of emergence of the Council of Indigenous People. In support of this research, I collected 417 articles related to Ilisin from three newspapers and three magazines in the period 1995 to present. I also conducted an internet "ethnography" by visiting three BBS sites and collecting 38 posted comments about Ilisin.

The thesis draws on poststructuralist theoretical frameworks and tourism research about power and ethnicity, as well as research on the social, historical and political context of Taiwan. Various social definitions of "others" were identified in the media contents and shared cultural meanings of Ilisin constructed in internet conversations. These distinctions were not limited to Han (Chinese) versus Indigenous. What and who constitutes "us" versus "them" was found to be a contingent issue that related to social and cultural identities and contexts. The comments on the Internet demonstrated a broad range of interpretations of Ilisin and its media portrayals.

In the end, this study challenges the apparent comprehensiveness of the category of "Chinese". Multiculturalism is often critiqued for constructing a utopian rhetoric where the "minority" can have their own cultures/ghettos under the state, while, at the same time, the dominant social groups absolve themselves of responsibilities for prior discrimination. However, multiculturalism overlooks cultural and ethnic diversity in the "dominant" and inevitably simplifies the concept of antagonism. This thesis demonstrates a complex set of relationships other than the binary of "dominant" and minorities/Indigenous in the context of "multiculturalism".

The thesis and its analyses in many respects reflect my experience and point of view and are intended to provoke a dialogue on these issues. Critical, interpretive research is not intended to bring closure, but to open up dialogue, and I suggest future studies to apply various ethnographic methods to gain a deeper understanding about how people interpret and embody difference. Moreover, I suggest we investigate other 'ethnic', 'Chinese', 'Taiwanese' events to explore power relations from various angles and to (re)discuss and de/re/construct meanings of these events, which I hope, in the end, will contribute to the ethnic/racial debates in Taiwan.

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## **Dedication**

*In memory of Liao PP.*

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

The concept of “ethnicity” recently has been critiqued as a term of political correctness that is used to avoid the notorious term “race”. Nevertheless the boundaries between the biologically arbitrary term, “race”, and the culturally sensitive term, “ethnicity” have blurred (Goldberg, 1994; Gunew, 2004) to the point that even ethnic differences have become seen as insurmountable and natural, and now serve as a “justification for racist, discriminatory conduct” (Chow, 2002a: 14).

In this thesis, I examine a “traditional” cultural and religious Indigenous ritual, Ilisin (harvest festival), in Taiwan and its meanings with a particular sensitivity to issues of race and ethnicity in the Taiwanese context. During the 1990s, as an outcry against ‘globalization’, there was a request for attention to localization in Taiwan. The questions that followed the request were ‘who are Taiwanese’, and ‘what is Taiwanese culture’. After four-hundred-years of Sinicization, ‘Chinese’ (if it has an obvious definition) seems to be the legitimate answer to both. Yet the unique position of Taiwan as both a settler society and a colony of China makes the identification more contested. In addition to the complex emotional links with the ‘motherland’ (China) there is also the relationship between Chinese settlers and Indigenous peoples which further problematizes national identities.

As the original ‘primitive’ inhabitants of the land, Indigenous people had been represented as the ‘barbarous others’ by the dominant Taiwanese, Chinese settlers and Japanese colonizers. As such, indigenous cultures and identities were seen as ‘requiring’ assimilation. Since the late 1980s, however, burgeoning social activities in Taiwan have challenged the colonial project. Following the abolition of the legal

bans of newspapers and political parties, the government of Taiwan openly recognized Indigenous peoples as the prime residents of the island in the constitution on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, rather than calling them the demonized name, 'mountain people'. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1995, the Council of Indigenous People (CIP) was set up at the central government level, the highest bureaucratic echelon in Taiwan, for all affairs concerning Indigenous people. Thereafter, 'Indigenous culture' has become seen as having rather lucrative potentialities in Taiwan. In official government matters, 'Indigenous culture' has meant 'multiculturalism and the integration of races/ethnics in Taiwan' (CIP website, 2005). For Indigenous people, it can be seen as recognition of their histories and existence, as well as a way to profit from their culture and make a living. For non-Indigenous people, it constitutes a broadened understanding of 'Taiwanese cultures', but also an exotic form of cultural entertainment. As a result of these relatively recent interests in indigenous cultures, several key questions arise, mainly what are the underlying ideologies of this 'en vogue Indigeneity' and whose interests are they serving?

This thesis focuses on the "Ilisin" which is an annual celebration ritual of the Amis tribe. Prior to colonial occupation, Ilisin represented a time for family gathering for Amis, similar as Chinese New Year for Han people, and was an expression of gratitude toward the gods and spirits. The introduction of Western religions, however, resulted in a conversion of faith and spiritual assimilation among many indigenous people. Due to the diminishment of religious traditions, the Festival has been secularized, or rather 'politicized', as an event that marks both indigenous identity and resistance to colonialism. The politically repositioned event has overtime attracted attention from investors and the public, and, as a result of market forces and foreign interests, Ilisin has also been represented and molded into an entertaining and

exotic tourist attraction by the Taiwanese government with the cooperation of the “tribes”.

Though commonly seen as a “traditional” cultural ritual, Ilisin, is not able to escape from the social order, and keep its purity. Instead, under modernity and capitalism in Taiwan, it is undergoing significant changes, both physically and symbolically. In other words, Ilisin is not only a fundamental event, but also “reflects the major conflicts that result from its integration into capitalism and modernization”(Garcia Canclini, 1993: 28). Therefore, the various representations of Indigenous people and/in Ilisin stand to reflect these distinctions. In other words, although, as a “traditional” event, it has been processed as the boundary between differences (for example, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people), it is never fixed. Ilisin has different positions when situated in different backgrounds and contexts. This complex gives Ilisin multi-dimensions, and puts Ilisin on the borderline of “us” and “them”, and Indigeneity and Chineseness/modernity. Hence, the shifting definitions of borderline constitute a “space in-between”, where, according to Bhabha (1994), power might emerge and be observed. As Chow (2002b) notes, boundaries that separate and essentialize people are not necessarily bad. It might be argued that they are indispensable, because, to some extent, they help to represent the exteriors of a group. So, what is more important is how these distinctions and images are limited to certain usages, and only certain groups of people are seen as legitimate to define and use them. In this vein, this study is interested in exploring how these different faces of Ilisin are used and become effective.

As mentioned, the emergence of the CIP in the end of 1995 is pivotal for Indigenous people in Taiwan. Accordingly, I chose data during 1996-2005 in order to investigate the racial/ethnic power relations under the “multicultural era”. To this end,

I examined how Ilisin is portrayed as a starting point to disclosing the power structures in Taiwan by applying textual analysis on selected media data. I retrieved 417 articles from 3 newspapers (*China Times*, *Liberty Times* and *Min Sheng Daily*) and 3 magazines (Ho Ha Ya Aboriginal Young, East Coast Review and Taiwan Indigenous Voice Bimonthly). Furthermore, as Gunew (2004) argues, “authenticity” is a performance judged by audiences. In order to investigate how people understand and interpret Ilisin, inspired by the emergence of internet studies and the popularity of the Bulletin Board System (BBS) in Taiwan, I conducted an “Internet ethnography”. I “lurked” on the discussion boards for travel and Indigenous issues on 3 BBS sites (PTT, NTUCC and Oceanic Home), and retrieved 38 posted comments related to Ilisin.

In this thesis, in order to avoid an arbitrary conclusion, I kept in mind that, as a researcher, my (social) position potentially influences my point of view and the results of my research. Through disclosing the ‘I’ in my research, the web of power relations in the research process and to some extent in society can also be revealed (Humberstone, 1997). Ideally, this study will open an arena for ‘critical dialogue’ (hooks, 1990: 133), which will write more and further discussions and debates on the meanings of difference and identity politics in Taiwan.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

In order to understand ethnic/racial power relations and identity politics in Taiwan, this thesis explores media representations of Ilisin and social comments about the event and related issues. Accordingly, three research questions were developed to help guide the research:

1. How are the media representations of Ilisin conveyed, received and used?

2. Who benefits from particular representations (or definitions) of Ilisin?
3. How is the notion of hybridity acknowledged and converted?

### **1.3 The Organization of This Thesis**

This thesis contained seven chapters. In Chapter One, I introduced the background information of Ilisin, and explained how and why a “traditional” Indigenous ritual was under examination to explore power. In the end, the research three research questions, which were developed to help guide the research. In Chapter two, various theories that provided perspectives to explore key ideas and issues were reviewed. Poststructuralist understandings of “difference” and hybridity gave a foundation to articulate boundary and power; theories of embodiment and performativity helped understand comments of personal experiences; research on cultural performances demonstrated how power is intertwined when “tradition” cultures are adopted into other forms; and tourism research explored various power relationships in tourism to challenge the idea that considers tourists always have power over locals. In Chapter Three, research methodology was detailed. I asserted that this thesis is a project of cultural studies with a methodology of textual analysis and Internet studies. Following the concept of “encoding-decoding” (Hall, 1996), which provided a basis to see media texts as more than purely informational, I analyzed media texts to understand the ideologies that were encoded in the texts. Also, even though Internet ethnography is not flawless, I recognized its popularity among Taiwanese young generation and potential to employ non-intrusive observation (Wittel, 2000; Beaulieu, 2004).

In Chapter Four, the findings were displayed. I categorizing three main themes in the media: A Place of Our/Their Own, The Sale of “Natural/Indigenous” Character,

and One of “Ours”, and summarized the comments on the Internet. In Chapter Five, an overview of Taiwanese history was introduced to help understand the findings in historical, social, and political contexts. The media representations about Ilisin and “us”/“them” and narratives of the social commentary were examined to explore power relations. In Chapter Six, my reflexivity of my life experience on racial/ethnic relationship was disclosed, in order to understand the impact “I” had on the research, also to reveal potential power structure in my texts (Humberstone, 1997). Also, I identified barriers and difficulties I faced in this project. In Chapter Seven, I concluded the research by challenging the apparent comprehensiveness of the category of “Chinese” in many theories and the simplified concept of antagonism. Then, I made suggestions for future studies on related topics, racial/ethnic relationships in Taiwan.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter I review research with a focus related to my thesis. This work helped to guide the design of this thesis, which is intended to examine Ilisin, the meanings that its media representations might convey, and comments about the event by BBS users. Generally speaking, the literature I reviewed provided an opportunity to explore key ideas theories and issues. Firstly, I drew together various theories that explore the contested concept of difference, in order to understand how hybrid event/identity can be observed and recognized. Then, I discussed theories about how identities can be embodied, performed and subverted. In the end, I summarized discussions around cultures, tourism and power.

### 2.1 From Difference to Hybridity

How does identity relate to “difference”? As Goldberg (1994) explains “[i]dentity is generally conceived in this conceptual framework as a bond...that extends to [people] a common sense or space of unified *sameness*” (p.12, my emphasis). This identity can, commonly, be formed through excluding those who are outside of its scope as different. In other words, the existence of “others”, those who are different from “us”, is what makes the representation of “us” possible (Hall, 1990).

Poststructuralist theory (which may include deconstructionism, psychoanalysis, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and certain strands of feminism) provides a language to understand difference. It problematizes the presumed transparency between meaning and signification (“logocentrism” or “referentiality”), which rests upon a scheme of binary oppositions. Because of the belief that logocentrism is a product of historical and ideologically hegemonic forces, the general tendency of

works of poststructuralists is to trouble and suspend the fixed origins of “the real” (Chow, 2002a 1999, 1998; Gunew & Yeatman, 1993; Rutherford, 1990).

Beyond exploring linguistic and semiotic issues, poststructuralism has also examined broader social issues such as culture and identity. Because all knowledge has been identified as inherently situated in poststructuralist theories, identities are conceptualized as increasingly constructed and conditional. For example, in his groundbreaking essay, *Orientalism*, Edward Said (2003[1978]) shows how the Occident (the West) constructs a totalized Orient (Middle East), through knowledge, culture, and representation. He raises the question of self-representation by “the Orient”, and argues that this will empower subordinated groups by recognizing their subjectivities (Said, 2003 [1978]). Subaltern studies, postcolonialism and multiculturalism find their arguments based on the notion of differencing and displacing the internal scheme of logocentrism as well. By giving voice to “subalterns” or minorities, subaltern studies seeks to challenge existing hegemonies and to empower the subalterns. Postcolonialism, in a more global context, depicts the ways in which colonizers, mostly White Western, construct and impose their ideologies onto the colonized, and identify the distinctive position of colonized and the right to represent and speak for themselves. In short, “it refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome” (Hulme 1995: 120, cited in Loomba, 1998). In a slightly different context, multiculturalism refers to a national or geopolitical cohesiveness that recognizes heterogeneous elements, and is “invoked as a way of signaling divergence from a national monoculturalism often too glibly identified with the ‘West’ or ‘Europe’...” (Gunew, 2004: 16) (Chow, 1998a; Gunew, 2004; Loomba, 1998).

