

The connotation of music and identity of indigenous people in Taiwan

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Abstract

This article is a first step in addressing the perspective of music and indigenous identity in Taiwan before raising awareness of traditional territory controversy through the ongoing indigenous movement. Thus, the historical process of indigenous identity in Taiwan is crucial for understanding the interaction of music and indigenous identity in Taiwan. This article is a precursor to my next article, which will discuss music and indigenous movements in Taiwan and will bring the music into the discussion. Firstly, I will discuss the ethnicity of indigenous people in Taiwan to evaluate the collective identity and personal identity of indigenous people in Taiwan. Secondly, the music and identity of indigenous people in Taiwan will be discussed, as music is a means for majority groups to consciously shape the image of indigenous people and to interfere with their lives through musical appropriation. After this first step, I will complete the next article on music that tells the story of the indigenous movement in Taiwan.

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To explore the interaction between music and indigenous movements in Taiwan, this article will discuss some key issues in order to rethink the identity of indigenous musicians first to establish a basic knowledge. The starting point is to discuss indigenous identity through exploring the different spheres of ethnic groups and the formation of identity in Taiwan. Furthermore, the relationships between music and identity will be discussed to make the argument that indigenous people have their own perspective on being an indigenous person in Taiwan, and this is shown through music.

The ethnicity of indigenous people in Taiwan

This article is eager to escape the framework of the 'pan-indigenous ethnic group' to explore the ways in which contemporary Taiwanese musicians communicate their identities through music. This article, thus, will address the ethnicity of indigenous people in Taiwan and explore the discourse around indigenous identity.

Taiwan is a multi-ethnic country. It is suggested that there are four major ethnic groups which have relationships of mutual-antagonism in politics, culture, and society in Taiwan: Taiwanese (or Minnanren 閩南人), Hakka people (客家人), Mainlanders (外省人) and Yuanzhumin (原住民, indigenous people). The first three belong to the Han ethnicity (Wang, 2003: 56; Shih, 2007: 2; Hsieh, 2017a: 22). For instance, when the album *Harmonious Night OAA* (和諧的夜晚OAA) was released by Jutoupi (豬頭皮/朱約信) in 1996, he attempted to use the cultural element of the 'four ethnic groups' in juxtaposition to imply the process of linking localities (Chen, 2013: 115). According to Hobsbawm (1990), the Mainlanders are not a 'community' at all, nor even a 'proto-ethnic group.' However, the reason that 'Mainlanders' is designated as one of the four major ethnic groups in Taiwan is due to the interaction of inter-ethnic political relations in Taiwan's historical process (Chuang & Chao, 2017: 83).

The term Yuanzhumin is also related to the political history of Taiwan. Yuanzhumin are the representatives of the indigenous peoples, and they campaign for the rights of all of Taiwan's indigenous groups. In the mid-1980s, the indigenous movement was on a critical journey towards 'self-recognition, and the term Yuanzhumin was created by the indigenous movement groups to define the identity of Taiwanese indigenous peoples (Hsieh, 2017b: 114). The Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA, 臺灣原住民權利促進會) has promoted the indigenous name rectification movement (臺灣原住民正名運動) since 1984 (Hsieh, 2017a: 100) and they have requested that they be called Yuanzhumin in official documents and in general usage (Taiwan Documents Project, 1993), instead of the discriminatory slang names, like Shanbao (山胞, 'mountain siblings') or GaoShanzu (高山族, 'high mountain people') (Chang, 2003: 227; Hsieh, 2004: 69; Hsieh, 2017a: 169). For centuries, Taiwan's indigenous people have suffered from different forms of

