

## **Indigenous Communities and Cross-Strait Rapprochement: A Case Study of Chun-ri and Shih-wen**

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### **Abstract**

Absent from most public debates on Taiwan's embrace of neoliberal capitalism are the potential consequences of economic liberalization for Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Deregulating markets and unfettering capital and resources are tied inextricably with cross-Strait politics. With a deep-seated apprehension of China still felt in many corners of the Taiwanese society, these issues are often framed with particular emphasis on the "China Factor", overshadowing other relevant economic and societal considerations and thereby narrowing the scope of debate over government policies. Nevertheless, the potential influx of foreign capital investment, long- and short-term migrant labor and international visitors may have profound effects on Taiwan's most vulnerable citizens, including the indigenous peoples. This paper will report the results of field research conducted among the Paiwan ethnic group, assessing actual and potential future changes affecting their individual families and communities. Preliminary assessment indicates

that official policies liberalizing visitation and trade between China and Taiwan have already affected the Paiwan communities. Whether these changes become handicaps or opportunities depends on realistic evaluation, strategic planning, education, implementation, and periodic re-evaluation. This paper will contribute to the larger discussion of possible responses to the effects of inter-regional migration and transformations on minority societies by providing an assessment of current and potential conditions among the Paiwan of Taiwan.

**Keywords:** *Paiwan, aboriginal communities, economic liberalization, cross-Strait politics*

**JEL classification:** *F15, I31, J15, Z13*

## **1. Introduction: Paiwan Communities in the 21st Century**

Comprising two percent of the population of Taiwan, *yuanzhumin* (原住民, “original residents”) are a small and marginalized social group. The Paiwan is the second largest (17 percent) among the fourteen officially recognized tribes. Paiwan communities are located primarily in Pingtung County (屏東縣). Villages are also found in Taitung (台東), Kaohsiung (高雄), and Hualien (花蓮) Counties, and individual members have migrated throughout the island. Population size and territorial range make the Paiwan uniquely suited for observing the interplay between neoliberal policies and indigenous peoples.

Members of the Paiwan aboriginal community are being absorbed into market economies to increasingly greater degrees by expanding privatization and trade liberalization exemplified by Taiwan’s ascension to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. Integration with the global economy has created social costs and refashioned longstanding

economic structures. On the one hand, tribal cultural identity is under persistent threat of dilution by a dominant Taiwanese culture, while on the other, reliance on wage incomes has intensified among Paiwan households. In an age of neoliberalism and globalization, outmigration for wage income, withering native language fluency, conversion of traditional cultural practices into token ceremonial rituals, and loss of traditional lands to commercial interests are widespread phenomena among Paiwan villages.

At the forefront of these adverse trends has been the process of national transformation from a closed market economy guided by an authoritarian regime into an export-oriented economy managed under a two-party system. The Kuomintang (國民黨, KMT) government began promoting commercial agriculture on aboriginal lands in the 1960s (Minority Rights Group International, 2014). Legislation passed in 1969 ostensibly to protect aboriginal land rights, actually opened a legal channel for commercial interests to acquire traditional aboriginal territory. In effect, communal lands not used for growing cash crops were confiscated by the state or made available for lease by Taiwanese of Han descent (Simon, 2002). Hong Yu-hua (洪玉花) works in the social affairs department of the local township office and moved back to Chun-ri (春日) after growing up outside of the village:

In the past, aborigines who had land didn't necessarily have money. Outsiders who had a lot of money would come looking for land to rent from aborigines. Gradually, the village lost usage rights to its surrounding land. In addition, most villagers were not highly educated and unfamiliar with technology. With the transfer of ancestral land rights, villagers lost their main source of livelihood. At the same time, aborigines couldn't compete with others in the free market.

Young aborigines began leaving their villages in droves in search of work in the 1970s. Those who ventured out were driven by a desire to improve the family's standard of living, by the limited opportunities in the village and conversely the availability of jobs outside engendered by favorable economic and societal trends. Taiwan's economy took flight in the 1970s, with much of the growth captured by export industries. The authoritarian KMT government invested heavily in infrastructure to facilitate its export-led strategy of economic development. In 1973, the government announced the "Ten Major Projects" program, which included constructing a major highway system, harbor facilities, power plants, and making other improvements to the island's infrastructure (Mattlin, 2011).

Aboriginal villagers responded opportunistically to the sudden need for workers. Many found jobs as cheap laborers in the factories of small and medium-sized enterprises, the growth engine of Taiwan's economy. Others found jobs working on construction crews, putting together the necessary infrastructure for a thriving export-driven economy. Lin Jin-Li (林金利) departed from Shih-wen (士文) in 1983 and held several jobs while living outside of the village:

I started working in Taichung when I was 17. I worked for 11 years until there was an economic downturn. Prices rose and salaries were low. In 1998, my boss asked me to go to China for a generous salary, but I didn't want to go, so I went into building construction.

You Guang-ming (尤光明) left Chun-ri and began working outside of the village from a young age. His story reveals an inadequate standard of labor protection that was common in many of the industries into which aborigines ventured:

My company was afraid that I would take early retirement and collect a large sum of money, so they were smart and got rid of workers with large funds accumulated toward their pensions. Severance pay always costs the company less money than retirement pay. I was the only one out of 8 or 9 other workers who received early retirement. The last month, they tried to coerce me into signing a resignation letter. They told me to wash the roof every day. It was unbearably hot up there, but my wife told me to endure it. Washing the roof is usually contracted out to an industrial cleaning company, and at least 10 people work together to finish all of the buildings. I made it through the month, so I was able to collect my retirement pay.