The above theories have, to some extent, successfully subverted the concept of

totalized Others that is constructed by hegemony, and reclaimed the subjectivity of Others and their capability to resist or self-represent. However, under an ostensibly liberal argument, this is a tricky situation. In the words of Spivak (1993, cited in Chow, 1998a), "There is a lot of name-calling on both sides of the West-and-the-rest debate in the United States...in effect the two sides legitimize each other. In Foucauldian language, one could call them an opposition within the same discursive formation"(p.10). Also, in her remarkable essay, 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988), Spivak gives this polarization a pessimistic conclusion: a subaltern can never speak, for if she does, she will be a subaltern no more. In other words, the conundrum lies in that, according to the "logic of wound" ("The subsequent paranoid tendency to cast doubt on everything Western") (Chow, 1998b: 6), the two (hegemonic and the oppressed) are the recto and verso of a sheet of paper, and, ironically, the logic encourages or reproduces insurmountability of differences that reinforce the binary and leaves the structure of power intact (Chow, 1998b; Gunew, 1993).

Bhabha (1994) asks, in exploring the "in-between space", "Must we always polarize in order to polemicize?" (p.19) He attempts to introduce the notion of translation to suggest that all "differences" are correlated to each other, and there is no "originary" fully unto itself:

...[T]ranslation is...a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense - imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it *can* be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the 'original' is never finished or complete itself. The 'originary' is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalised prior moment of being meaning- an essence (Bhabha, 1990: 210).

Then the notion of space-in-between emerges from the perception of translation.

Bhabha (1994) explains, “the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is *unequal* but its articulation may be *equivocal*” (p.212). In this sense, if there is no essential originary, there is no incommensurable difference, and the process of translation creates a transitional area where the meaning is contested, negotiated, redefined, and repositioned. Furthermore, he asserts the function of the space-in-between is to “make possible the emergence of an ‘interstitial’ agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism” (p.212). In other words, the space-in-between serves as a witness to the sliding and blurred boundary between “us” and “others”.

Hall (1996[1988]) also brings up the issue to re-theorize the concept of difference. He claims there is a radical meaning of “difference”, which refers to unbridgeable separation, and there is a positional, conditional and conjunctural meaning of “difference”. “Difference, therefore, persists- in and alongside continuity...Moreover, the boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference” (Hall, 1990: 227).

Although she does not talk about “hybridity” directly, Chow (2003) advocates Bhabha’s notion of third space as a way of critiquing colonialism (i.e., hegemony) via making the identification of native (i.e., oppressed or subaltern) absurd. She asserts that the openness of the space-in-between can challenge the essentialism that imputes a fundamental and absolute quality to certain groups of people according to their social class, ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality.

This openness... is to be differentiated from the kind of idealization of another *culture* in the form of a totality that is absolutely different (and indifferent) to our own...it is total sign...the entire function of which is to contest the limits of the conventional (arbitrary) sign itself (Chow, 2003: 342).

Nevertheless, the notion of hybridity and negotiation is far from unproblematic. It is often criticized as an apolitical bedside companion of late capitalism and modernity (hooks, 1992; van der Veer, 1997). “Hybridity and difference sell; the market remains intact” (Hutnyk, 1997: 122).

As far as colluding with capitalism is concerned, Garcia Canclini (1993, 1995, 2001), in his empirical studies, offers that the act in lieu of a pure form of “radical politics” is hopelessly utopian from the outset. Since capitalism is an irreversible fact, he attempts to demonstrate that capitalist modernization, instead of destroying “traditions”, can also appropriate and restructure them, and reorganize the meaning attached. In other words, capitalist modernization can be seen as another potential way to reform and reshape identification.

Furthermore, as “pro-hybridity” (Hutnyk, 1997: 122) intellectuals claim, the power of the term does not lie in yielding a new and directly effective political object or knowledge, but rather, through scrutiny and redefinition, it may be able to reveal a new space of translation, and a new possibility for political practice (Bhabha, 1994; Garcia Canclini, 1995; Gunew, 1993).

## **2.2 Body and Difference**

Atkinson and Wilson (2002) propose that contemporary theories of the body and embodiment have tended to see bodies as the “text of culture”-“how bodily shape, size, appearance, movement, and experience influence (and are influenced by) one’s interaction with others in society” (p.382). For example, Bourdieu (1984) explores how people embody the fixed differences (“social location”), which he calls “habitus”. He asserts that the body can be seen as a kind of “capital” which has its exchange value with other kinds of capitals, but the value is not universally equal among people;

mostly it depends on one's location in the social and societal matrix. He, then, concludes that people will treat their bodies differently, according to their social locations. Foucault (1977), on the other hand, illustrates how knowledge could be used to discipline peoples' bodies and bodily activities, and produce "docile bodies". Through deploying bio-power and its system of subjugation, people and their bodies are categorized and managed systematically (Chow, 2002a). Along similar lines, it has also been argued that people may reproduce or resist hegemonic codes about the body via their physical activities and embodiment-in particular, by challenging dominant ideologies about certain bodily categories, such as those implied in gender or racial/ethnic stereotypes of physique and ability.

In addition, there are theories that demonstrate how parodying or performing activities can also be a way to reveal the naturalized links between particular people and corresponding embodied characters. That is to say, gender/race/ethnicity is a set of cultural ideals by which bodies are identifiable, recognizable, and intelligible (Butler, 1999 [1990], 1993; Gunew, 1994; Shugart, 2003). Butler (1999) argues that gender, and/or race, ethnicity, sexuality and so on, is a performativity, which is an aspect of discourse that produces effects it names through repetitive and recitational practices and materializations. In this sense, gender/race/ethnicity is a formula with two necessary premises: discourse, which is comprised of cultural ideals constructed by reiterative practices, and practice, which is performance or materialization of the discourse by people (Shugart, 2003). However, the discourse is never fixed, nor stable. Butler (1997) asserts the discourse is a set of ideals that can never be embodied perfectly. Thus, the impossibility to reach "perfect performance" causes imperfect performance to reconstruct the discourse. Moreover, the requests and anxiety about regulating legitimate ways to "perform" ones' identities in order to be intelligible

reveals the incompleteness of the imposed link between identities, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and/or sexuality, and bodies. However, the term, “performativity”, is literarily chosen to be distinguished from “performance”. Butler (1993) argues, performance presumes a subject, but performativity contests the very notion of the subject. As Gunew (1994) explains, “it is not a subject who acts (or ‘represents’ herself in the traditional human sense) but the discursive and reiterated performance which convey power to a subject” (p.76). In other words, “the ideals” that a subject has to follow to be intelligible are ones which the subject takes part to re/construct and re/articulate.

For example, in her influential work, “Gender Trouble”, Butler (1999 [1990]) uses drag to avow a fantasy of “becoming” the opposite sex by dressing up like one, which revealingly tells the relationships between bodies and gender as a “performativity”. Also, Gunew (2004) examines a racial/ethnic incident in Australia<sup>1</sup> with the notion of performativity. She suggests the incident implies that ethnic authenticity is not a natural quality, but an artificial persona that can be put on and taken off. In this scenario, the audiences are those who know how ethnics should act. Besides the subversive potential of cross-performance, discussed by Butler and Gunew, Shugart (2003) demonstrates how self-parody (i.e. parodic performances of femininity by women or of masculinity by men) can also be seen as a way in which the artificiality of gender stereotypes and binary opposition can be disclosed. She uses several episodes of “Ellen”, a situation comedy, as an example to illustrate that it could seem to be unnatural and blatantly intentional when a woman is performing “femininity”.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to gain “authenticity” on writing “ethnic” subject, a writer, Helen Demidenko proclaimed that she was a migrant from Ukraine, and dressed and acted “ethnic authentically” every time she appeared in public. She was seen as one of the features of “authentic ethnic” writers until her “non-ethnic” background and last name, Darville, were disclosed.

### 2.3 Traditional Cultures, Cultural Performances, and Power Struggles

In recent research, Alexander (2004) argues that cultural performances are a double-edged sword for cultural and political identities. In his framework, “cultural performance” refers to

...the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display for others the meaning of their social situation. This meaning may or may not be one to which they themselves subjectively adhere; it is the meaning that they, as social actors, consciously or unconsciously wish to have others believe (Alexander, 2004: 529).

The cultural performance, in his view, includes both “old fashioned ritual” and “ritual-like” events, such as theatrical performance and social drama. He claims that the performance is a compound of social complexity, and its goal is to fuse the meanings to the audience.

The elements of a cultural performance, which affect the performance fundamentally, are a) the system of collective representations: including the background symbols and foreground script, b) actors, c) audience, d) means of symbolic production, e) *Mise-en-Scene* (put texts into the scene), and f) social powers. “Taken together, they determine, and measure, whether and how a performance occurs, and the degree to which it succeeds or fails in its effect” (Alexander, 2004: 533).

In order to efficiently send messages to audiences and achieve the best quality of reception by audiences, sometimes actors will have to adjust their “origins”. Magowan (2000) examines the cultural borrowing between indigenous tribes, which, she suggests, will make it easier for “outsiders” to access the Indigenous cultures as a whole. In this study, she demonstrates the relationships between Indigenous ritual

dance and political actions by discussing a case about Indigenous people using their traditional dances to voice their opinions at a political event. She argues that the dances should be seen “as an expressive, active and ongoing performative dialogue with the nation” (p.319), although they are corporeally dispositioned. Moreover, she claims that in the dynamic interplays between the nation and Indigenous cultures, cultural borrowing becomes inevitable and necessary. Being aware of the dangers of the dispositions of cultures, she suggests that we should also acknowledge the flexibility of indigenous cultures, and take the responsibility to view the dances “not only as a theatre of life but as a declaration of support for the intercultural state of the nation” (p.320). Kassam (2000) also demonstrates how Indigenes express themselves through in(ter)venting cultural performance. She discusses the social struggle of an indigenous rights activist who tries to obtain ethnic status and political representation in Africa. The activist, as a strategic device, intervened in the annual dance performance “to articulate how an old symbolic form is being given a new meaning” (p.202). She claims the performances are a way to perpetuate traditions, by keeping the cultures alive, and to empower, by realizing people’s agency to in(ter)vent, rearticulate, and redefine.

Diffusing their messages and meanings to audiences through cultural performances, Henry (2000) argues, gives Aboriginal people opportunities for having a voice in public. She investigates the dances in two cultural arenas in Australia to explore the connections between cultural performances and the politics of identities. She concludes that “public performance” could open up opportunities for Aboriginal people to engage in dominating ideologies and, at the same time, to figure out a different possibility for playing a role in redefining themselves, besides living oppressively under bureaucratic process.

In Taiwanese contexts, studies have explored the struggles in “retrieving” traditional cultures. Pu (2001) investigates traditional rituals of Tsou, one of the Indigenous tribes in Taiwan to expose the contradictions and dilemmas in retrieving traditional rituals. He suggests that retrieving is giving new meanings and functions to “old” traditions, such as (re)forming identity, learning and conveying cultures, and resistances. On the other hand, he also asserts that, in the process of “retrieving”; the contentions between “new” and “old” should not be overlooked. Juzie (2003) examines the rituals in the Seejiq Truku Village to assess the power contents between groups. He proposes that every ritual is a result of the matrix of four powers: elders in the community (reservoirs of traditional knowledge), educated social elites (advocators of resistance and redefinition), religious ideologies (western missionary, mostly), and national/local government. Hence, the rituals are multi-dimensional and sometimes self-contradictory.

Also, Hsien (1996) explores the multi-dimensional concepts of “Indigenous traditional cultures” that were under the management and the control of government. He proposes that there is the potential for “symbolic violence”, referred to as “naming [the culture] when needed, then ditching it thoroughly after using” (translated from Chinese by Liao. Verdery, 1993: 4; cited in Hsien, 1996: 85), He also demonstrates how Indigenous people have learned to use the system in order to gain the resources and support they need for cultural conveyance.

#### **2.4 (Re)Presentations, Tourism and Powers**

Tourism is often understood as a colonial and imperialistic commodity, which produces negative outcomes such as “cultural marginality” and “reinforced primitivism” (Azarya, 2004). However, Cheong and Miller (2000) employ Foucauldian perspectives of power to analyze the power relations in the tourism

industry to argue power in tourism is myriad, instead of one-way. By revisiting Foucauldian assumptions about power, they frame the power of tourism in four ways: omnipresence of power in tourism; power in tourism networks; the tourism gaze; and repressive and productive tourism power. *Omnipresence of power* challenges a common belief that the contesting of power only occurs between certain factors, such as the tourist industry, government agents, and local business. They assert that power in tourism is prevailing even on the ground level and everyday (micro)interactions of tourists and institutional actors. By *power in networks*, Foucault emphasizes one's place/ position, instead of the role of the individual per se. Thus, that allows shifting identities of individuals, which largely depends on contingencies, time, and place. Consequently, there is no one-sided, fixed flow of power from one individual to another. In Foucault's works on clinics and prisons, the "inspecting gaze" is one powerful vehicle for agents to perform power. Cheong and Miller consider that "*the gaze* is especially relevant to the discussion of power in tourism because seeing is so much a part of touristic experience and because the manipulation of the imagery is so important in the marketing of tourism" (p.376). Interestingly, they do not position the tourist as the only one with the power to gaze, but rather, they argue, tourists are also targets of brokers and locals. Even more so, sometimes the unfamiliarity and differences with local cultures enhances visibility of tourists and situates them in a vulnerable position. In the end, Foucault (1980) considers that "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (p.119, cited in Cheong & Miller, 2000: 377). In other words, power is both *repressive and productive* at the same time. In tourist context, Cheong and Miller suggest that, for tourists, tourism, as mentioned,

can put them under scrutiny of the gaze and situate them in a vulnerable position, and as a result, brokers, locals, and other agents of power “instruct, educate, and reform the tourist, and also those that result in agents inspecting, monitoring, and generally managing tourists” (p.385). Yet, these experiences could be challenging and rewarding, since tourists do not know precisely how they will be influenced. At an institutional level, the blossoming of tourism brought “the rise of tourism field and the expansion of knowledge about it” (p.385). Yet, development and establishment of this “discipline” produces knowledge, a specialized language, which regulates and restricts how the topic of tourism should be and would be discussed.