colonisation and thus, each name has had its own histories, such as *Shengfan* (生番, 'uncultivated barbarians'), or *Shoufan* (熟番, 'cultivated barbarians') from The Qing Dynasty of China (中國清朝), *Fan* (蕃, 'savages') at first, and then later *GaoShazu* (高砂族, Takasagun) from the Japanese period, and *Shanbao* (山胞) from the Republic of China, when it was ruled by the KMT (國民黨) (Hsieh, 2017a: 168; Chiu & Chiang, 2012: 530). Among the various terms for indigenous people in Taiwan, only *GaoShazu* had a positive connotation, and this was used during the Japanese colonial period (Chiu & Chiang, 2012: 531). When Huang (1984) tried analyzing the social systems of the Taiwanese indigenous people by observing their political, religious, economic, and kinship institutions, he used the term *Tuzhu* (土著), which is slightly negative, to represent the indigenous people, because there was no specific word with which they could describe themselves.

The academic community was criticized at that time because the scholars believed that academic groups had not proven that the ancestors of the Austronesians were the earliest residents of the island of Taiwan. The term *Yuanzhumin*, which has the meaning 'original people', was said to be not objective. However, to overthrow discriminatory slang names, the term *Yuanzhumin* therefore had prevailed through an official ethnic name-change until 1994 (Hsieh, 2017b: 115; Chiu & Chiang, 2012: 531).

However, according to Wang (2003: 12), the notion of the 'four major ethnic groups' was created with intension to explore the characteristics of those ethnic groups, which in fact have a strongly relative relationship such as the Taiwanese local residents relative to Mainlanders and indigenous peoples relative to Han people. It was attached to the ideology of establishing Taiwan's independence in late 1980. The ideological function of ethnic groups is to classify peoples (ibid: 61). The ideological meaning came from the assumption that the different ethnicities and cultures within Taiwan have their own national identity, which distinguishes them from the Chinese nation (中華民族) (Wang, 2003: 54; Chang, 2006a: 48-49). The boundaries imagined between the ethnic groups are therefore often influenced by the meaning and political purpose of 'the other'. That means it was set against an outside "other" and this is the main reason that has given rise to active distinctions between the main ethnic groups in Taiwan (Chuang & Chao, 2017: 79).

Moving on to more group identification, Jenkins (2004: 21) has pointed out that group identifications and categorizations may interact with each other and the problem of distinguishing a category emphasises the power and politics around identity effects. Power and politics play a vital role on the formation of ethnic groups. As previously mentioned, *Yuanzhumin* is used to define the identity of indigenous people by ATA, which promoted the pan-Taiwan indigenous movement and the term as now become the proper noun, which is used in Taiwan.

The notion of the pan-Taiwan indigenous movement is that of a 'pan-tribal movement' (Thomas, 1972: 745), which includes ten Taiwanese indigenous tribes who participated in a small national movement for Han Chinese. This is also a pan-ethnic identity movement because it has built up a perspective on common ethnicity among Taiwanese indigenous tribes (Wang, 2003: 114; Hsieh, 2017a: 81). After this movement began, 'pan-Taiwan aboriginism' (Mintz, 1974: 30) has been used in a significant number of indigenous research projects in Taiwan. For instance, the *Yuanzhumin* is a social group in Taiwan who offer a contrast to the Han Chinese. To apply a framework for each Taiwanese indigenous tribe, the cultural particularities of the diverse tribes could not be emphasized in Mintz's research on Taiwanese indigenous music in the post-modern era (Chen, 2013: 11-13).

Nevertheless, according to Chao (2003: 190), the tribe was at the centre of indigenous culture as boundaries before the Japanese colonial period. There was no transnational or cross-tribe consciousness on the whole, because of the barriers of traffic, culture, language and the complex relationships between the Han Chinese and the indigenous people. The boundaries of the tribes are the borderline that members recognize, and this perspective formalised tribalism, but this could not be regarded as making up a nation. The indigenous tribes were just a proto-nation without an identity. During the Japanese colonial period, the government educated indigenous people in Japanese culture. This resulted in rather than increasing homogeneity, aggravating tribalization (2003: 215). After the Kuomintang (KMT) government took over Taiwan, assimilation made indigenous peoples suffer stigmatisation identity for thirty years (2003: 205-206). As a result of these historical pan-indigenous nationalism emerged, as the times required (2003: 208). Although pan-indigenous nationalism mobilized the identity of the ethnic groups towards the 'nation' position, it was actually a reaction to colonial forces. It was a symbol of resistance and so was a constructed discourse (2003: 209).