Alternatively, public sector jobs were coveted for the job security and generous benefits they provided. The authoritarian KMT government guaranteed lavish pensions, social welfare, and tax breaks to the military, teachers, and civil servants as a gambit to secure allegiance from these key groups (Fell, 2005). Chen Han-ji (陳漢吉) grew up in Nei-wen (內文) and attended Central Police University, the highest learning institution for police cadets:

At the time, the economy of the village wasn't that great, so most aborigines chose to become soldiers, police officers, and teachers because of the fixed income. The public sector is a lot more stable. Most of my classmates are police officers and noncommissioned officers. My wife is from the same village, so we bought a house closer to home. For those who live in different counties, it's harder to come back, so they can only visit once in a while on holidays.

Native language fluency has eroded steadily throughout this period of outmigration. A striking number of adult Paiwan villagers who grew

up in the 1970s and 1980s when community members began looking outside the village for work are more capable in Mandarin than in their native tongue. Chen Han-ji, as a native of Nei-wen, lamented that:

Even though our native language is being taught in schools, Chinese is being spoken at home. Some parents might be more accustomed to speaking Chinese throughout the day, and so have become rusty at their native tongue. If they have trouble speaking, then of course they are going to use Chinese with their children.

Meanwhile, government-sponsored indigenous language programs designed to reverse the trend of language loss among aboriginal villages starting with the youngest members of the community have produced mixed results at best. First experimented with in 1996, indigenous language courses are now available in all elementary and junior high schools. Aboriginal students are required to take indigenous language courses in elementary schools in accordance with a 2001 law. The same law stipulated that junior high schools must offer indigenous language education as an elective course (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). Beginning in 2016, aboriginal languages will be offered along with Hoklo (福佬 / 閩南, Taiwanese) and Hakka (客家) as part of a compulsory native languages curriculum (Lin and Pan, 2013). Aboriginal students also have added incentive to achieve a basic level of fluency in their native tongues, receiving bonus points on school admission examinations contingent upon passing an evaluation test (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). In addition, the Council of Indigenous Peoples has published official written systems for indigenous languages, making them more accessible to educators and learners (Pawan, 2004).

Indigenous language programs are fraught with intrinsic and environmental difficulties. Poor and fragmentary teaching resources, curriculum content that focuses almost exclusively on language structure to the detriment of cultural practices, and a dearth of qualified teachers in rural areas collectively cripple the effectiveness of government-sponsored indigenous language programs. Furthermore, a general perception exists even among aboriginal communities that native language instruction is a waste of valuable time and resources. Instead, indigenous language courses play second fiddle to English, regarded as an essential component to educational and career performance (Sung and Hsiung, 2010). The result has been languishing native language fluency among aboriginal youth, and a continued drift toward extinction for indigenous languages.

Aside from imperfect language fluency among aboriginal youth, nearly all elderly Paiwan are illiterate in the newly created Romanized forms of their native language. Looking to the future, these obstacles paint a bleak picture for indigenous languages. Taiwan's indigenous peoples have traditionally relied on oral anecdotes to disseminate history and socialize children. Although this oral tradition can be communicated through Mandarin, unique cultural traits are lost or obscured in translation. Tjuku Revuci (Weng Yu-hua, 翁玉華), head of the social affairs division in the Chun-ri Township Office, attributes the decline in oral recitation to the proliferation of communication technology in villages:

Storytelling occurs less frequently now. Even though the government has begun promoting cultural education in public schools, kids study outside of the village and are seldom at home, so they don't have as much time to interact with elders. When they do come home, they play computer games, watch television, and surf the Internet. In the

past there weren't these types of activities, so after finishing dinner, everyone would listen to elderly people tell stories. Wisdom from older generations is difficult to pass, because young children don't have firsthand experience of that kind of lifestyle. It makes it more likely that children will find the stories irrelevant.

With illiteracy widespread among the older generation and children and middle-aged villagers less than competent in their native language, formidable barriers exist hindering the passing on of culturally sensitive portrayals of family and village history. Internet access is expanding rapidly in Paiwan villages, allowing external influences to creep more deeply into aboriginal societies and replacing traditional forms of socialization with online communities. Knowledge of family and village history has deteriorated, and the collective oral tradition, including stories, myths, and beliefs has also faded. Losing such sources, the narratives of aboriginal communities will be told more and more frequently by academics and outsiders rather than by community members themselves.

## **2. Comparison of Chun-ri (春日) and Shih-wen (士文)**

Embedded within these broader trends, individual communities and community members develop distinct identities and economic strategies to persevere through cultural change and economic dislocation. Although members of the Paiwan ethnic group are part of the second largest aboriginal tribe, they account for only a slim portion of Taiwan's population. Nevertheless, there are striking differences among Paiwan villages in depth of cultural assimilation with Han Chinese as well as patterns of inclusion in the market economy based on marked diversity in terrain, population spread, and distance from urban centers. Although

it is possible only to speculate on the effects of Taiwan's deepening integration with the global economy forged upon a thriving relationship with China, presently observable differences between villages may be harbingers on the future of indigenous cultures and communities.

Paiwan villages sprawl across the southern chain of Taiwan's central mountain range and in the hills and coastal plains of southeastern Taiwan. Paiwan society relied traditionally on hunting and subsistence agriculture, with each village having economic rights within acknowledged territorial boundaries. Prior to the period of Japanese administration, members of the Paiwan tribe had a tenuous tribal identity, lacking an ethnic name with which to describe their peoples. Identification among Paiwan members was based upon home village (Tung, 1995). Further complicating tribal ascription, the name "Paiwan" has been used to describe different groups of people at different times (Chiang, 1993). Nevertheless, there are close relations among clusters of Paiwan villages, including between Paiwan members in Chun-ri Township (春日鄉).