In his study (1992), Chen explores the power of the gaze in tourism specifically. He claims that tourism is a process for tourists to experiment being “the others” by intruding and gazing into their living. Thus, most of the time tourists are those who hold the power of looking. Yet, he also points out the power that locals might have to gaze back to tourists and to recognize them as “outsiders”, or to refuse to present themselves in tourist ways. By exposing reciprocal power flowing between tourists and locals, Chen denies locals as powerless objects, or tourists as omnipresent exploiting power. Yet, he argues, although it provides a new angle to understand power in tourism, it should not be explained as an equal power relationship has been achieved already.

Healy (1999) takes the Lurujarni Trail in Western Australia as an example to understand the representations of Aboriginal people and cultures in tourism, and to search for possible intercultural exchanges. First, he examines the discourse and photography on tourism booklets (brochures), and suggests there are a variety (and incoherence) of representational strategies. He argues that, even though there is no homogenous way of representing Aboriginal people and cultures in those texts, they

do provide “a useful guide to ... contemporary postcolonial spatial practices” (“distinctive and potential transformative modes of intercultural exchanges”) (p.62). Furthermore, he investigates the trail and suggests three modes of walking the Trail. First of all, it is aesthetic consumption. He asserts that being in the site and around by landscapes only, even though without the physical presences of Aboriginal people, can provide a pure cultural experience. Then, it is mimetic primitivism how tourists experience and imitate the ways Aboriginal people lived, acted and walked on the trail. Allo-fascination, which is “a mode of appropriation of Aboriginal culture...as a source, a voice and a body which is radically other” (p.67). The walking experience is significant because the meaning the “others” attribute to them. Yet, he rejects to see “others”, Aboriginal people in the article, as simply repository of knowledge and differences. Instead, he points out the communications and negotiations across perception of cultural difference might happen during the interaction. Through these ostensibly racial displays, he asserts that the practice of walking actually involves negotiation, recognition and exchange between tourists and local (i.e., Aboriginal people and cultures). In the end, there are varied motivations to come to the trail, and varied experiences of the walk. This is his attempt to “mark out this kind of spectatorship from the longer history of the popularity of Aboriginal people as ‘live ethnological displays’, circus performers and pageant artists” (p.68).

Regarding authenticity of indigenous cultures, Taylor (2001) introduces the concept of sincerity by exploring the representations of Maori in New Zealand. He states that the term “authenticity” often suggests an essentialism that refers to that certain cultures can and should only be presented by certain people and in certain ways. Hence, authenticity might overlook potential evolutions of a culture and interactions between the “outside world” and the culture. To overcome this, he

introduces a concept of “sincerity” which refers to “whether a person represents herself truly to others...that is, one’s relationship with oneself” (Erikson, 1995; cited in Taylor, 2001: 23). This is to say that, instead of pre-existent assumptions on how ones and ones’ cultures should be or act, sincerity opens doors for communications and negotiations with others. At the same time, it also encourages others (tourists) to reveal themselves. In the end, “tourists and actors meet half way, [and] authenticity may be redefined in terms of local value” (p.24). In other words, by introducing the concept of “sincerity”, it gives “authenticity” a chance to be adjusted and, in other words, allows hybridity to emerge.

Given the diversity of opinions in the research discussed above, it is not clear whether it is useful or harmful to advocate and promote the indigenous/aboriginal traditional cultures in order to build up and reform identities of community/race/ethnicity. What “traditional” cultures represent is highly influenced by the political and economic context in which they are situated and they can be interpreted in various different ways. Acknowledging floating meanings of “traditional” cultures makes it possible to observe the contested power. In this vein, I designed a study to analyze the dynamic nature of power relationships in Taiwan within the questions of race/ethnicity by examining the drag and push of the boundary of Indigenous identities portrayal within media representations of Ilisin.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

In this chapter, I summarize the research methodology for this thesis. In bold terms, this thesis is a project of cultural studies with a methodology of textual analysis and internet studies. Cultural studies is often defined as an academic discipline with interdisciplinary approaches which focuses on the “interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts”(Kellner, 2003:10). It scrutinizes its subject, cultural practice, in terms of social structure, such as the historical, social, political, and/or economic contexts in which cultural practices exist (Kellner, 2003; Lucas, 2000). Beal (2002) indicates that three main frameworks of analysis are usually used in cultural studies projects to reveal and investigate cultural struggle and the articulation of meanings and powers: cultural texts, audience reception, and political and economic environments. It has potential limitations and can be a narrow pursuit, if the project is restricted to a single method. To overcome this, Kellner (2003) proposes “an approach that (a) discusses production and political economy, (b) engages in textual analysis, and (c) studies the reception and use of cultural texts” (p.12).

The objective of this study is to explore the racial/ethnic power relationships in Taiwan through their cultural performance event, *Ilisin*. To this end, I conducted a research project applying textual analysis and “Internet ethnography”. I collected data from printed media (three newspapers and three magazines) and from discussion boards on selected BBS sites (three sites, five discussion boards). Moreover, as Howell, Andrew and Jackson (2002) note, “cultural practices are produced from specific social and historic contexts”(p.171). Hence, the historical, social and political backgrounds of Taiwan and racial/ethnic relationships in Taiwan were reviewed in the thesis, in order to “contextually destabilise connections that appear natural and

extremely stable in any given historical context” (Howell, Andrews & Jackson, 2002: 155).

### 3.1 Data

In order to complete the objective of the study, I collected data that can help me describe power from two angles: media representations and audience reception. In the first part of the research, I investigated “representations” from related articles from selected magazines and newspapers. The three magazines I used were: ‘*Ho Ha Ya (Taiwan) Aboriginal Young*’, issued by CIP, and two unofficial magazines, ‘*East Coast Review*’ and ‘*Taiwan Indigenous Voice Bimonthly*’ during 1996-2005. The first magazine had 9 issues during the time, the second one 112, and the last one 10. Among these 131 issues, I retrieved 18 articles with Ilisin-related discussions. As for newspapers, I limited the sample to two of the “Big Three<sup>2</sup>” of Taiwan’s newspapers, *China Times*, *Liberty Times*, and *Min Sheng Daily* from the United Daily News Group, which is an entertainment and leisure oriented press. I did an initial search of the newspapers database via the system in the National Central Library. Then, I selected 399 articles<sup>3</sup> out of 596 titles to look for the hard copies of the articles published during July and August of 1996-2005 (Also see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 The number of articles retrieved from each publication**

Publication	Number of Articles Retrieved
Ho Ha Ya Aboriginal Young	1
East Coast Review	13
Taiwan Indigenous Voice Bimonthly	4

<sup>2</sup> The “big three” are three newspapers with the highest subscription and reading rate. They are, in alphabetic order, *China Times*, *Liberty Times*, and *United Daily*.

<sup>3</sup> 277 are from *China Times*; 20 are from *Liberty Times*; 102 are from *Min Sheng Daily*.

China Times	277
Liberty Times	20
Min Sheng Daily	102

The reason I chose 1996 as the start for the research period is because the historical significance of the year. The amendment of the Constitution in 1994 and the setup of the CIP in 1995 are two important moments for Indigenous people, for this liberation broke down the ostensible discriminations toward Indigenous people, and promoted “multiculturalism” in Taiwan. However, as intellectuals (Goldberg, 1994; Gunew, 2004) have argued, the (state) multiculturalism can be seen as a systematic way to manage differences, or the “others”, in the country, and its liberal pluralism “implies both a hidden norm from which minority groups diverge while failing to recognize [the] prevailing power differential”(Gunew, 2004: 17). This study views, critically, the two liberations as a start of a new era, a possible subtle othering process. Since the CIP was set up at the end of 1995 (December 10<sup>th</sup>), I think it is reasonable to set 1996 as the start point of the data.

The way I went “into the field” was by “lurking” on three popular BBSs (Bulletin Board System), PTT, NTUCC BBS, and The Oceanic Home, based on the TANet (Taiwan Academic Network). PTT and NTUCC BBS are two of the most popular BBS sites in Taiwan, and both of them have boards for travel and boards for Indigenous issues. The Oceanic Home is a much smaller site, but it is a gathering site especially for people from Hualien, and for discussion and issues around Hualien where Ilisin takes place. The site also has a discussion board about Indigenous issues as well.

I lurked around these three sites on the discussion boards for travel and

Indigenous issues to collect and observe the discussions users had about Ilisin and related topics. The starting point for the research depended on the archiving practice of the sites: PTT Indigenous started in 1999, and Travel in Taiwan in 2001. NTUCC has maintained the Indigenous board since 1994, but in order to match with the BBS data, I retrieved the articles posted after summer 1996 for PTT and NTUCC and starting in 2001 for Travel in Taiwan. Oceanic Home started its board of Indigenous affairs in the December of 1998. I collected the postings between the starting points and March 2006. In order not to intrude and lead the discussions, I did not show up on the board, and did not notify users of my 'lurking'. In the end, 38 related posts/discussions were retrieved.

BBS is an extremely popular "place" for youth to interact in Taiwan, especially students. There are private based and TANet-based BBS system. TANet is the network that belongs to the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, and it supports schools and research institutions at every level to share information. Nowadays, it provides services such as distance education, email, FTP, Telnet, WWW, BBS, Netnews, and Archie (Ministry of Education, 2001). The main services a BBS site offers are discussion boards, and there are also often functions such as mail, talk (one-on-one), chat room (in group), voting and so on. One of the major strengths of BBS is its easy-to-get and up-to-date information and the instant interaction it enables with other users.

According to a survey by the Institution for Information Industry in 2005, the population using the Internet in Taiwan is 9.4 million, which is 41% of the whole country (Lee, Oct. 6, 2005). The number of registered users on one of the most popular BBS sites in Taiwan is 424,291, and the age of the users mostly is 20-23 (142,063) (PTT, December 3, 2005). Statistics for another BBS site shows there are

8,505 log-in times per day, and the average of on-line minutes is 73 (National Taiwan University Computer Center BBS, December 3, 2005). A study by Liou claims that the population of BBS users reached 300,000 in Taiwan in 1995, and another study points out that the amount of traffic on the BBS sites in Taiwan is 4% of the total of Internet traffic in whole world (Liou, 1996; Cited in Lin, 2003). In short, BBS is used extensively in Taiwan.

In the era of the Internet, the traditional definitions of ethnography have been challenged by the emergence of "Internet ethnography". Traditionally, ethnography is a method that entails researchers going into the field, and learning and researching other cultures. However, with the pluralisation of cultures and the growth of use of the Internet, the definition of 'field' as a corporeal or geographical area is becoming problematic. There is a trend to see virtual space as a place where ethnography can be conducted. Internet studies suit ethnography well, some argue, given that it demonstrates the sense of a dynamic "community" and multiple identities. Furthermore, the non-physical presence of researchers gives the possibility of non-intrusiveness (Wittel, 2000; Beaulieu, 2004). There are several ways to do "ethnography" on the Internet. The one I conducted in my research is "lurking in the field", and observing and analyzing users perspectives on and responses to representations of Ilisin. One of the strongest advantages of this method is to minimize intrusiveness and disruption.

### **3.2 Analysis**

In his study of the process of mass-communication, Hall (1996) critically (re)interprets the apparently linear sender-receiver model. He argues that messages and meanings do not move from senders to receivers without any

“misunderstandings”. Instead, two significant moments, “encoding” and “decoding”, happen during communicative exchanges, which inevitably lead to so-called “inefficient” communications. “Encoding”, as Hall refers, is the moment message producers transform a “raw” historical event into a “*communicative event*” (p.42, emphasis as in the text). In this sense, the subject event is coded into a communicative code, visual, auditory, or/and literal, and mediated toward the mass. “In the moment when a historical event passes under the sign of discourse, it is subject to all the complex formal ‘rules’ by which languages signifies” (p.42). Thus, even though producers claim to be neutral or realistic, the production is inevitably framed by knowledge, ideologies, ideas, and so on. Then, he identifies three hypothetical positions from which messages are decoded: *dominant-hegemonic*, which might be said as “the viewer *is operating inside the dominant code*”(p. 47, emphasis as in the text); *negotiated*, which refers as the viewer acknowledges the privileged dominant definitions, yet reserves the right to make an adaptation to a more local condition; and *oppositional code*, which is described as the viewer, although with understanding of dominant codes, “detotalizes the message in a preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (p.49).

The process of encoding/decoding, which Hall describes, provides an initiation for the analysis. It suggests the ways to see texts, in media, as messages coded by the knowledge, power, or/and ideologies the producers hold, instead of simply neutral information. Also, it does not see decoding as a homogenous linear process through which audience receive and understand the meanings “completely” and “accurately”. It makes alternative or counter interpretations possible. Therefore, it provides a basis for this thesis to analyze various meanings and interpretations the texts might offer,

and, with references to social context where the texts reside in, to explore the power the texts might convey.