Indigenous culture and identity have been fragmented due to the policies of assimilation at different stages. In 1993, Sasala Taiban from the Taiwanese Rukai tribe (魯凱族) promoted the notion of tribalism as the core idea of the indigenous movement to rebuild traditional culture and the tribal system (Sasala, 1993; Chao, 2003: 210). Mafeje (1971: 257-258) questioned the notion of 'tribalism' in Africa, and pointed out that we need to conceptualise the ideology of tribalism under the context of modernity. He argued that anthropologists should discard the notion of tribalism because of the limits of the classificatory system (1971: 259), he also mentioned the importance of culture, which is how indigenous people describe themselves (1971: 258). Revisiting the pan-Taiwanese indigenous movement and tribalism in Taiwan, we can understand that the former is created with political intentions and the latter is a means through which indigenous peoples can rethink their self-identity, rather than their collective identity with a cultural perspective. Although Mafeje (1971: 261) concluded that the notion of tribalism was an oversimplification and was an anachronistic misnomer hindering cross-cultural analysis in Africa, tribalism in Taiwanese indigenous society is still a progressive movement that helps to support traditional culture.

Furthermore, another justification for the tribalism that arises in Taiwan is the migration of Taiwan's urban indigenous people. During the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s in Taiwan, indigenous people began to migrate to cities in search of employment. In 1995, official statistics estimated that the number of urban indigenous people accounted for about one-third of the total population of indigenous people (Chi, 2005: 24). This situation obviously showed a fragmentation of culture. Even the urban indigenous immigrants have internal cohesion, but there is still much uncertainty about protecting indigenous culture that needs to be challenged. In particular, the indigenous elites of the pan-Taiwanese indigenous movement gradually felt isolated from their hometown tribes (Liu, 1994: 69; Hsieh, 2004: 68 Chi, 2005: 17). According to Hsieh (2004a: 71), there are three reasons for the failure of the ATA's project that was being communicated to the tribes around Taiwan. Firstly, the KMT party controls the indigenous administrative units; secondly, the indigenous tribes are distributed in wide areas of Taiwan and the members of ATA are limited; finally, each tribe has their own language.

Participating in culture is a critical factor in the building of a nation, and national identity has been established through this participation (Chao, 2003: 215). Sharing a common culture makes immigrants maintain their identity within a majority culture (Mafeje, 1971: 259). For perspective, the differences among the traditional cultures of the diverse tribes in Taiwan should be underlined. There are complex cultural

differences within the ethnic groupings within Taiwan's indigenous people and these groups have strong self-identification through facets such as language, custom and tradition, social systems and institution (Wang, 2003: 57-59). For example, Hsieh (2004b: 219) explored the ethnic composition of the Thao tribe (邵族) in The Sun Moon Lake (日月潭) in Nantou (南投, central Taiwan) before the tribe was recognized by the government in 2001. He pointed out that Thao people identified themselves as plain indigenous people (平地原住民), who are different from the official indigenous peoples in Taiwan (2004b: 228).

Under these circumstances, Huang (1984) has classified the nine indigenous tribes in Taiwan into two types, on the basis of their politics, religions, and their economic and kinship institutions. One finding is that privilege may be consistently maintained by means of the kinship system and the hierarchy in a tribe's class system, and this is reflected in tribe's belief in gods, rather than in a capitalist economic system. The other finding emphasised an individual's ability to acquire the dominant position, and this did not rely on the class system. Although this classification may not be appropriate to describe all of the types of current indigenous tribes in Taiwan, this article helps us to understand the differences in the political, social and cultural systems among these tribes. In other words, we cannot ignore the cultural differences between the diverse ethnic indigenous groups in Taiwan when exploring their individual and collective identities.