Nestled at the southern tail of Taiwan's central mountain range, Chun-ri Township was established in 1950 as an amalgamation of several Paiwan villages, including Chun-ri (春日), Gu-hua (古華), Shih-wen (士文), Gui-chong (歸崇), Li-li (力里), and Ci-jia (七佳). Several of the villages within Chun-ri Township have been uprooted prior to settling at their current locations. In 1934, the Japanese colonial administration had encouraged aboriginal families from Shih-wen to move from their mountain hamlet to a new settlement in the vicinity of Fangliao (枋寮), the nearest predominantly Han Chinese community. A total of 119 households chose to relocate, forming six smaller villages collectively called Chun-ri (春日) in honor of Kasuqasang (甲中春日), the Japanese police officer in charge of aboriginal affairs in the region. At the same time, population growth and a dearth of available

land prompted villagers from Shih-wen to create a branch village at Gu-hua. A devastating typhoon struck southern Taiwan in 1972, causing extensive damage to Chun-ri, Gu-hua, Ci-jia and Li-li villages. Villagers then collected what remained of their belongings and moved to rebuild their communities at their present-day locations (春日鄉部落誌 [tribal records of Chun-ri Township], 2010).

The removal of Chun-ri from the inner mountain to the outskirts of Fangleiao occurred at a time when job opportunities were limitless and good wages were paid to laborers. Accustomed to relocation, village members were undaunted by the difficulties of embarking for unfamiliar settings for wages. Jobs in labor-intensive industries and on construction crews offered gainful employment to the working-age population of Chun-ri, and made consumer goods widely available to households within the village. Living in the vicinity of coastal towns and bustling transportation networks allowed individuals to find jobs while maintaining a support system in the village. Families from Chun-ri were thereby well-positioned to take advantage of Taiwan's economic transformation. Hong Yu-hua remembers the dramatic changes that took place in Chun-ri:

When the village moved from its former location in 1973, houses were still one-story and built from stone and mud. In the early 1980s, the economy started to take off, and people re-built their houses. When villagers from my generation got married, they built two-story houses. Back then, it didn't matter what your occupation was, you were sure to make money. Houses were constantly being built, so there was always a need for more workers and wages were high. You could make 2,000-3,000 NT<sup>1</sup> a day, and, occasionally if there was a deadline to meet, you could make up to 10,000 NT. My husband was a professional soldier and had Sundays off. From 1989-1990, he

would go with neighbors to erect houses outside of the village, and one time, he made 6,000 NT.

Leaving the village for wages bore fruit for Chun-ri households, with many using their earnings to invest in housing renovations, household appliances, and commercial goods. Consequently, the standard of living in the village has risen dramatically and social advancement has become a priority for Chun-ri villagers. A significant number of middle-aged villagers have bought houses and settled in urban areas to take advantage of the greater social benefits available:

Villagers were poorer before. Everyone's house was built with basic materials, and children went to school in bare feet. Things cost a lot less as well. Now, even lifestyle habits are gradually changing. Villagers are educated now, and the economy has improved greatly. We also have a good deal of contact with Han Chinese, and learn from these interactions ... I hope that my grandchildren will attend junior and senior high schools in Kaohsiung (高雄). I want them to be able to learn a lot from the outside environment, and to enjoy public resources from the city. Of course, just studying in an urban environment doesn't guarantee success, but there are a lot more opportunities and better access to resources compared with the village. Children are exposed to different cultures and intellectual stimulation in the city that aren't as readily available in Chun-ri or Fangliao.

Compared with Chun-ri, economic development in Shih-wen cleaves more closely to traditional practices. The permanent residents in Shih-wen are composed primarily of school-age children and the elderly. Working-age villagers are more likely to live outside of the village or be

absent much of the time, leaving the village before daybreak on weekdays and not returning until the twilight hours. Trap hunting is still prevalent, and residents maintain inherited plots of land for subsistence agriculture. Ko Han-chiang (柯漢強) is a civil servant in the economic affairs division of the township office:

The township office is in Chun-ri and it is located closer to Fangliao, so resources are more accessible and the economy is better. Children from Chun-ri have a greater opportunity to become civil servants or teachers because they come from families with better financial situations. In Shih-wen, only the older generation and young children live on the mountain. There is no market economy to speak of, so villagers look for jobs elsewhere. The younger generation comes back to celebrate festivals, or if there is some emergency like a death. Villagers also often come back when they get paid to share their earnings with family.

Traditionally, villagers from Shih-wen are more likely to find menial labor jobs in construction rather than in manufacturing industries. According to Li Jin-yu (李錦玉), the higher wages available in construction are more appealing, despite the heightened safety risks and grueling physical labor. Temporary contract work may also be preferable to villagers from Shih-wen, who can join a construction team with other village members and survive on their earnings for a period of time after completing the project.

Housing the township office is also a boon to cultural capital in Chun-ri. The Township office has discretionary control over various resources including subsidies from various funding sources and administrative support that can be allotted toward organized cultural projects. Both individual artists and groups of community event

organizers can apply to the township office for stipends to promote their work. You Guang-ming noted that:

The local township office offers generous stipends to promote aboriginal culture. You can get a subsidy if you decorate your front door with carvings. There is a strict standard on the quality of the engraving, so they are always beautifully done. Doorframes have to be quite wide to meet the size standard. But you don't have to pay for any of it. The government covers all of the expenses, so they are supporting artists.