Thus, it was not my intention to “find out” what authors of subject texts want to express, but to ask under what kind of circumstances or backgrounds and with what assumptions the statement or argument will make sense, i.e., what assumptions are embedded in the texts? In other words, through analyzing the possible assumptions about race/ethnicity which the texts might carry reveals the possible attitudes toward racial/ethnic issues existing in the society. Furthermore, as far as the power relations are concerned, my analysis explored the ways in which these statements or arguments legitimize certain cultures as inferior or superior to others (Chow, 1998a).

To this end, I engaged with critical theories before analyzing. However, I did not simply insert the subject, the cultural practice, into a pre-formed theoretical structure. In other words, though I, the researcher of the proposed study, have engaged with certain theories before beginning the study, they help to articulate, transform and conceptualize the contexts (Howell, Andrews & Jackson, 2002). This can be achieved “only if we insist on the careful analyses of texts on responsibly engaged rather than facilely dismissive judgment, and on deconstructing the ideological assumption” (Chow, 1998a: 13). With the principle in mind, then I conducted an analysis of my data as follows. First of all, with all media data, I critically read them to make a series of claims about the types of the media representations and their meanings. Furthermore, I analyzed the ways the representations legitimated certain cultures and groups of people with respect to the historical, economic and social environments in Taiwan.

The next step was to analyze the social comments retrieved from my “field trip”

to the Internet. The “field” component involved observing and collecting the discussions about Ilisin, its media representations and related issues. What I collected from the “field trips” was how people received and/or articulated the images and definitions which were presented in the media and how people experienced Ilisin. Furthermore, I compared these audience responses with several testimonial style articles (including interviews and journal pieces) to approximate an understanding of “audience”.

Eventually, I made a series of claims about the general picture of the power struggles about the definition of Ilisin, of “us” and “them”, and related racial/ethnic representations in Taiwan.

### **3.3 Potential Problems**

Because everyone has their own biographical standpoint for understanding and reading texts, my analysis of media representations in this study risks falling subject to a single-dimensional analysis. However, I acknowledge the importance of the “texts themselves in the reading process” (Dewhurst & Sparks, 2003, p.374), and therefore I have focused on understanding and investigating the structure of the texts and the context in which they exist, as a means to overcome my own limited perspective. The objective is not to determine how audiences might actually interpret the representations, therefore, but rather to understand the contested meanings of the cultural practice, Ilisin, and to have an idea about a broader picture of the power relations and structures identified in people’s discussions about and representation of the festival, as I discovered them in these texts. In other words, the analysis serves as a means to consider how people construct Indigeneity about Ilisin from the various representation and meanings given to them and how these constructions relate to

racial and ethnic power relations in Taiwan.

Using the Internet to conduct “ethnographic” participant observation is somewhat controversial. There are several concerns. One of them is an advantage as well as a weakness of the Internet: non-physical presence. Observing “real people” is always the major part of an ethnographic project. The relations between participants and researchers are challenged by ‘lurking’. Some argue that this might miss out on important physical evidence such as the facial expressions of participants, which might give hints about their mindsets. Virtual “participant observation” can be criticized as not so much an ethnographic analysis as a textual analysis, discourse analysis or conversation analysis (Wittel, 2000; Beaulieu, 2004). Nevertheless, users of the Internet and BBS have now developed a system of BBS speech that can be used to express their feelings or emotions through combinations of words and marks, and this provides an alternative way to interpret the emotional mindsets of users. Moreover, a main goal I intended to achieve via this thesis is to critically examine power relationships in Taiwan. Thus, in this sense the potential of a virtual ethnographic method to uncover the manifest ideologies and power is more crucial than how conventional this method is.

The Internet and BBS offer anonymity, and, therefore, the authorship and validity of data may be questioned. Several points need to be stressed about objectivity and validity in online studies. First, it is now customary to recognize that socio-cultural truths are often standpoint dependent. Secondly, anonymity and the uncertainty of identity and authorship is an attraction for users of the Internet, and is an intriguing metaphor of the world, such as the multiple identities a person can have in multiple different locations and events, or for different issues or categories (Wittel, 2000; Beaulieu, 2004). For the purpose of this study, knowing if it is Indigenous users

who are, for example, opposed to making a “holy ritual” a tourist event or to performing for others is not as important as to understand there is the possibility that some people have this point of view. Furthermore, through this view, I am able to explore and analyze the possible power relationships under the claims themselves, rather than according to the legitimacy of the authors.

Data saturation is an important condition for an “ethnographic” project. In the question of whether the data collection of this thesis has reached data saturation, if judged by the volume, a total number of thirty-eight posted comments might be of concern. However, due to the way I designed this study, which is, to a certain degree, similar to textual analysis, lurking and collecting comments on the selected discussion boards in response to issues around Ilisin during a specific period of time, the number of comments was not a factor of concern. Because of the effort not to evoke interactions with users, it was not planned to create conversations, even when the volume of the data might seem to be too small. Hence, due to nature of this thesis, I have to accept that the standard of “data saturation”, in terms of volume, might not be satisfied here. Nonetheless, there is another definition for “data saturation” often used, which, in rough terms, refers to the condition where the data has given the researcher sufficient knowledge to predict how the next participant might react. In this sense, this Internet ethnography I conducted might achieve a level of saturation. After viewing all thirty-eight, it is clear to me there are several attitudes toward Ilisin and related issues that came up repetitively. In other words, they gave me an idea of what to expect so I could anticipate how the next users might comment on similar issues in similar contexts.

There are potential issues with respect to access and power in this method. The problems of access have two aspects: access for research, and access to the BBS sites

for participants (Beaulieu, 2004). My access to these three BBS site was straight forward, because I was a regular user of one of them before the research, and all I did for the other two was to register. The access for participants, users who post on the boards, however, was more problematic and risked skewing the sample. First, in order to connect to the Internet, users have to have access to a computer and the Internet, which rules out half of the population in Taiwan. Also, they have to have knowledge about the BBS, such as programs that supports the BBS, and the IP address of the particular site. Furthermore, in order to post articles on the board, to become a valid user of the site, the user has to either register a "valid" email address which is not from free registration websites, such as hotmail, yahoo, gmail, and so on, or fill out a registration form, on which the applicant has to give out her/his personal information, such as address, phone number, affiliation instruction, etc. According to prior research (Liou, 1996; Cited in Lin, 2003; PTT, December 3, 2005), about half of the population of BBS users is 19-27 years old, and their educational level is high school and above. Therefore, in this study, I acknowledged that the diversity of the participants is limited, and that they comprise a mostly young, average educated or above, and middle-class or above group.

The most "powerful" people on the BBS sites are site managers and board managers, who manage and scrutinize sites and boards. Site managers take charge of the business such as registrations of users, applications for setting a new board, applications for board managers, punishment for inappropriate behavior on the site, and so on. Board managers can set the tone for the board, hold votes, delete and mark articles, collect articles for archives, block certain users from posting on the boards, and so on. It is safe to say there is definitely a potential for censorship on the BBS that limits the freedom of users. By not naïvely thinking there is ultimate freedom on

the Internet or the BBS, and by looking for patterns of censorship, I attempted to identify the influences these people and their rules had on the actions and speech of users.

In terms of the power that I have over the participants, I am aware of my actions of “stealing” their thoughts. In other words, my analyzing their discussions without notification can be problematic. Nevertheless, ‘lurking’ is a socially acceptable act on the web, and, by a consensus of users of BBS, the articles are open to public (Beaulieu, 2004). Unless one violates the copyrights, such as citing without notifying resources, it is acceptable. A final ethical question about ‘lurking’ concerns authorship. Although BBS already provides anonymity, people can still be tracked down by their user IDs (identification). I provided a higher level of anonymity by giving them pseudonyms and not referring to the sites they are from in my findings.

Even though I was approaching the audience component of the study empirically by examining BBS users’ comments to the event and its media images, it is impossible to escape from “personal interpretation”. So I must accept that I will always have my own blind points or bias on the issues. I support Haraway’s view that investigators or researchers have a responsibility to position themselves and to acknowledge their “interested” character (Gunew, 2004). Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis also assert the importance of being aware of the researchers’ “standpoint”. They argue:

Imagination is situated; our imaginary horizons are affected by the positioning of our gaze. But, at the same time, it is our imagination that gives our experiences their particular meanings, their categories of reference. Whether it is “borders”, “home”, “oppression”, or “liberation”, the particular meanings we hold of these concepts are embedded in our situated imaginations (Cited in Gunew, 2004: 3).

Being aware of my own position can also help me to understand why I make certain decisions and have certain perspectives, and in this sense, the power structure can also be observed and revealed from my texts (Humberstone, 1997).

## Chapter 4 Findings

In this chapter I lay out my findings from the data I collected, including how the Ilisin is defined, presented, received and discussed. I roughly divide the findings into two sections, “News Reports and Magazines Articles”, in which I summarize the findings from “objective” news-reported, commentary or information oriented articles, and “Social and Testimonial Comments”, which includes testimonial articles, interviews and journal-like articles from printed media and posted comments which I retrieved from the BBS sites. Nevertheless, the distinctions between the so-called objective and testimonial articles are sometimes blurred. Although this might not be the standard of “objectivity”, in this research, I generally distinguished them by the degree to which the articles of reveal the author her/himself.

### 4.1 News Reports and Magazines Articles

I retrieved 596 titles from the newspaper database, and then I eliminated 197 of them that were purely announcing information, such as the columns on “What is on this weekend”. As a result, 399 articles were collected and analyzed from the three newspapers, *China Times*, *Liberty Times*, and *Min Sheng Daily*. The newspaper articles were located in sections like Local (East Coast, or Hualien-Taidong County), Travel/Leisure, and Cultural Affairs. I also reviewed 11 related articles from the three magazines.<sup>4</sup>

Unsurprisingly, there was no single theme about the meanings of Ilisin in the print media--newspapers and magazines. Differences were observed across different media over a similar period of time, and in the same media in different time periods. Nevertheless, even though differences can be generally seen in the materials, this did

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<sup>4</sup> 6 are from *East Coast Review*; 4 are from the *Indigenous Voice Bimonthly*; 1 is from the *Ho Ha Ya Aboriginal Young*.

not mean that themes jumped out systematically. The categories I developed were not perfectly exclusive of each other. Instead, overlaps can also be easily observed. In other words, it is for the sake of accessibility that in this section I have simplified the various themes into main categories.

It is also noteworthy that there were 18 articles that described in detail the contents of the traditional processes and rituals of Ilisin that I did not elaborate on in the following section. Generally speaking, they explained how Ilisin was conducted “traditionally”, according to various anthropologic research. Although these types of articles appeared to be purely informational, they are also encoded with ideological point of views. Thus, in the next chapter, I integrated them into the discussion.

#### **4.1.1 A Place of Our/Their Own**

*The Amis tribal structures nowadays have almost existed in name only, and only flash back in the annual Ilisin...Ilisin has become the last fence of the tribal structure. (Chang, 1998: 34)*

126 (121 from newspapers and 5 from magazines) articles have this theme which defines Ilisin as a very unique and separate place and experience for Indigenous people, specifically, the Amis tribe, to construct, inherit, preserve and pass on their racial/ethnic identities, and to preserve and consolidate their clanships. (Huang, 1998: 18) Ilisin, in this view, is depicted as a place exclusive to Indigenous people and their identities that is open to evolution, and allows the hybrid of present and past, heritage and modernity/Chinese. It is to say that Ilisin is not strictly limited to the ancestral understandings and practices, which is to say, how it was traditionally done. Rather it is a celebration of people’s existences and identities, and at the same time, it is a chance to pass on the spirits. It works more or less like the “Chinese New Year” for the Han people, an annual event for family gathering and to learn about traditional

folk customs.

In keeping with this theme, there were numerous articles about how people in the villages celebrate Ilisin in “new” ways.

*...The opener is a traditional ceremony for senior and virtuous people in the village. In this way, it has achieved the goal of preserving Amis cultures. There is also an award ceremony of scholarships for outstanding youths in the village. In the end, this modern Ilisin shows the spirit of past and future and is extremely impressive. (Wun, 1996: 15)*

*...This year there is an innovation about the Ilisin at Shanrum Village. They changed ceremonies from dancing and singing into the stage...They have shown the heritage of Indigenous people in a delightful way. (Wei, 1997: 14.)*

Other than demonstrating “modern” factors, there were also other “Indigenous” factors in the modern Ilisin. Some villages integrated Ilisin with sport games including physical activities with local or “Indigenous” character such as archery and areca tree climbing. For example, some villages, according to the articles, added other traditional rituals, dances, songs, and techniques, which traditionally do not belong to the specific event, into the contents of their version of Ilisin in order to pass on more traditions to the younger generations. These “novel” styles received compliments and praise in the media saying this kind of integration of different elements of Indigenous cultures and their daily lives had made Ilisin more meaningful.