Taiwan has gradually become a multi-cultural country since 1997, and the number of public policies specific to the four main ethnic groups increased, for instance, the Hakka and the indigenous content have been added into the course in main educational system (Chang, 2006b: 120). We are trying to loosen the rigidity of a one-dimensional frame in order to discuss indigenous identity in this article, but given the history of the concept of multi-culturalism in Taiwan, we need to avoid overemphasising the distinctiveness of the so-called 'multi-cultural groups,' a concept which has its historical baggage as a result of different forms of colonialism and other struggles, rather than emerging solely from ethnic, language and cultural conflicts (ibid: 127). As in the case of researching Asian cuisine in Australia, the multicultural perspective is still affected by management policies from the national governmental right (Anderson, 2000: 382).

Some politicians using the social welfare of indigenous peoples to solicit votes and this caused the Taiwan's indigenous policies have been focused on some particularities resulting from Taiwan's aboriginal policy, and there has been constant emphasis on particularity, resulting in labelling in the society and in a reduced space for establishing reciprocity, a situation which could lead to 'reverse discrimination' (Chang, 2006b: 121-22). Chiu (2009: 1085) discussed the production of indigeneity through exploring contemporary indigenous literature in Taiwan and through trans-cultural inheritance. She argued that to re-conceptualise the probably multiple positioning of indigenous discourses in Taiwan's cultural context, there should be a more sophisticated theoretical framework that goes beyond binary oppositions. The aim of this project is not, however, to deny the contribution made by the collective identity of the 'pan-Taiwan indigenous', and it is not to proclaim the arrival of Taiwanese indigenous tribalism. Rather, I would like to suggest a creative and multi-layered approach that can be used to breach the stale polarisation of discourses on indigenous identity in contemporary Taiwan. This article would therefore seek to draw on Jenkins' (2014: 15-16) perspective of identification in rethinking the complex issues surrounding indigenous identity in Taiwan.

Jenkins (ibid.) has pointed out that the individually unique and the collectively shared can be understood as being similar in important respects in terms of the significant identification and interaction between them. Furthermore, the theorisation of identification must equally accommodate the individual and the collective. Following these perspectives, the argument in this article is that the interaction between the indigenous

identities of individuals and collectives is a consequence of the co-existence of multiculturalism and tribalism in relation to debates on the identity of indigenous people in contemporary Taiwan.

Indigenous music and identity

The content of music and dance carry more indigenous ideas and expressions than do written texts, and they provide a more comprehensive means of textual analysis (Sun, 2001: 16). Music and dance are inseparable from the common life of the tribe in Taiwan, and the traditional rituals of tribal society provide the foundation and the practice of a tribe's culture in the context of the classical music and dance of famous festivals, such as the *Ilisin* (harvest festival, 豐年祭) of the Amis tribe (阿美族), and the *Pasta'ai* ('The Ritual for the Short People,' 矮靈祭) of the Saisiyat tribe (賽夏族) (Chao, 2004: 37). As a result, the exploration of indigenous identity in Taiwan via musical culture that is the focus of this article is a means to understand the process of identification through indigenous culture.

To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding in exploring the relationship between indigenous music and identity in Taiwan, the project on Taiwanese indigenous music engages with the concept of national music, this project, at first, will explain the differences between the concepts of 'national music' and 'ethnomusicology'. The reason for this is that the terms nation and ethnography in Mandarin are the same, '民族 (Mínzú)', in Taiwan, and Taiwanese traditional music is often signified as a national music. However, from the perspective of ethnomusicology, all types of Taiwanese traditional music correspond to national music, like indigenous music also corresponds to national music (Fan, 2015: 44). This method in a Taiwanese context means to observe, participate, collect, record, analyze, interpret, and describe the musical culture of an ethnic group and the researcher as an outsider (ibid). The research on Taiwan's indigenous music, for the most part, may consciously accentuate the process of ethnic identification but, more commonly, the perspective of ethnic awareness that is used to discuss notions of Taiwan's traditional music and national music tends to be identified with ideas of nationalism, rather than ethnomusicology (ibid, 44-45).