In addition, the township office coordinates with institutions of higher learning to sponsor joint programs bringing together distinguished members of the village and students interested in aboriginal culture. Tjuku Revuci offers classes in aboriginal artwork:

I teach weaving classes in Pingtung (屏東). The township office cooperates with National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (屏東科技大學) to arrange classes on aboriginal culture. Although our class sizes are small, we have some outstanding students who produce wonderful artwork.

Located higher in the mountain and with a smaller population, Shih-wen is rarely the site of cultural activities. Instead, volunteers from social organizations travel to the village to arrange classes and activities for the children prioritizing religious and lifestyle education. Residents also have less intimate relationships and more infrequent interactions with officials in the township office than their compatriots in Chun-ri, presumably making it harder for Shih-Wen to receive grants for activities preserving cultural artwork. Therefore, although villagers from

Shih-wen have more infrequent contact with Han Chinese compared with their counterparts in Chun-ri, there is a more concerted effort to preserve material culture in the latter.

The benefits of commercial agriculture have also been distributed unevenly between Chun-ri and Shih-wen. Situated at the base of Da-Han Mountain (大漢山), Chun-ri is in an ideal position to grow mangoes to sell to the market. Highway One lies just outside of Chun-ri, linking the village to major transportation networks leading north-south and westward. Mrs Leehy observed that:

Life is different after relocating closer to Fangliao ... The land that previously might have been used for growing traditional crops is allocated to growing mangoes now. It's rare to see anyone growing millet or that kind of thing.

According to the government's "Regulations on Development and Management of the Lands Reserved for Indigenous Peoples" (原住民保留地開發管理辦法) promulgated in 1968, aboriginal land cannot be bought or sold by non-aborigines (Simon, 2002). Rather, non-aborigines negotiate with aboriginal communities to obtain cultivation rights for a period of time on indigenous lands (Land Rights (05-40), 2014). As a result, villagers in Chun-ri engage in commercial agriculture directly as well as lease land to outsiders. Ko Han-chiang described the development of commercial agriculture in Chun-ri:

Chun-ri and Gu-hua are on nearly level ground. About 80 percent of the agricultural land is used to grow mangoes. Wax apples are also grown commercially in Chun-ri Township ... In some cases, the owner of the land might be getting older, or they might have jobs outside of the village. Therefore, Han Chinese from outside of the

village come to take care of the mangoes. After they reach an agreement, maybe for five or six years, the land is managed by Han Chinese. About 40-50 percent of farmland in the village is contracted out to Han Chinese by private landowners, while another 10-20 percent is owned by the Township Office and rented to Han producers. The rest of the land is left for aborigines to cultivate themselves.

Whereas the land surrounding Chun-ri has been converted for commercial agriculture, agricultural production in Shih-wen occurs on a smaller scale and is operated by community members. A handful of households sell taro to the market, while the majority of agricultural products grown in Shih-wen are consumed locally:

It isn't common to grow mangoes on the mountain. The road to Shih-wen is long and winding, and is often damaged during the typhoon season. Mangoes also require more care, and the cost of inputs is high, so agriculture on the mountain is still very traditional ... Shih-wen is a mountain district, so the transportation networks aren't convenient. Chun-ri is just across a major road from Fangliao, so villagers have closer relations with Han Chinese. This area has warm relations with Han Chinese, but Shih-wen is deep in the mountain, so there aren't as many Han businesses. Over 90 percent of the economic activity in Shih-wen is still operated by locals.

Traditional Paiwan society is hierarchical and composed of four social classes, including the chief, nobility, warriors, and commoners. Regardless of gender, the eldest child of the chief inherited the position after the latter's passing. In the past the chief was the most important figure in the village, responsible for the general welfare and tasked with

supervising ceremonies, managing affairs both between village members and with outsiders, conducting war, and administering other affairs. Village members offered a portion of the harvest and a share of hunted animals as tributes to the chief (Huayu World, 2014). In both Chun-ri and Shih-wen, the divisions between classes have largely faded. However, the position of chief has been retained in both villages under varying circumstances. In Chun-ri, the duties of the chief have largely been appropriated by local government. Tjuku Kavluwen (Weng Yu-hua, 翁玉華)<sup>2</sup>, a civil servant in the social affairs division suggested that:

The four classes still exist, but the differences between them have declined. A number of factors have diminished the importance of traditional classes, including assimilation with Han Chinese culture, elections and government intervention. Before, the village chief held all power over land rights. The local government is in charge of managing land now. Because of these changes, the social system headed by the village chief has been replaced.

Compared with Chun-ri, Shih-wen is removed from local government by its remote location and sparse population. The absence of police stations and government offices affords the village chief a degree of sway in managing social affairs. However, many of the chief's customary tasks have been effaced by economic and social transformations. Li Jin-yu, who is a relative of Shih-wen's village chief, has observed these changes in her lifetime:

The chief has ceded a lot of authority over village matters to the village head. After all, the village head is elected by the residents of the village, and his stamp is required on all official documents. You have to go to the village head if you want to apply for unemployment

benefits or resolve legal disputes. Almost every household in the village receives some form of aid from the local government. The chief also used to act as a mediator in disputes, and his or her word was always final. Now, there are all sorts of organizations that have encroached upon areas formerly under the auspices of the village chief. For example, the patronage system wherein villagers gave a proportion of the harvest or the hunt to the village chief in return for livelihood protection has declined and been replaced by social organizations.