Additionally, Ilisin used to be limited to the ancestral belief system, which is now very close to extinction. Many villages halted the traditional ceremonies for religious reasons to celebrate the “new year” in modern alternative ways. However, under the request of their fellows, the Ilisin festival coupled “traditional” dances and songs is being convened again, but detached from the original religious meanings. The disassociation from the ancestral religions and the new emphasis on

modern/western value is recorded in the articles. This is illustrated in an article about an Ilisin festival hosted by a (Christian) church:

*Before, the Church used alternative ways to celebrate the gathering during this big day. This year the Church took the advice of the people and decided to hold an "Ilisin", a ceremony with traditional tribal dances and songs to give thanks to Jesus...Although the Church holds different perspectives about what to celebrate with the tribe, this celebration will not alienate the tribal traditions.*  
(Chu, 1998: 15)

Moreover, because of the sacredness of Ilisin, many articles hint at the inappropriateness of connecting the festival with tourism. Chu (1996), though not directly opposed to tourism, says that it is not exactly a tourist event, but more like a traditional ritual. In his article, he advises that tourists should respect the ceremonies. Lee (1998) similarly warns that tourists should not expect too much "entertainment" from Ilisin and criticizes that "outsiders" would attend the event for entertainment or sight seeing purposes. He explains, "*Ilisin is a private event for the tribe...It is as strange as when (Han) people worship their ancestry at home, and a passersby comes into the house and enthusiastically wants to join them*" (40).

The Ilisin festival has been through changes and adjustments over time, including involving both sexes into most of the process, and changing what they celebrate. However, although the hybridity and "*the ability of Ilisin to adjust and to change*" (Chang, 1998:36) are embraced, the intervention/invasion of external forces are questioned. Panai Mulu (1998) argues that, "*Ilisin is being sacrificed for Taiwanese music cultures*" (p. 52). She declaims how popular cultures soak up the Indigenous music for vitality and inspiration which in the end heavily effects the "purity" of Indigenous music.

*This relates to the complicated issues of constructing a "value system" for this*

*ethnic group (Indigenous people). If the government thinks this style of Ilisin is a norm and even intervenes in the situation by enthusiastically promoting it, it could very possibly destroy an ethnicity that is now going through “a transformation of cultural values”...(Chang, 1998: 37)*

#### **4.1.2 The Sale of “Natural/Indigenous” Character**

*The Indigenous Harvest Festivals<sup>5</sup> are heating up and bringing tourists diverse traditional festivities. (Chu, 2004: B4)*

There were 72 articles from newspapers and two from magazines in the sample that related broadly to the idea of positioning Ilisin as a “tourist product”, a event that welcomes tourists and invites them to explore and experience “local cultures” and to add different flavors to their summer<sup>6</sup>. In most cases, the natural beauty of the east coast was coupled with the exoticness of Ilisin as a trip (back to) the Home of Nature/Origin/Indigenous (Uian-Hsiang-Chi-Lu).

That Ilisin is implicitly a government tourist project is evident in the media. This is demonstrated in news accounts about the government organized “County United Harvest Festival”<sup>7</sup> (Lien-Ho-Fong-Nien-Chi), which combined a variety of tourism events with Ilisin, and in the official tourist information on Ilisin that is printed in travel/leisure sections of various newspapers. Newspapers also published full coverage of the “official schedule”<sup>8</sup> of different Ilisin festivals along the east coast of Taiwan (Hualien and Taitong County) and detailed tourist information about Ilisin. In combination with other local tourist destinations and attractions, Ilisin was introduced as the “*alternative summer getaway*” (Chu, 2000: 15):

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<sup>5</sup> In this article, the journalist used the term “Harvest Festivals” referring to all the traditional Indigenous festivals happening in the summer, regardless of the tribes. Though it did not refer to Ilisin directly, Ilisin is mentioned in the article.

<sup>6</sup> “Natural/Original” flavor (Uian-Oei) is a pun on “Indigenous” flavor (Uian-Oei) in Chinese.

<sup>7</sup> Other than the traditional format of the Ilisin which is hosted by each village, The “United Harvest Festival” is a governmentally hosted event that has performances from different villages in the county.

<sup>8</sup> The final version of the schedule will be approved and announced by the host governments.

*In the summer, the East Riff Valley lay out their “natural” flavor for their guests!...Dishes made of edible wild herbs and special local fruits plus the Ilisin festival equals a summer with traditional “indigenous” flavor.* (Mo, 2001: B8, quotation marks added by Liao).

In addition, as the title, *“Amis’ Festival (the Ilisin) Welcome You with Joy!”* (Chu, 1999: B8), proclaims, Ilisin here is credited as an event open to public/“outsiders” to visit, explore and experience the ‘indigenous/Indigenous’ flavor.

Ilisin has also been described as a chance for Indigenous people to make money from government subsidies and tourist expenditures. Wei (1999) notes that people *“...take the chance to sell local souvenirs and Indigenous handicrafts... Some stallholders drift among villages following the different Ilisin festivals. This is a once a year chance for them to profit”* (Wei, 1999: 18)

My findings also uncovered requests by local group for putting more effort into promoting local Ilisin festivals (Cheng, 1998: 21). The local communities in Taitong County, for example, urged the government to make Ilisin a higher priority for tourist promotion, because it had not turned Ilisin into a ‘golden goose’ as its neighbour county, Hualien, had done. There was also a request by a local representative to take Ilisin to the international stage:

*It is a shame that the series of Ilisins hosted by various villages are costly, but only able to attract a limited amount of tourists. Thus [he suggests] the Tourism Bureau should take the leading role to integrate them into a event that can attract interests internationally...* (“Cultural Products”, 1999: 18)

Intriguingly, in the contents of these articles, although the uniqueness and the “Indigeneity” of Ilisin are posed as a key attraction, overall hybridity of the event is not harshly attacked, but rather mentioned as a part of Ilisin. *“Some villages remain traditional, and others integrate modern characters into their Ilisin festivals...”* (Chu,

2004: B6)

#### 4.1.3 One of “Ours”

*Starting from the next year, Indigenous people can have (harvest festivals as) ethnic ritual holidays* (Ing, Wang and Loo, 2005, A6)

In 2005, the Executive Yuan, the highest administrative governmental agency, announced that Indigenous people can have vacations for their New Year as well. This shows that the government, unlike before, is starting to consider itself to have a responsibility to manage, assist, facilitate and even intervene/invent “one of our cultures”. This perspective is conveyed in one hundred six-three (one hundred fifty-nine from newspapers and four from magazines) articles.

One local chief (1999) stated that “...*government will help Indigenous people preserve the fine folk customs (Ilisin)*” (Cited in Chien, 1999: 18). One of the many methods the government uses to “help” preserve Ilisin is by sponsoring/subsidizing it. In this way, it encourages villages to host the events:

*...in order to resurrect and preserve these precious cultural assets and to encourage villages to revive the presence of Ilisin, the East Coast National Scenic Area Administration has been given financial subsidy. Some villages, which had stopped hosting the Ilisin festivals for years, have gradually restored the event...(Wang, 1998: 19)*

Moreover, the governmental support for and intervention in the Ilisin festivals are seen in the frequent appearances of the head administrators of the local governments. Villages send the ambassadors to “*offer tributes*”(Wun, 1996: 13), as the journalist put it, and invite “head chiefs”, the local head administrators, to their rituals (Chien, 1999). At the event, the local mayors were wearing the customs that traditionally symbolized the leaders of tributes, and worshiped by the chiefs of

villages as 'head chief' (Huang, 2002). Also, they participated in a traditional process which young people in tribes used to go through to symbolize their coming to adulthood and joining to the workforce of the tribes (Wang, 1999).

Because it is (seen as) a subcategory of Taiwanese culture, to understand Ilisin has also become a way to promote the integration and understanding among ethnic groups and to eliminate the barriers between them. Thus, with the power of "authority", government agencies open up the ritual for participation by non-Indigenous people. Several articles (Huang, 2004; Ke, 2004; "Harvest festival in Dulan village", 2004) about a project that the Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA) has undertaken to allow young people of every race/ethnicity to participate in the process of the traditional ceremony demonstrate that:

*Participants in this year's Dulan village harvest festival will be more than only the Amis. Programmed by the CCA...135 youth from every ethnic group in Taiwan (Fukin, Hakka, "Mainlanders", Indigenous people, and foreigners) will go through the training, including physical and cultural, and ceremonies together...breaking down the inter-ethnic barriers and appreciating each other's cultures. (Huang, 2004, 49)*

Articles also documented an anxiety about losing "traditions" and questioned the appropriate level of governmental intervention. In 1998, there were a series of articles about how the chief officer of the East Coast National Scenic Area Administration "saved the traditions" (Chuang, 1998a; Chuang, 1998b). After a couple years of subsidizing the events, he started to worry about that the event was "*losing its 'original' taste*" (Chuang, 1998a: 21), due to the loose scrutiny process. Then, he called a meeting with seniors and chiefs from tribes to discuss the structures of the modern Ilisin. In the end, he decided to set up more detailed regulations to make Ilisin "*return to its innocence*" (Chuang, 1998 b). Yet, Huang (2002) observed that there

were pros and cons of government involvement in these cultural events, and suggested the subsidy system should involve more than just giving out money, and should involve the development of more efficient all-around plans and assessment systems.

#### **4.2 Social and Testimonial Comments**

There was a large number of posted comments about various Indigenous identity issues on the BBS sites, which were potentially related to and useful for this research, however, I only collected 38 of them that are directly discussed the festivals. Although I do not identify the sites the comments are from, and I give the IDs pseudonyms, I have retained the boards they are from, because where they are located is useful information. Other than these, there are also 7 articles from the printed media that are in testimonial formats, including interview and journal.

The BBS member's discussions about Ilisin and how it is presented in the society/media are predictably diverse. Some critically reviewed the ways Ilisin is (mis)presented, while others described the experiences of Indigeneity they gained/lost in the event.

*On the night the Ilisin was over, a senior told me that 'the answer you are looking for is inside of you...' After all, this is me, the one who is from the tribe, from the ancestry souls, from the call of Pangcah. (Chuang, 2005: 58)*

Chuang described it in the journal published in the magazine about his experience of his inheritance of "Indigeneity" after years of escaping and questioning it. He, an Indigenous young man, finally realized himself after joining the Ilisin at the village his family originally was from.

He is not alone in the sense of retrieving/experiencing Indigeneity via Ilisin.

There were posts discussing the meanings of modern Indigenous festivals for Indigenous people on the boards about Indigenous issues. Most of the users appreciate the existence of the traditional, although somewhat modernized, rituals. They claimed that growing up in a big city has restricted how they feel and understand their “Indigeneity”, their inheritances. Thus these traditional rituals were seen as *one of very few ways they could actually experience their racial identities*. They treasured the time they spent in the villages and with the seniors.

Several users from the travel boards, similarly, stated that attending the events had made them *understand more about Indigenous culture and people*. By partaking in the activities that were open to non-villagers, Catchings (2003) claims to have had an “*authentic Indigenous moment*”, and s/he thinks “*it is great to know WE have such a colorful culture.*”

Yet, some objected to this view. They felt disappointed about the *empty/vague meanings* the modern Ilisin carries, and the commodities/souvenir booths at the venue invoked bad feelings. Annika (2000) who went to the United Harvest Festival complains:

*It was like a festival that celebrates for nothing. Yes, there was lots of dancing, singing, and drinking. That is it. I don't understand why there is so much hype about this in the media. The events were poorly organized, and their intention is so obvious- making money from us, the tourists. I felt upset. I would rather go to a beautiful place and enjoy the view. And I won't go back again.*

Others agreeing with Annika said that *they could not feel too much “culture” from the events. If that is so-called Indigenous cultures (as it is claimed in the media), they will be very disappointed.*

Nevertheless, there was another opinion stating that they do not care about

“authenticity”/“artificiality” that much. These were travelers/tourists, and they had a good time in that carnival atmosphere. Bird (2003) compared her/his experience at Ilisin with other tourist experiences:

*It is like if you go to Hawaii, you will have a Polynesian performance...The Harvest Festival or the Indigenous things are the specialty of the east coast. I went there to have a break from the big city, to see some different things. I did, and I didn't really care if it is "real". To be honest, I wouldn't know what is a real Harvest Festival anyway.*

Chu and Huang (Chu, 1997) had a conversation comparing traditional dance performance and the “Redtop Art performance<sup>9</sup>”, a sort of performing art. Huang argued that the most precious part of Indigenous dance is its *soul*, thus he could not agree with the opinion that Indigenous people should learn from the success of the Redtop—learning to be more delicate about their “stage presentation”. “...*Sometimes, it [culture] needs*” Chu posed his view on commercialization, “*help and make-over from commercialization to have a change on both quality and quantity...*” (p.53) Huang agreed somewhat, but insisted if they adjust “*their*” traditions “*for us*”, the traditions will lose their uniqueness. In the end, *the value will be cut off*. In the end, Huang hoped the public could *return the souls back to the Indigenous people, and leave entertainment to show business*.