As mentioned previously in the discussion on the ethnicity of the indigenous people in Taiwan, the identity of indigenous people needs to be discussed through the lens of the discourse around colonial history. The indigenous people have had to negotiate with outside forces in Taiwan, such as Japanese colonists and the KMT government through being faced with their cultures being turned into cultural capital through mass media. The outside forces used different forms of representation to transform indigenous music into objectified cultural capital for their own political or economic purposes (Chen, 2013: 14).

According to Frith (1996: 110), identity is an experiential process and music is the key to providing a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective. In Frith's writing, Hindi film music has served both as a symbol of Indianness in the Caribbean, and as a channel for the dissemination of Western pop music (Manuel, 1997: 24). The diverse music preferences existing in the various identities of Indo-Caribbeans mirror the sense of Indianness that may be located in India, in the diaspora, and in the virtual reality of cross-cultural Hindi films (ibid: 29). The process of being an Indo-Caribbean is thus embodied in the experience of choosing the styles of music in a contradictory situation.

In Taiwan, Hung (2014: 141) has pointed out that the Shijhou Village (溪洲部落) is a village of neo-traditional Amis tribe people in the city, and the indigenous people here have listened to diverse musical styles from outside their own tribe under the influence of technological changes. Although members

understood non-indigenous culture through various genres of music, the oral songs from the original tribe were still the foundation of identity. As in Frith's perspective, music, as a carrier of the process to construct a sense of identity among the indigenous diaspora, has established a sense of place in which the traditional and modernity coexist.

To explore indigenous music and collective identity, there is another method with which to study cultural experience and music of a single tribe in Taiwan. Lin (2013: 49-53) indicated that in the Tao tribe (chi. 達悟族 or Yami 雅美族) in Taiwan, the anood traditional songs in the Tao language, pass on the story of their life and of taboos as a medium through which to communicate emotions, and the makaniaw (traditional taboos) are regarded as common themes for research on Tao music. As we know, indigenous music communicates experiences of life, emotions, culture, and even of taboos, to form the identity of indigenous people.

In respect to individual identity, Hung (2013) also took the Taiwanese indigenous singer, Suming Rupi (舒米恩·魯碧) as an object of study in order to explore the relationship between indigenous music and identity through analysing the lyrics, music and instruments of his two albums. The research showed that Suming established his identity in terms of indigenous people through working on indigenous activities, and also, because of this conscious identity, he has begun to use identity and language as his creative materials, and these have become methods in his expression of self-identity. The image of Suming does not necessarily enable us to clearly distinguish between the two seemingly opposed identities through the superimposed images of 'singing indigenous people' and 'indigenous popular singer,' and perhaps the expression of identity is not single but multiple.

Suming's music emerges out of the experiences of a group of indigenous singer-songwriters who are exploring their own. However, the history of indigenous people being classified as 'others' is related to the experience of indigenous people being colonized by foreign nationals (Chen, 2013: 94). Indigenous peoples were long regarded as others until the 1980s, when they began to write in Mandarin to describe their identity from their own perspective, for example, through the magazine 'Kao-Shan-Ching (高山青)' which was founded by indigenous students (ibid: 95). This was during the rise of the pan-Taiwan indigenous movement. The historical background of indigenous music in Taiwan, related to the notion of being 'the other' and to colonial history will be discussed more fully later in this article. In addition, the relationships between indigenous music and the pop music industry in Taiwan will also be examined.