As mentioned earlier, both Chun-ri and Shih-wen have witnessed a steady decline of native language fluency, with pernicious consequences for cultural continuity. Vestiges of traditional cultural characteristics of the Paiwan tribe have still survived despite this handicap. Villagers can still arrange to have a shaman perform rituals to recover from illnesses. Many villagers own at least one set of traditional clothing that can be worn for special events. In addition, important festivals such as the five-year festival and millet festival continue to be celebrated as community events. However, Western religions have penetrated aboriginal communities and diluted the significance of rituals and beliefs. Missionaries and preachers began proselytizing in Chun-ri Township in 1957, and the first permanent church was established in 1960. The vast majority of villagers in both Chun-ri and Shih-wen are of Catholic or other Christian denominations. Mrs Leehy is a long-time resident of Chun-ri and believes that:

Some of the changes in culture have been because of religious conversion. People were superstitious before. There weren't any doctors, so if you got sick, the village sorceress would come and perform rituals. If you wanted to plant taro and you sneezed, you had

to stay home that day. There is a type of bird that was considered bad luck and, if you saw it on the way up the mountain, you had to turn back. Before people converted, there were many types of folk beliefs. Children weren't permitted to eat certain types of food. But now most people follow Christ and the old superstitions have disappeared.

Religious conversion has made an indelible impact on aboriginal culture, notably in dampening the original meaning of cultural rituals. Festivals and related cultural activities have become more symbolic in nature, deprived of their workaday value and serving now primarily as tributes to their erstwhile prominence.

### **3. Cross-Straits and Domestic Economic Policies under the Ma Administration**

After eight years of frozen relations during the Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) administration, discussions between Taiwanese and Chinese negotiators to reciprocally open borders began soon after Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) took office. Talks were held in 2010 under the auspices of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), representing Taiwan and China respectively. The negotiations culminated in the signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Although a historic milestone in cross-strait relations, the ECFA was oriented more toward establishing targets and timeframes for future economic cooperation than implementing concrete measures per se (Mainland Affairs Council, 2009). Articles three and four dealt with future economic pacts, with the two sides agreeing to commence separate negotiations covering goods and services within six months of the entry into force of the ECFA (Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, English

translation, 2014). Accordingly, the SEF and ARATS met again in Shanghai in 2013 for the ninth round of cross-strait talks and came to an agreement on the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014).

The tortuous path of the CSSTA since leaving the negotiating table has shone a spotlight on the ramifications of regional economic integration. A botched attempt to force the CSSTA through committee review into a plenary vote ignited the Sunflower Movement, a nearly month-long siege of the Legislative Yuan by social activists. Public anger was fueled by indignation over clauses contained in the accord as well as a multitude of other grievances with the development of Taiwan's political economy under President Ma. Ignoring widespread grassroots backlash, the Ma administration has continued urging the Legislative Yuan to expeditiously approve the trade agreement.

Apart from the Ma government's determined effort to pass the bilateral CSSTA, politicians on both sides of the blue-green divide have expressed interest in joining other multilateral free trade agreements, notably the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership (RECP). The common perception that the Chen Shui-bian administration's economic failures were a result of intransigence in liberalizing Taiwan's economy has empowered business-oriented factions within his party to promote their own policy positions. Both the TPP and RECP are extensive free trade agreements that would go much further in exposing Taiwanese businesses to international competition, de-regulating a myriad of industries, prohibiting Taiwan's government from banning risky financial products, and granting international corporations considerable legal standing to invalidate domestic health and environmental laws (How the Trans-Pacific Partnership Would Impact Democracy, 2014). The affinity that both major parties have shown for deeper economic integration would

seem to suggest that ensuing Taiwanese administrations will seek inclusion in neoliberal economic agreements regardless of the party in power for the indefinite future (Kuo, 2014). Entering into such agreements is likely to impact economic, social, and political relationships in Paiwan communities in light of the changes that have already taken place following previous expansions of economic liberalization.

Although the presently unratified CSSTA is not the only forthcoming *bête noir* for opponents of Taiwan's heightened economic integration with the global economy, it has drawn the most strident protest. Among the dissenting voices are several grassroots groups defending aboriginal interests, including the Association for Taiwan Indigenous Peoples' Policies, the Indigenous Peoples' Action Coalition of Taiwan, and the Pangcah Amis Defense Alliance. These groups have issued a joint statement objecting to the Council of Indigenous Peoples' toeing of the government line. A separate group, the Aboriginal Youth Forum Against Service Trade Pact, denounced the Council for suggesting that the CSSTA would have negligible adverse impacts on aboriginal communities, thereby betraying the aboriginal rights movement and abandoning its duties (Loa, 2014b).

At first blush, the repercussions of the provisions spelled out in the CSSTA appear to be innocuous for the Paiwan villages surveyed. Only an extremely narrow segment of the population of Chun-ri and Shih-wen is engaged in the less competitive service industries and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) likely to be the hardest hit after the CSSTA is put into effect. Under such circumstances, it is improbable that an influx of Chinese investment will cause a sudden unemployment crisis in these aboriginal communities. Thomas Lin, a Paiwan pastor of sixteen years and graduate student at National Sun Yat-sen University observed that:

Although Taiwan will open its borders to Chinese investment, the impact on aboriginal workers will be limited. It's important to consider the nature of the cross-border labor flow. Taiwan will import high quality labor from China, so there won't be a noticeable effect on the majority of aboriginal communities.