On the board of Indigenous affairs, Donovan (1999) argued that, instead of saying that the popularity of tourist forms of Ilisin evoke the society and aid in (re)discovering the beauty of Indigenous cultures, it is because the society of Taiwan relies on economic/capitalism so heavily that the society usually (re)discovers its

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<sup>9</sup> “Redtop” is an art troop performing dragqueen-ish shows. All the artists in the group are male, and all the main characters/persona on stage are female. There is usually no obvious “gay contents”, thus it is not generally seen as “gay events”. And most of the artists are, as they claimed, straight, and they do this as an expression of art, not of their identities.

cultures in the process of consuming of cultural commodities. That being said, s/he asked, *“Is the Indigeneity only an object of consumption? ... If consuming is, to some extent, also reproducing, then how should we consume, and how can we reproduce?”*

Given the high popularity of Ilisin, Emory (2000) sought to correct the name of “Harvest Festival” in the media. S/He criticized, *“Both the Mid-Autumn and the Dragon Boat Festival are Han holidays for family gatherings, just like the Chinese New Year. But I’ve never heard anyone misuse their names in the ways all the traditional Indigenous rituals are called ‘Harvest Festival’...”*

On the other, Fester (2002) was glad to see that Ilisin has gradually become a significant attraction for tourism. S/He was impressed by the way an event could invoke such a great amount of interest in the culture as a whole. However, after serving as a voluntary tour guide at one Ilisin, s/he also worried about how guests/tourists might get the wrong impressions about Indigeneity from this single event. *“Seeing tribal people hospitably treating guests (tourists) with their best dishes and drinks, and singing and dancing for them, I couldn’t stop wondering, if this will reinforce the stereotype saying Indigenous people are all carefree, passionate and heavy drinkers.”*

Gab (2002), a user with non-Indigenous identity on one of the Indigenous affairs board, asked where the “real” Indigenous culture could be seen. Hoffman suggested to find tribes and those *traditional rituals, which have not yet been turned into tourist events*. They might be the places that still preserve the most complete and *authentic* Indigenous cultures. Ivan, with a somewhat different opinion, said that so-called authenticity sometimes creates inaccessibility for others who want to understand the culture. Thus, those so-called tourist-made events, to a certain extent, are

intercultural bridges in a *multicultural society*. They offer easier introductions for interested outsiders.

## Chapter 5 Discussion

From the findings summarized above, Ilisin, unsurprisingly was shown as an event with various meanings and drawing several different boundaries for Taiwanese identities. Thus, in this chapter, I endeavored to understand what and how Ilisin served in the identity politics in Taiwan by reviewing the findings with references of historical, social and political contexts of Taiwan.

In bold terms, each different perspective implies a different position in the social framework of power relations. Accordingly, three key themes I recognized in the findings could lead to three different frameworks here, and each of them constitutes a different boundary of “us” and “them”. Thus, in an early conclusion, these findings challenge the antagonism between “Chinese/Han” and Indigenous people, which is frequently brought up in debates on racial/ethnic issues in Taiwan.

A major flaw of this antagonism is the omission of the diversity inside “Chinese”. Looking back in the history, there is no homogeneity inside the “group of Chinese”. According to the different languages (dialects), ancestral regions and period of immigration of the Hans, the ethnicities inside the Han can be divided into at least three groups (although it is somehow politically incorrect nowadays): Mainlanders, Fukkan (Holo), and Hakka. The relationships among these three groups are complex. To explain in an extremely simplified fashion, Fukkan and Hakka started their rival like relationship back in the time when they were both living in the southeast of mainland China. Moreover, after settling in Taiwan, due to the long time domination (economic, political, etc.) of Fukkan, the rivalry had only gotten worse. There were severe fights and battles between these two groups. As a result, they formed different relationships with Mainlanders, the immigrants from China after WWII and, at the

same time, the dominate group in Taiwan since the proclamation in 1945, even though at that time their people, cultures and languages were both oppressed and marginalized in the society. With that being said, the so-called ethnic/racial relationships in Taiwan are not excluded in the relationships between “Han” and Indigenous people, for the “Han” themselves are a complex, instead of a homogenous or essential, ethnic/racial group. Moreover, complicated connections with the imaginary “Great China” (Da-Chu-Hua) and the political struggles against the People’s Republic of China (PRC) both add multiplicity to the identities of Han/Chinese/Taiwanese. Therefore, the positions of Ilisin, to some extent, are set up according to the different standpoints of these ethnic groups. To be clearer, Ilisin not only defines the boundary between Han and Indigenous, more than often, it also defines the relationships among the Chinese. Moreover, other than ethnic/racial relationships, Ilisin to some extent defines the geographic core and periphery as well, even though this also has something to do with ethnic/racial hierarchy.

### **5.1 An Overview of Taiwan and People Who Live On It**

To help make sense of the findings, it is useful to briefly consider the history of Taiwan. Long before the Chinese discovered this island, there were many tribes of Indigenous people living on it. The first recorded encounter of Chinese and Indigenous people happened more than 400 years ago. There were conflicts caused by misunderstanding and differences. In the end, the small groups of Chinese found their ways to live peacefully with the “barbarians”. In conjunction with the late Ming Dynasty and early Ching Dynasty, General Cheng retreated from the mainland and took over Taiwan from Dutch colonizers. The Cheng government “cultivated” Taiwan in order to turn it in to a base for “Overthrowing Ching, and Repossessing Ming” (Fuan-Ching-Foo-Ming). With the amount of people the troops carried over to Taiwan,

Chen started to “cultivate”, i.e. to Sinicize, this periphery, and to deal with “barbarians” with organized military power. His policies for ruling barbarians, which was somewhat different from those of western colonizers, entailed pretty much driving the Indigenous people to the mountains, the less fertile area of the lands. In the end, the plan of repossessing Ming never worked.

After the Cheng regime was deposed, the Ching Dynasty was not very enthusiastic about retaining Taiwan, although it finally overturned its ban on passage to Taiwan. Yet, in order to prevent Taiwan becoming once again a base for revolt, it retained certain strict restrictions on immigration and passage to Taiwan. However, the number of immigrants smuggled to Taiwan increased each day. Taiwan, abundant in fertile land, was literally a new world to the people in the southeastern, heavily populated coastal provinces of China. Furthermore, the Ching Dynasty also passed an order to restrict the right of the Han people to cultivate the mountains and far east, “the lands of barbarians”, in order to, on the one hand, reduce the conflicts between immigrants and Indigenous, and, on the other hand, prevent the rebel immigrants from escaping into the mountains. Under the order, the Ching segregated the Indigenous from the immigrants, and set up borders between them. Yet, the restrictions that should have helped to reduce the interest of immigrating into Taiwan, accidentally, caused a certain level of assimilation between Han and Indigenous people. Some restrictions only allowed single men passage to Taiwan, which was intended to lessen motivations to stay in Taiwan. However, they eventually led a situation described by the idiom, “There are no Tang Shan (mainland) grandmothers but only Tang Shan (mainland) grandfathers in Taiwan”, which referred to interracial marriages between Han men and Indigenous women.

This period of indifference to Taiwan lasted into the last Ching Dynasty, when

western imperialist powers started aggressively invading. They showed active interests in Taiwan for their trade base in the Far East. Thus, after almost 100 years of indifference, government started developing official plans for Taiwan. Yet, the policy of ruling “barbarians” had no radical changes<sup>10</sup>. It was not until the Japanese occupation, especially at the time when more soldiers were needed for the WWII, that the policies of segregation were changed to a policy of “Royal-People-nization” (Japanesation; Huang-Ming-Hua): encouraging people in Taiwan, whether Han or Indigenous, to be nationalized, to embrace Japan thoroughly, instead of being a second-class colonized people. Although Japanesation soon came to an end with the end of the war, it was arguably the starting point of the assimilation of “ethnicity”.

After the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist Party)<sup>11</sup> government took over Taiwan from the Japanese, the policies for governing the “barbarians”<sup>12</sup>, followed a strategy of assimilation, only this time the principle was Sinicization, not Japanesation. Even though “ethnic” people (not exclusive to Indigenous) reluctantly fought against the ideas of assimilation and military government at first, after decades of ruling by KMT, the majority of people acquiesced to governance in educational, cultural, linguistic and other aspects of their lives. To some extent, the propaganda that promoted Taiwan as the land of “the Last Hope for Countercharging Homeland China” had been successfully installed into the majority of people, even though they and their family did not retreat from the mainland with the defeat of KMT. “Authentic” Chinese

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<sup>10</sup> There were policies to educate and assimilate so-called “tamed barbarians”, who were living in the flat plains at that time and had a certain level of assimilation by Chinese, but little regarding to “raw barbarians”, who were living in the mountains and had less or little Sinicization. Eventually, the different level of assimilation led to a myth prevailing in early KMT ruling period, which reflected in the term, “mountain people”, which was used to identify the Indigenous people in Taiwan.

<sup>11</sup> The party originated in mainland China in 1912. It was organized by Song Jiaoren and Sun Yat-sen which overthrew the Ching Dynasty. The KMT fought the WWII with Japanese, and, then, the Communist Party of China for the control of China. Led by Chiang Kai-shek, it was a major force in Chinese politics for several decades before its retreat to Taiwan in 1949. There, it controlled the government under a one-party authoritarian state until late 70s..

<sup>12</sup> The policies ironically saw “Taiwanese/Fukuanese” as barbarians, like how Japanese did.

culture became the one and only rightful culture. As a result, unlike prior to this assimilation, when the myth and curiosity around ethnicity and ethnic traditions led them to be explored as intriguing anthropologist projects (Masuda, 2003), these differences were treated as ab/normal folklores that evidenced the deviancy of “those” people. To certain extent, the occasional foreignness helped mold a harmonious “Chinese” society, for if there were anything not so “Chinese”, it must be caused by their “ethnicity” (Sun, 2000).

The ideology of Sinicization in Taiwan was challenged, fiercely, at the end of 1970s. The “Formosa Incident”, which happened on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1979, was the moment of breaking out, and political/social activism has followed ever since. Ethnic/ “local” groups asked to be recognized and to be emancipated. As a result, more localized perspectives were introduced into education (for example, adding the ‘History of Taiwan’ in the curriculum), media (for example, the emergence of Indigenous, Taiwanese/Fukkan, or Hakka speaking TV and radio stations) governmental agencies (for example, the ‘Council of Hakka Affairs’ and the ‘Council of Indigenous People’), celebrations/tourism (for example, the programming and promotion for Hakka Culture Festival and Indigenous “Harvest Festival”) etc. Roughly speaking, this entailed a rise of “multiculturalism” in Taiwan, in which every “ethnic” group had their voice in daily lives and did not shy away from “mainstream” attention.

## **5.2 Discussion**

Having this abridged historical transformation in mind, I can now link the various themes in the findings to the ethnic power struggles in Taiwan.

One perspective represented Ilisin in term of the “other” as “their” event. These

articles were mostly located in the local news stories where the hybridity was treated softly, and apolitically, as a necessary outcome of “modernity”. Because the level of assimilation was so deep, the Indigeneity that survived, in this case the existence and celebration of Ilisin, was seen in term of incommensurable differences. The perspective revealed a tendency to signify and spot “aberration”, i.e., Indigeneity, in a formulaic way as: “No matter how much they are like us, they are never us”. In other words, instead of considering the “Indigeneity” as a contingent outcome of people’s historical and social backgrounds, it sees these differences as axiomatic by ignoring the fact of colonization, assimilation, resistance and so on. It put “Chinese” as the norm, omitting Indigeneity most of the time, and singling it out when Indigeneity became too obvious. On the other side of the spectrum, there is a discourse from a similar logic that sees Ilisin as “our” thing and “our” place, one which was crucial mostly in the Indigenous-oriented magazines. By saying that, it rejects any interventions from the outset. It asserts a clear binary: we are we; your interruption is not welcome. In this way, it accepts the fact that the cultures will change with time and that hybridity is inevitable. However, it also asserts a self-determination which argues it is the right of “the people” to decide how their identities and cultures evolve, and that the ruling political parties, in this case, the Han governments, have no right to intervene. These two antithetical discourses constructed a similar concept that there are essential differences between “Chinese” and Indigenous people, which Ilisin exemplifies, and which means the government and tourist industry should get out of their/our business (Chow, 2003; Gunew, 1993).

The discourse of advocating/promoting tourism, in one sense, provides evidence of an awaking consciousness about local cultures. It shows that Ilisin, or the “Harvest Festival” as mostly it is referred to, as a special treasure of the local. Also, at the same

time, it considers tourism as opening up a channel for communications between once separated groups (Taylor, 2001). Yet, in this view, the danger that this trend of tourism might exploit the local cultures/environments in colonial and imperial fashions should not be overlooked, nor should the nostalgia for nature and the past which is imposed onto these people, cultures and the locations where the event happens (Azaya, 2004). It is not surprising to know that stereotypically Indigenous people and cultures, and East Coast of Taiwan, are all seen as 'primitive and rough', and this is now the niche or selling point for this tourist attraction. For example, Hualien was considered as "undeveloped" years ago, and the government, central and local, were criticized often for ignoring periphery, which has the highest Indigenous population in the island. Following the blossoming of local tourism, the Hualien County Government was eager to promote its primitivism and to position Hualien as the last "pure" land in Taiwan. The promotion of this tourist approach is obvious in the media. The presentations that portray Hualien as the "Home of Nature/Indigeneity/Origin" and the periphery as the place to be in order to escape daily routines support the logic of a discourse of dichotomy of modern/primitive, and central/periphery (Markula, 1997). This situates "Chinese", in the sense of educated, modern, and urbanized Chinese, in the position of power to consume those local/ Indigenous people in the small east coast towns.

Meanwhile, there are also descriptions about how Indigenous/local people benefit, financially, from the tourism and their "performance". This perspective empowers local and Indigenous people by recognizing their ability to cope with tourism, and, at the same time, poses tourists in a vulnerable position at which they were being economically exploited. Although it recognized the subjectivity that locals might have in this perspective, by describing this financial reward, I argue, it helped

assuage the guilt, if there is any, of promoting/selling/buying exoticism, stereotypes, and fantasies, and justifies the acts. Moreover, it could lead to a neglect of the power disparity between the parties by elaborating and amplifying the benefits, and, at the same time, potentially provoking distaste toward “selling” the cultures, as evidenced from the Internet (Chen, 1992; Cheong & Miller, 2000).

Yet, the chances to reconstruct and transform the cultures and identities via tourism/commodification/capitalization should be and have been recognized by people. As Hobsbawm (1992) tries to demonstrate in his work, the so-called traditions were all invented at a certain point for the interest of certain parties. In this vein, the “authenticity” might not be as important as the question if it is possible for people with ownership to control the potential of reproducing/reconstructing people’s own cultural practices and forms. In his observations of villages in South America, Garcia Canclini (2001) believes that people have rebuilt the ownership of their townships and culture via commercialization. In the case of Ilisin though, the power of promoting, organizing, and presenting the event in the media is mainly in the hands of non-Indigenous related governmental agencies, i.e. tourism bureaus. For example, the government of Hualien County, in order to be more “tourist-oriented” and thoughtful (for tourists, apparently), has created a “United Harvest Festival” out of nowhere in Hualien City, which has the easiest travel accessibility from out of county. The “Festival” successfully ascended on the radar of tourists, however, this tourism-customized event is less a “success” for rejuvenating a culture, due its obvious commercialization. Rather it is “symbolical violence” at the expense of Indigenous people/cultures and people living on the periphery (Hsien, 1996).

After 2000, the pivotal election in Taiwan’s history, the first president from the ‘local’ political party, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was elected. Since then,

there has been a trend to 'de-Chinese', which is to cut off the connection with (the imaginary) China that the previous KMT government had always coveted, and to (re)learn and (re)discover what Taiwanese have on their land. Indigenous cultures, as native and unique cultures on the island, unsurprisingly, have ever since been included as parts of 'Taiwanese' cultures. In other words, there is a discourse showing a gracious attitude toward this part of "our" diverse Taiwanese culture. It is an important model for multiculturalism. Every minority group gets its spot under the umbrella of nationalism, which can easily be observed from the supreme status given to local governmental officers in the event. The discourse of 'ours' gives the power to 'others'/majority to share ownership of the cultures with a minority, I argue, in order to make up their 'lack'. In one sense, the 'lack' reveals the anxiety of Taiwan in a de-colonizing process (from colonization by the Dutch, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, and, arguably, Chinese again) to find a spot of its own, and the confusion and bewilderment of people to re-imagine their identities (Bhabha, 1993). At the same time, it also avows the ignorance of the 'dominant' people whose culture is almost undetectable for its natural existence and normality, which leads to the urge to fill out this 'lack' by owning these unique and visible minority cultures. Furthermore, the nation, because of its ownership, on behalf of these cultures has the obligation to preserve, protect, manage, and, if necessary, to intervene (Chow, 2003). In the end, this gradually turns into a quest for 'authenticity'. Gunew (2004) argues that "authenticity" is a performance judged by audiences, in this case, including the governmental authority agencies. In order to fill the slack, ethnic minority, Indigenous people, are burdened to act/performance 'authentically', or they might be punished by the system, such as loss of financial subsidy, media, tourist promotion, etc.

Representations of the "traditional" ways in which Ilisin was conducted can also

be found in the media. Although articles appeared to be simply informational, even sometimes educational, what they conveyed was never neutral knowledge. This discourse, on the one hand, shows the sincerity to “make up” for the faults of previous colonizers and to (re)connect with the earlier inhabitants of the land, as well as a nostalgia for purity and the uncontained. This nostalgia could have the tendency to negate the influence of colonialism or imperialism, in order to return to innocence (Loomba, 1998). In this case, the recovery of “traditions” gives this government an easy way out from the critiques of colonialism of its own (i.e., the arbitrary claim of itself as the authentic “Taiwanese”, and the ignorance toward other minority people that was maintained for long period of time). Since it is now including “Indigeneity” and helping rehabilitate Indigenous traditions, this government should not be criticized. Additionally, the nostalgia helps to undo the “Chinese” colonialism, by turning back the time. This is ironic as some, if not all, of the “historical material” of the traditions were produced under another colonial power, Japanese (Matsuda, 2003). In the end, the retrieving could lead to another sense of essentialism, which stated that there is a distinguishing Indigeneity which needs to be restored. It might overlook the historical process and evolution this ethnicity has been through.

Moreover, the ritual of Ilisin has also become a bridge between ethnic groups in the discourse. The idea that by going through this ritual “you will understand Indigeneity” is widespread. Government (co)hosted Ilisin to welcome people out of the tribes to participate in the process. This mimetic primitivism, by which I loosely apply what Healy (1999) used to describe the way ‘outsiders’ experience and imitate the ways Indigenous people lived and acted in certain “Indigenous” settings, is never a one-way exhibition. Instead it brings outsiders, who could be either Indigenous or non-Indigenous, under the scrutiny of tribes and makes them have to recognize and

negotiate with things they might not expect, things that are not so “Indigenous”. Moreover, it reached, to some extent, what Taylor (2001) introduced as “sincerity”. Both parties, locals and visitors, presented themselves in a “truthful” way in order to meet in between: to negotiate previous stereotypes they held beforehand. However, the gesture of presenting the event as a way to understand Indigenous people and culture overlooks the “normal” lives Indigenous people have outside of this short period of time. In other words, this discourse, in some ways, makes Ilisin become a “habitat” where “living” Indigenous people reside, Indigeneity is produced and exhibited, and others can visit (Chow, 2003).

From the “testimonies” on the BBS, there are many Indigenous youths who attribute their “Indigenization” to their learning about and, in some cases, participating in Ilisin. It was a process through which they found (or gained) their ‘Indigenous’ selves. When the media portrays Indigenous people’s social position by broadcasting the Ilisin festivals, this information could be seen as in a manner similar as Althusser’s “hailing”. Through this representational and ideological process, Indigenous subjects come to construct and recognize their Indigenous subjectivity. In a sense of performativity, people, Indigenous specifically, feel compelled to perform their Indigeneity to “become” Indigenous people. To elaborate further on this case, the way users “embodied”/felt Indigeneity revealed a recognition that there is a social discursive formation that defines Indigeneity such, that they can relate to various forms to “be Indigenous”. While the media produce and convey messages that construct Ilisin as a place where Indigeneity exists and is exhibited, Ilisin comes to be recognized as a model or example of Indigeneity. Hence, those who participated in the event get interpreted as experienced and embodying Indigeneity. Although, theorists argue that it is impossible to reach a “perfect performance”, these imperfect

performances serve, at the same time, to (re)construct the discourse from which they are formed. In this vein, these participants perform the way they imagine Indigeneity should be acted out, and, at the same time, the actors contribute to what Indigeneity is like. In the end, the possibility of changing the discourse is introduced. Moreover, this is to say that the compelling feeling to “act out” discourse in order to “be” Indigenous reveals the artificial, if not impossible, since it is never stable, links between bodies and ethnicity/race (Butler, 1999[1991], 1993; Chow, 2003; Gunew, 1994; Shugart, 2003).

In order to be “authentic”, the “performance” has to be recognized by its audience (Gunew, 2004). In this sense, in order to recognize the performance, the audience needs to be able to link it to the social discourses it refers to. Thus, when Ilisin is radically customized for tourism, its performance rendered in entertaining or “inauthentic” way, there are likely to be disconnections between “traditions” and the event for the audience that has prior understandings of the social history and origins of Ilisin. In this case, the audience did recognize the “affected” and “contained” elements in the event. Yet, the responses from the commentators to affection, or hybridity, varied. There were people who were upset about the “inauthentic” experiences, but others who did not think it was important for them to experience authenticity, and were more interested in the exotic and different, as an escape from their daily routine, and who considered a “modified” Ilisin as more “accessible” and more effective at achieving its mission of introducing Indigenous culture. These mixed voices about an adjusted cultural performance reveal several scenarios of power struggles, such as tourists who have power to gaze on the event, people who protest its modification by and for “outsiders”, tourists who are vulnerable to “be cheated” by the tourist propaganda, and people who have ownership and are

empowered to realize their agency to in(ter)vent “traditions” and communicating with “outsiders” (Chen, 1992; Cheong & Miller, 2000; Hsien, 1996; Kassam, 2000; Taylor, 2001).

The construction of discourses of difference is always on going. The definition of “us” is constructed through meanings of Ilisin. In an extremely simplified sense, how the media represented Ilisin showed shifting definitions, and, thus, revealed the ever-changing relationships. At the same time, it avowed the radically shifting social and political climate in Taiwan. Before 2000, the dominant narratives and ideas about Ilisin provided a space for “them” to express “their” Indigeneity. The clear boundary between Han and Indigenous, however, reveals the ignorance of the colonizers (the “authentic Chinese”), and the mesmerizing dream of “irredentists” (i.e., returning to the motherland /mainland China). Then, after a period of social activism and capitalism, Ilisin turned into a symbolic event of rejuvenated Indigenous culture, and ethnic dignity. It became popular and “mainstream”. As a tourist sensation it gathered a great deal of interest and attention, nevertheless, it revealed an interesting shifting boundary: This time “us” is not simply Han, but those polished and urbanized Han from big cities who are able to travel to peripheral east coast villages to “escape from daily life”, and “them” included the local Han people whose lives had become somewhat tied to this tourist event. Finally, the discourse of “local consciousness” and multiculturalism constructed a picture of inclusion: Under the umbrella of “Taiwan”, everyone has their voice. The embracing of Ilisin by people conveyed the celebration that “Indigenous people are part of our Taiwanese.” However, in order to be covered by this umbrella, “ethnic” people and cultures will need to fit into the definition of “Taiwan”. Then, who has the power to define it? Apparently, the state does. It is evident in the process of de-Chineseification, cutting off the connections

with China/PRC, the government, and the political party in power since 2000, has borrowed heavily from the “minority” as a proof of distinctness. For example, they have tried to “officially” make Ilisin, a used-to-be ethnic event, a statutory holiday as the “Chinese” New Year.

Thus, in the end, the discourse that defines “us” and “them” is never settled. In other words, the so-called ethnic/racial differences, as Ilisin stands for in this case, can be manipulatively shifted, exaggerated and smoothed over. Friends or foes? It depends.

Additionally, it is intriguing to see the different perspectives in the various publications and articles. The *Min Sheng Daily* predictably produces mostly tourist-oriented articles, the *China Times* is by and large slightly skeptical toward the discourse about Ilisin as “theirs”, and the *Liberty*, on the other hand, tends to embrace Ilisin as part of Taiwanese culture the most. Comparing the political position of the *China Times* and the *Liberty*, it can be roughly described as on opposite poles of the spectrum of the issues about China and Taiwan. Generally speaking, the *China Times* holds a more friendly position toward the concept of “Pan-Chinese” (Da-Chung-Hua), and the idea of (re)union with mainland China/PRC. But the *Liberty* has a strong political position of “Taiwan” awareness. In the end, although it is noteworthy that the political positions are influential with their perspectives toward Ilisin in general, these are not without any variation and inconsistencies.

Finally, the people who were observed in this study were not a passive audience who uncritically received media messages. One of the reasons, I would argue, is that there are multiple discourses, even though there might be a dominant one from time to time, they would choose to identify with, or submit to. Then, there will never be a

perfect translation, even of the same discourse, and they tend to produce different interpretations (Hall, 1996). Yet, there needs to also be an account of the power of the managers of the boards, from which I retrieved my data, as well as the sites to impose restrictions on “politically incorrect” discussions. Even so, Ilisin is never stable, and neither is the interpretation of ethnicity/race, in the audience’s reception.

## Chapter 6 Reflexivity and Barriers/Difficult

### 6.1 Reflexivity

While conducting this research, I felt that I imposed my values onto this project. My personal experiences and beliefs, theoretical or not, were insinuated into my interpretations and the subject matter I selected. This research in some way is very personal, and is a reflection of my will and my own "identity crisis". I felt often that I was doing nothing but applying data and theories to confirm what I have already believed. It happened obviously when I categorized my "findings". I wrote down three "themes", and then started wondering if they were really divided into these themes. "Am I not using my power as a translator/author to bend the material into what I want?" I thought about this question over and over again. To admit that a researcher can never separate herself from her project, self-reflection is arguably an important method to expose the power the researcher has over the research topic and contexts. Thus in the following, I looked back on myself and tried to understand in what ways "I" have had an impact on the research and the results. Moreover, by examining myself and my social position, it may reveal binary ideologies of "us" and "them" (Markula, 1997).

I will begin my reflexivity by telling my stories. It was about ten years ago, and I was a high school student on a field trip to Taipei County. We were visiting a famous park, and, at the same time, there were other groups of students from a local college. They approached and said hi, so we started chatting. They asked, "How do you guys get to school?" It was definitely not the first time for us to be asked this type of questions as soon as people knew we were from Hualien. They assumed we were, first, Indigenous (Mountain people, as we were referred to back then), and, second,

that we live primitive and ancient lives. So we bluffed about how one of us was the daughter of a chief, and how rich her family was to have dozens of pigs and wild animals. Also, our vehicles to school were various kinds of animals. Surely they bought these stories and were amazed by us not looking too different from them. When they left, we concluded this conversation by rolling our eyes and complaining this was the situation we always ran into, being (mis)recognized as Indigenous.