Perhaps echoing this sentiment and outlook, there is little concern among interviewed village members that unemployment will increase in the future. Many expressed a belief that jobs will always be available, despite facing a tougher labor market than in the past. In every case, the loneliness of living far away from the village was described as a greater worry than the threat of unemployment. Job hunts routinely take villagers far away from Pingtung County to commercial hubs in northern Taiwan. Ko Han-chiang has experienced these changes firsthand:

Taiwan's economy was better in the past. Take my uncle, for example. He left the village and found steady work, so he settled down outside of the village. At that time, the construction industry was booming, so there was a need for a lot of manpower. Jobs were very stable, so people could buy a house and raise a family. My uncle became an urban aborigine, but he left as a young man, so he retained aboriginal culture and language. Jobs have become much harder to find now because of foreign workers and industrial relocation. Aborigines face more competition in the labor market now as well, so we have to go wherever the work is. Most villagers go to central and northern Taiwan, from Taichung (台中) northward.

Even in the event of unemployment, returning to the village is a bulwark against the typical privation associated with job loss. The

village provides a social support system and means of subsistence, and offers livelihood protection for those who are unable to find adequate working conditions outside. As a rule, Paiwan who have relocated from Chun-ri and Shih-wen maintain land rights and keep up homes in the village. Ties to the community are preserved through a surviving form of primogeniture, in which the eldest child is obligated by custom to inherit the family home. Village members who have migrated and returned are thus guaranteed to have their basic needs furnished. Temporary or seasonal work in and around the community is also abundant, furnishing village members with sufficient access to basic consumer goods. Li Jin-yu was born in Shih-wen but now lives in Fangliao. She believes that:

Salaries are low and prices keep rising, but you won't be unemployed as long as you're willing to do the work. Since wages can be so low, some people think it's better to be unemployed than get paid so little for doing such exhausting work. Social welfare is really good now. If you don't have a job, you can apply for unemployment benefits. It's possible to get by doing odd jobs around the village for five days and collecting social welfare, so some people choose that lifestyle.

At the same time, implementing the CSSTA has the potential to create new jobs for indigenous peoples. Some proponents of the CSSTA argue that, coupled with burgeoning cross-Strait travel, permitting Chinese investment in Taiwan's tourism industry will nurture a thriving tourist industry in aboriginal communities (Hsiao, 2014). Indigenous peoples thus stand to reap a windfall from the ratification of the CSSTA according to this line of reasoning. However, the expected gains in the tourism industry are minimal for villages such as Chun-ri and Shih-wen. According to Ko Han-chiang:

Not many Chinese tourists travel to Chun-ri, and the ones who do are at most passing through. Except for the old slate houses in Ci-jia, there are no famous attractions to draw Chinese tourists. The most precious aspect of the slate houses in Ci-jia is that they preserve primitive aboriginal life, including the road to get there. If you want to develop the tourism industry, you need to provide running water and electricity and have convenient transportation. The Ci-jia slate houses don't have electricity and the roads aren't accessible ... The number of tourist attractions in Chun-ri Township is limited, so the majority of Chinese tourists who come to the area don't stop here.

The anticipated benefits to aboriginal communities receiving a surge of Chinese tourists are also dubious. A recent visit by Chinese official Zhang Zhijun (張志軍) to Wu-lai (烏來), an aboriginal district in northern Taiwan, highlighted the perils to aboriginal culture that may arise with intensified tourism. Visiting Taiwan in his official capacity as the Minister of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, Zhang was treated to a traditional aboriginal dance performed by Atayal aborigines. The dancers were adorned in clothing resembling that of the Amis tribe, although the headwear of the female dancers was characteristic neither of the Amis nor Atayal (Loa, 2014a). Perhaps a harbinger of things to come, the incident provoked vociferous criticism for being a perversion of aboriginal culture for commercial benefit, or the "projectization" of cultural artifacts (Chu *et al.*, 2014).

Chinese investment in Taiwan's tourism industry may also contribute to the loss of ancestral lands and accelerate the demise of indigenous languages (Lee, 2014). Aboriginal groups have posited that mainland investors are more likely to sacrifice aboriginal interests in order to secure maximum profits on their investments. As a

consequence, these groups fear that Chinese-invested hotels and other tourism ventures will encroach upon aboriginal communities without due respect for indigenous land rights. They argue further that the penetration of Chinese tourists into traditional aboriginal territory will threaten local culture and language as the economy is reoriented toward accommodating Chinese visitors (Hsiao, 2014).

While the controversial CSSTA has drawn sharp criticism from aboriginal activists, it is by no means the only neoliberal policy threatening aboriginal communities. The Ma administration has touted Free Economic Pilot Zones (FEPZs) as indispensable to preventing Taiwan's economic marginalization. A draft plan to establish the FEPZs was approved by the Legislative Yuan in August 2013. The purpose of creating the FEPZs is to escalate economic liberalization by creating business-friendly investment enclaves. In order to facilitate this goal, restrictions on the flow of goods, people, capital, and knowledge will be loosened within FEPZs, and generous tax incentives and conditions for land acquisition will be granted to investors (National Development Council, 2014). According to the draft of the Special Act Governing Free Economic Pilot Zones, six major ports, Taoyuan (桃園) International Airport, and Pingtung Agricultural Biotechnological Park are set to become FEPZs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014b). Article four designates the Ministry of Economic Affairs as the managing authority within the proposed FEPZs, suggesting that business interests will hold sway over labor and environmental considerations within these zones (Tai *et al.*, 2014).