I do not know when I started to possess this kind of fear/disgust to be misrecognized as “who I am not”, i.e., Indigenous. But I can always feel it especially when, as I call it, the problem of choosing souvenirs occurs. At the age of seventeen I left my hometown, Hualien, for college in the capital city, Taipei. Once I went back home for vacation in my freshman year. At the end of the trip, my parents wanted me to bring some souvenirs for my new friends. They considered “Indigeneity” as a way to present me and my people in Hualien. However, I was very reluctant to accept the idea that “Indigenous things” could represent “my” hometown and me. Due to my “humble” origin, athleticism and tanned skin, I had already been asked if I was Indigenous in the big city very often. Thus, I had felt the urge to distinguish myself and “them”. Yet, in the end, we reached an agreement that “their” culture was fresher and more exotic for those “Taipei-ers” after all.

After five years of undergraduate studies and other “enlightenments”, I finally grew to be a strong proponent of the (political) ideology of an Independent Taiwan. I am against being treated as “Chinese Taipei/Taiwan”, and I even refuse to call my country as “R.O.C” (the Republic of China). As a result, I had to reexamine who count as Taiwanese, who I am and who “my people” are. Eventually, I revised my attitude toward many other ethnic groups. Yet, do “I” really change?

Throughout this research, I have been trying to figure out the distinguishers/links between Taiwanese, Chinese, and Indigeneity. My own struggle of finding the “national” identity was projected onto this research. As a Fukkan descendant, whose family has lived in Taiwan for seven generations, or politically incorrectly called as a “Taiwanese” (Ben-sheng-ren), I have been through different stages about feeling connected with the “Pan-Chinese”, as well as with the “others”. In the end, I could see my “sequence of identities” emerging from/implicated in the stages I set for Ilisin. As a very loyal and strong advocate of independent Taiwan, my thoughts might reveal some pre-existing bias toward “Chinese” and ignorance toward other minority Han ethnic groups, i.e., Hakka.

Nonetheless, this would not and could not be an excuse if the research ended up being extremely skeptical. My self-reflexivity helps me to see my motivation more clearly, but does not stop me from looking for a “truth”. In this research I attempt to link a variety of theories to explain the findings, and I understood it was possible that I was looking for particular theories that would fit my findings. It is inevitable. The question I kept asking myself is “Is this logically/theoretically practical?” All in all, there would not be only one exclusive way to explain this subject. What I could do in this project is to acknowledge my position on this issue, and my influences on this research, and thereby to achieve a logical, believable conclusion, which could be one version of truth for me and possibly for others.

## **6.2 Barriers/limitations**

In this section, I have attempted to summarize the challenges and barriers I faced while doing this project. By recognizing the limitations, it could help describe a certain imperfectness of the project, and also provide suggestions for future related

studies.

It was a tough task to translate the data into English. With my limited language ability, sometimes I could only hope that I successfully pulled off the meanings of those elusive terms and words into English. Nonetheless, there would be a time when I had to interpret the meanings first, then choose the “appropriate” ways to translate these meanings into English. It might reduce the reliability of this research. On the other hand, it discloses certain concepts illustrated in this project: the question of linguistic or/and cultural translation, the power of authors/translators, and, in the end, the instability of “meanings”. Consequently, although it might have been a challenge, if not a limitation, for me to have had to translate numerous Chinese texts into English, it also demonstrates the subject of this project, that of translating a tradition/ritual into other social/political/cultural settings.

Categorizing was a task that made me struggle during the process. This involved more than simply doubting myself about my quasic-subjective intents in designing these categories. It also stemmed from a deeper anxiety about arbitrarily categorizing things. This, on the one hand, can be defended as a necessary evil in order to catalogue the different definitions of Ilisin given by people from different social positions. However, on the other hand, the danger of omitting possible hybrid meanings was very real. In other words, by categorizing these meanings of Ilisin, arbitrarily, the power structures behind the production of the discourse might be overly simplified, and the complexity of their form overlooked.

In this research, the amount of data is not huge which posed a potential limitation for reaching “data saturation”. A period of 10 years might not be short, however, the data sources were limited to 3 newspapers, 3 magazines and several online articles. Could they possibly “represent” all the media representations? In

addition, could the online articles represent what people actually thought and experienced about Ilisin? Of course not! And to be honest, it was never my intention to identify every possible perspective on these issues, nor would that be possible. One purpose of this project was to explore alternative ways to look at the issues and hopefully to challenge prevailing ideas about race/ethnicity, which see difference as a natural and unconditional occurrence, in the society.

In the end, the issue of “authenticity” also came up a number of times. This project and my personal ethnic/racial background, both arise from colonial origin: I, a Han, a descendant of colonizers, am doing research about an Indigenous event to “explore” my own identity struggle. How very appropriate! Even though I disclosed that I, for various reasons, have the right to discuss this topic “authentically”, I have doubts in mind. Therefore, I have been very cautious about the words and languages I used. However, this led to another question: Why cannot I proudly “own up” to this Indigenous culture? Isn’t that the main idea of a multicultural society, to include every culture under the name of the country? To a certain extent, the project in the end provides a possible answer: If dominant groups proclaim the coming of the “multicultural era” which encompasses all (minor) cultures under its umbrella and overlooks the history that led to the oppression and the power structures in the first place, this so-called ‘multiculturalism’ would be nothing but another type of ignorance. Thus, I need to be careful not to fall into the trap leading to an irrefutable difference between Han and Indigenous people/cultures, yet not to naïvely take “our” cultures for granted.

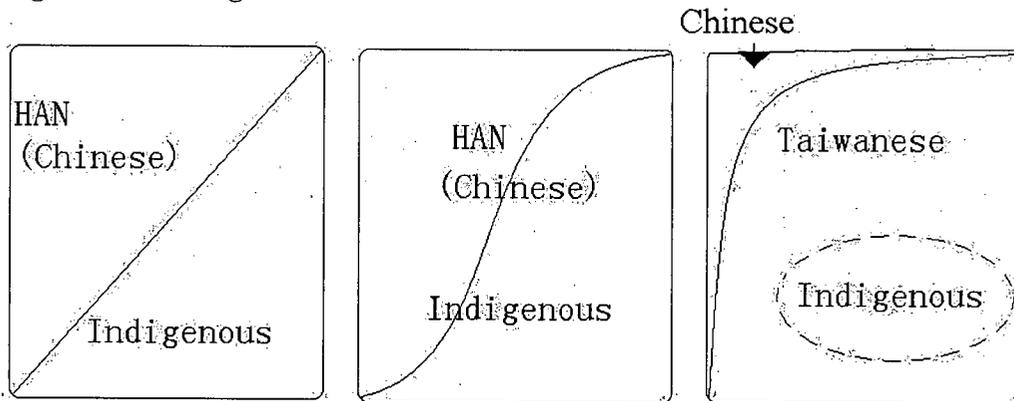
## Chapter 7 Conclusion and Future Research

### 7.1 Conclusion

As Bhabha (1993) claims, “we have entered an anxious age of identity, in which the attempt to memorialize lost time, and to reclaim lost territories, creates a culture of disparate ‘interest groups’ or social movements” (p.212). The symptoms have been more and more obvious in Taiwan, especially after a period of social and political liberation. “Who are Taiwanese?” is one of the most contested questions people are trying to address.

Through this study several social definitions of “others” in Taiwan have been identified. What and who constitutes “us”/“them” will always be a contingent issue that has to be put into the context of political, social, even geographical positions. I illustrated the different positions in Figure 7.1. The left figure demonstrates how the

**Figure 7.1 Shifting Boundaries**



Han (Chinese) and Indigenous are seen exclusively distinct. Although this arbitrarily omits internal diversity in both groups and existent fusions among groups, due to polarized traditional cultures and lifestyles, this Han/Indigenous distinction is historically dominant. Even after being deeply Sinicized, to some extent, still cannot escape from being “others” in the society. However, this is not settled. Due to a

variety of historical reasons Indigenous people, and Ilisin, are often paired with east coast Taiwan, Hualien and Taidong Counties. Especially after tourism began burgeoning at the east coast, the distinction is more about “tourists” and “locals”, to the extent the local Hans might be recognized as the part of “primitive others” (See the middle figure in Figure 7.1). Last but not the least, there is one more definition of “us”/“them”, which blossomed with the ideology of “independent Taiwan”. Under this definition, Han and Chinese have been treated as separated: The former is seen more as a race and later as a nationality. This de-Chinese process tries to contain Indigeneity as a part of “Taiwanese”, and push “Chinese” out of “us” (See the left figure). Although this is a rough summary of various definitions of distinctions in Taiwan, in the end, it has shown a merging of “Indigenous and Han” and split in Han/Chinese.

In the end, this study has ambitiously tried to engage the puzzles of ethnicity and race in Taiwan, and to challenge the apparent comprehensiveness of the category of “Chinese” in many theories. A critique of multiculturalism, the condition which Taiwan has proclaimed itself to be in, suggest that “indigenous struggles are being eaten away by a state rhetoric of multiculturalism” (Gunew, 2004: 43). The concept of multiculturalism can be critiqued for constructing a utopian rhetoric where the “minority” can have their own cultures/ghettos under the state, while, at the same time, the dominant social groups absolve themselves of responsibilities for prior discriminations. In other words, it finds that “[m]ulticulturalism is represented as the externalized political testament both to the nation’s aversion to its past misdeeds, and to its recovered good intentions” (Povinelli 2002: 18, cited in Gunew, 2004: 43). However, this type of critique overlooks the cultural and ethnic diversity in the “dominant” and inevitably simplified the concept of antagonism. My research has

demonstrated that complex relationships prevail between races/ethnicity other than the binary of “dominant” and minorities/Indigene in the multiculturalism.

Yet, each text is polysemic, and personal interpretations can be skeptical. So through this study I wanted to offer, instead of authoritative interpretations of the issues, analyses from my point of view. Also, it was my intent to provoke dialogues and debates on issues in the Taiwanese context through this study. Still, this research might not be able to provide a thorough answer. Hence, I hope this research can serve as an initial study to provoke further discussions on identity politics in Taiwan and elsewhere.

## **7.2 Suggestion for Future Research**

In the end, this thesis does not answer all the questions I wanted to ask about identity, ethnicity/race, (post)colonialism, and Taiwan. Yet, I sincerely hope this project has accomplished its mission to open up and to invoke more conversation around related issues. Hereby, I would like to make several suggestions for further studies on related topics.

### **7.2.1 Methodologically**

This project incorporated several methods and provided multiple angles on the issues. As a result, inevitably, it in some respects lack depth. The number of media outlets I focused on and the understanding I was able to gain from the discussions/posts on the BBS sites were limited. Hence, I will suggest that further study should broaden the ‘sample pool’ by looking at more diverse types of media or art through which the construction of identities can be revealed. Use of in-depth interviews, focus groups and other ethnographic research techniques would also be useful for gaining a better understanding of the audience. Moreover, the Internet will still be a powerful resource to achieve understanding of young people. Personal

branding and self-expression is a 'lifestyle' of the young people today, and omitting this part of the research would risk overlooking a critical part of what really happens in their worlds. Also, whether to recognize the personal texts on the Internet as 'media' material or a personal narrative, I will suggest they should be considered both ways. Even more so, since the data from the Internet has this unique character, a new approach, which treats the data neither as pure text nor pure self narrative, should be established.

### **7.2.2 Substantially**

The ethnic/racial relationships and power struggles in Taiwan are far more complicated than what was described in this project. In fact, this project omitted, strategically, a large part of it. A future study, could continue the journey of exploring ethnic and racial identities and histories in Taiwan, and could cover more than only Indigenous (Amis, in this study), Taiwanese (Fukkan), and Chinese (mainly, the 'mainlanders'). For example, including Hakka and other new immigrant ethnic groups, who have provoked new identity de/constructing in Taiwan, would be valuable.

Moreover, other 'ethnic'/'Chinese'/'Taiwanese' activities/events could also be explored as a subject. On the one hand, a new subject could provide a device to explore more potential power relationships. On the other hand, by studying these events, their meanings could be rediscussed and potentially de/re/constructed, which I hope, in the end, will contribute to the ethnic/racial debates in Taiwan.

## Postscript

A major political incident occurred in Taiwan after I started writing, but before I finished. To acknowledge its influences, I hereby briefly elaborate on it and the potential impact it has had on this project. It started with a potential scandal involving the current president, who is the first president from a “local” Taiwanese party, DDP, and his family. They were accused of insider trading and forgoing financial account. At beginning there was a rally asking the president to step down, and, then, it gradually grown into a sit-in event lasting for weeks. During the sit-in, there were narratives with nostalgia for “authentic Chinese”. Eventually, it led to a tinge of “ethnic” antagonism, in terms of “Chinese” versus “Taiwanese”. I felt frustrated to see how things developed. I believe it has affected the way I saw my data, and made it more a political-oriented analysis then what I intended to do initially. Yet, as mentioned, as a researcher it is impossible to avoid being affected by things happen in my life.

In the end, I hope people will reconsider and see the antagonism more critically, and understand there will be always power underlying these kinds of events. And in the end, ethnicity/race may not be as natural or neutral as we think it is. This happens to be one of the major points I want to make in my study.

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