A number of strands of opposition to the FEPZs parallel similar concerns raised with the CSSTA. Detractors condemn the Ma administration for willfully carrying out policies congruous with China's effort to exert political influence on Taiwan through economic dependence. Many regard FEPZs as a Trojan horse for unification with

China facilitated by deepening economic integration. As evidence they point to the ECFA, which so far has produced ambiguous economic results, but established a general framework through which trade and investment with China were normalized (Chiu, 2014). Additionally, critics suggest that implementing the FEPZs will accrue benefits to a slim minority of Taiwanese by allowing corporations to rake in large profits while degrading workers' rights, causing serious financial losses to farmers, and crippling the healthcare industry (Hsu, 2014).

Notwithstanding these points of similarity, the CSSTA and the FEPZs differ on a number of crucial aspects. Whereas the CSSTA deals exclusively with Taiwan's service industries, the FEPZs target the island's agricultural, medical, education, financial, and high-tech industry sectors. A second follow-up trade pact similar to the CSSTA but covering trade in goods was originally scheduled to be concluded by the end of 2014. The eruption of the Sunflower Movement has stalled progress on the trade-in-goods agreement, as China has suspended discussions in order to soften the spotlight on cross-Strait negotiations. Taiwanese government officials have expressed skepticism publicly about reaching an agreement anytime soon (Huang and Low, 2014). Beijing may choose to monitor Taiwanese civil society's reaction to the unfinished legislative review of the CSSTA and perhaps, if necessary, bide its time until a regime change in Taiwan.

A second key divergence is the legal foundation of the two exemplars of neoliberal policy. The CSSTA is a bilateral agreement signed between representative offices of Taiwan and China, while the FEPZs were formulated by the Ma administration as domestic economic policy. Partly as a consequence, public outcry in response to the CSSTA has been conspicuously shriller than to the FEPZs. In Taiwanese politics, the China factor is a cumbersome impediment to forging clear-cut positions on economic policy. Politicians frequently resort to platitudes

about the influence of China to obscure their own economic policy preferences. The China factor allows politicians and the media to gloss over glaring contradictions in politicians' stances on priorities for economic development. As an example, prior to the Sunflower Movement, opposition politicians shamelessly leveled criticism at the CSSTA, while expressing support for the FEPZs insofar as it behooved them to do so (Wu, 2014).

Similarly, the highly politicized nature of the Taiwanese polity persistently obscures politicians' convictions. Constituents rarely punish politicians for making a volte-face in economic policy preference without offering substantive explanation. For reasons of personal interest or fear of public reprisals, several prominent opposition politicians withdrew their support of the FEPZs after the Sunflower Movement. While lambasting the Ma administration for pursuing the CSSTA and the FEPZs, they have offered little in the way of viable alternatives and have relied instead on hackneyed narratives. Although neoliberal policies such as those embodied by the CSSTA and the FEPZs are legitimate targets of criticism, much of the rancor on the side of the opposition has focused on the China threat or the incoherence of the Ma administration's plans. The Sunflower Movement has been instructive in showing that only when the presence of China is unequivocal or when civil society is aroused are there interstices in which groups opposed to economic liberalization can pressure politicians to reconsider support for neoliberal policies (Wu, 2014). However, even in these cases the opposition still derives its objections mainly from political rather than economic grounds.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The preceding assessment of economic policies under the Ma administration reveals a convoluted alignment of interests tilting lopsidedly toward escalating economic liberalization. If such conditions persist, there will in all likelihood be deleterious consequences for large swaths of Taiwanese society. Aboriginal communities are particularly susceptible to social transformations and economic dislocation as a result of the implementation of neoliberal policies. With no end in sight to the pursuit of free trade agreements, special economic zones and economic integration, many of the aforementioned crises besieging aboriginal communities will only intensify in the future.

Already in sharp decline, Taiwan's industrial sector will continue to be hollowed out as a result of diminished restrictions on cross-Strait trade and investment. The massive Chinese market, low wages, and lax environmental and business regulations have proven irresistible to numerous Taiwanese companies. The era of plentiful remuneration in industrial jobs for migrant aborigines has perforce drawn to a close. At the same time, unabated regional income inequality will continue to push aboriginal community members out of their home villages in search of work in commercial hubs. Aborigines who heretofore may have found more stable and safer work in the industrial sector are left with construction jobs as the only alternative for unskilled labor. If the CSSTA is passed, many of the construction companies employing aborigines in the future will be Chinese-owned. Such an employment situation runs the risk of workers' rights violations, in which contract and working condition disputes are prone to political interference to protect mainland investors.

At the same time that neoliberal policies have already created a tighter labor market for aboriginal villagers, they simultaneously pose a mounting threat to the natural environments sheltering aboriginal

communities. From the outset of Taiwan's economic transformation in the 1970s when the groundwork for capitalism was being laid, aboriginal land rights have been in a precarious state. In recent decades aboriginal territory has been disproportionately spoiled by the imperatives of economic growth as environmental regulations are often skirted or arbitrarily enforced. Numerous cases of malfeasance, including illegal dumping of toxic waste, excessive development of ecologically sensitive areas, and unlawful construction projects in restricted areas have been exposed in recent years.<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal communities, having already borne the brunt of negative externalities associated with rapid economic growth, absorb the detrimental effects of these practices most acutely (Simon, 2002). This trend is likely to continue in the future, as many aboriginal communities are located in sensitive environmental areas coveted for resource extraction and reservoir construction. Likewise, researchers have recorded a pronounced deterioration in environments surrounding aboriginal communities exposed to prolonged development of tourism industries.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, commercial agriculture may incur losses stemming from the easing of restrictions on imported agricultural goods proposed under the Special Act Governing Free Economic Pilot Zones. Although most Chinese agricultural products will still be generally prohibited from entering Taiwan, the proposed pilot zone bill allows Chinese raw food materials to be imported tariff-free into free economic pilot zones for processing and export. Local farmers would thus be thrust into competition with Chinese producers, whose lower costs are expected to crowd Taiwanese farmers out of the market (Lee, 2014). Although the bulk of the flourishing commercial agriculture on aboriginal land is destined for the domestic market, there is a credible fear that future agreements will further ease restrictions on overseas agricultural products entering Taiwan's market (Yeh, 2013). Such a development

would have a devastating effect on the agricultural industry in Chun-ri.

Hosting the township office and in close proximity to Fangliao and major transportation networks, Chun-ri is in a better position than Shih-wen to navigate the financial pressures wrought by expanded economic liberalization. The economy in Chun-ri is on much more stable footing when compared with that of Shih-wen. Employment as teachers, police officers, civil servants, and within the professional military is common in Chun-ri. These occupations provide stable work, good pay, and generous benefits that go far beyond what is available in the private sector. Children living in Chun-ri are more able to maintain robust ties with both the Han Chinese community and fellow Paiwan while attending junior and senior high schools in nearby towns. The ease with which village members can take advantage of transportation routes also makes it more convenient for villagers who have left Chun-ri to visit home routinely.

At the same time, however, the thriving local economy has not shielded Chun-ri from cultural dilution and has perhaps exacerbated the shortcomings of cultural assimilation. Having witnessed firsthand the opulence of material rewards accrued from moving up the social ladder, there is a prevailing tendency among village residents to prioritize economic enrichment above cultural preservation. Conversely, clear traces of traditional practices are still alive and well among the remaining population in Shih-wen. Rather than pecuniary ambition, the greatest threat to aboriginal culture in Shih-wen is a population drain that has deprived the village of middle-aged community members, leaving behind mostly the elderly and very young on the mountain.

Both Chun-ri and Shih-wen have begun experiencing the transformative effects of pervasive long-term outmigration triggered by earlier waves of economic liberalization. The direction of migration, however, is not fixedly unidirectional. In the past decade, as wages in

Taiwan have stagnated while prices of basic goods continue to climb higher, it has become more economically viable for many middle-aged migrant aborigines to return home to receive social welfare benefits while taking up subsistence agriculture or engaging in temporary and seasonal employment. These villagers have joined many of their compatriots from the first wave of migration in the 1970s and 1980s, who have already left the workforce and re-settled permanently within their home communities. While some may choose to retire to the village, the experience of venturing out has opened a Pandora's box. In many instances, children of village members who migrated in the 1990s have become accustomed to life in an urban setting and feel more familiar with city life than with life among compatriots. Having grown up with better educational resources, many aspire to employment in high-end service jobs, or to become small business owners themselves.

Young aborigines still based in the villages also continue to respond to the allure of superior resources and hope of a better livelihood in urban areas. The urban landscape these young aborigines face, however, is changed from that which their predecessors encountered. De-industrialization and the concomitant growth of Taiwan's service industries have obliged this cohort to take up more permanent residency in cities and to engage in employment with fewer benefits. The interests of aboriginal communities have therefore become even more intricately woven within the structures of neoliberalism and economic integration. As Taiwan becomes more deeply entrenched in these structures, with inclusion in free trade agreements, creation of special economic zones, and expansion of privatization in the offing, the disparate outcomes for aboriginal communities will exacerbate exogenous social and economic divisions already visible among aboriginal villages and village members.

## Notes

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1. 1 new Taiwan dollar is equivalent to about US\$0.0316.
  2. With the same Chinese name as Tjuku Revuci cited earlier.
  3. See, for example: EPA discovers illegal dump sites (Yu-tzu Chiu). *Taipei Times*, 10th September 1999. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/1999/09/10/0000001554>> / ASE sorry for dumping wastewater (Joy Lee). *The China Post*, 11th December 2013. <<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2013/12/11/395698/ASE-sorry.htm>> / Yoho beach resort operating illegally: EPA (I-chia Lee). *Taipei Times*, 7th May 2013. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2013/05/07/2003561673>> / Crackdown on illegal hotels in Cingjing. *TBS*, 19th March 2011. <<http://news.cts.com.tw/cts/english/201103/201103190695373.html>> / Premier pledges to act on environment (Hsiu-chuan Shih and I-chia Lee). *Taipei Times*, 30th November 2013. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2013/11/30/2003578004>> / Reservoir land laws changed (Shelley Shan). *Taipei Times*, 13th September 2013. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2013/09/13/2003572037>> / Hsinchu aborigines fight tree poaching with forest patrols (Meng-hsiang Tsai and Jason Pan). *Taipei Times*, 29th July 2014. <<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2014/07/29/2003596191>>

4. See, for example: Tzu-Ming Liu and Dau-Jye Lu (2014). The cultural and ecological impacts of aboriginal tourism: A case study on Taiwan's Tao tribe. *SpringerPlus*, 3:347. / Yin-Jen Chen, Su-Hsin Lee and Chun-Yu Chen (2013). Cultural landscape of tourism perceptions by multidimensional scaling on Wulai aboriginal community, Taiwan. *The Journal of Global Business Management*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (October), pp. 84-94. / Tom Hinch and Richard Butler (2006). *Tourism and indigenous peoples*. Routledge, London.

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# **National Identity and Evolvement of Strategic Relations**