As far as Waterman (1990: 368-369) is concerned, when examining the identity of Pan-Yoruba, music is an instrument for making history as a social action, realising the future and as a vehicle for respecting the definition of tradition. Put into the context of the discussion of indigenous music and identity in Taiwan, the colonial history of Taiwan and the indigenous music are interrelated and interacting with each other. Music was not only manipulated as an implement for shaping the image of 'the other', the minority group, by the majority groups, but could also be used to reinforce the ethnic identity of a minority group (Chen, 2013: 119). To give an example, the song Kao-Shan-Ching ('High Mountain', 高山青), is a 'mountain song', composed by the Han people during the period of the KMT government. The song was broadcast continuously through mainstream media, causing the general public to misunderstand it as an indigenous folk song, even leading to it turning into a symbol of Taiwan in the eyes of foreigners (Chen, 2013: 101). Yet, the song was covered by an Amis singer Jing-Zi Lu (盧靜子) with the vocable (onomatopoeia, 聲詞) rather than Mandarin lyrics, which has established the aesthetics of indigenous people as different from the Han people (ibid, 117).

Furthermore, based on Frith's perspective of music's aesthetic expression, music and identity aesthetics work to articulate in themselves an understanding that group relations and individuality rely on the understanding of ethical codes and social ideologies (Frith, 1996: 111). As Frith (ibid.) addressed in his study on music and identity:

What I want to suggest, in other words, is not that social groups agree on values, which are then expressed in their cultural activities (the assumption of the homology models) but that they only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organisation of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment. Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.

This concept seems to refute the sociological approach to aesthetic practice in which the social groups express their ideas in music. However, it needs to be clarified that, on one hand, music is, indeed, a cultural activity for indigenous people experiencing it and living together in Taiwan. On the other hand, music is a means for majority groups to consciously shape the image of indigenous people and to penetrate their lives through musical appropriation.

Born and Hesmondhalgh (2000: 2) have provided two notions with which to discuss the characteristics, forms, and other factors of musical appropriation: the manner in which the music of other cultures is reproduced through appropriation or fictional expression, and the manner in which identity and differences in social culture are constructed in musical expression. These two perspectives show that a complex relationship between musical text and sociocultural context exists in musical appropriation. In addition, musical appropriation involves a larger number of political and economic issues in comparison with other forms of appropriation (Chen, 2013: 97). In this regard, contemporary indigenous music is evolving.

Although musical appropriation is described as a means by which majority groups shape a negative image of minority groups, it actually has another role for those who have positive intentions when reflecting on the colonial history of Taiwan. Jutoupi (豬頭皮/朱約信) composed the electronic song *Wonderful Tonight* (和諧的夜晚OAA) in 1996, and this piece sampled the song *Misa Kuling* ('Money Song' 賺錢歌) which came from the indigenous Taiwanese Bunun tribe (布農族), forming a hybrid of different cultural materials to create an atmosphere of postmodern pastiche. (Ibid: 110-111). This song shows a positive intention for ethnic integration from the Han Chinese to communicate with indigenous people through music making (Ibid: 123).

Most of Taiwan's established way of studying indigenous music and identity are focused on the discussion of colonial history from the traditional perspective, so as to discuss the collision between the traditional and the modern in music works, together with postmodern hybridization (Chen, 2007; Chen 2009a; Chen 2009b; Chen 2010; Chen 2011; Chen, 2013). Furthermore, from the organisational point of view, considering the development of Taiwan's indigenous music industry and its relationship with politics and the economy (Huang, 2009; Huang 2011; Huang 2012), although in recent years there has been more research on the self-identity of indigenous musicians (Hsu, 2009; Li, 2000; Lee, 2005; Hung, 2013), there is still no completed research on the process of self-identification among indigenous musicians and the communication utilised to convey indigenous culture and identity to audiences. Colonial history is inevitably the basis of research, yet under the impact of indigenous music that is converging more and more with pop music, as well as under the impact of diversified streaming music platforms and social media, the identity and the practice of indigenous musicians need to be rethought.

As mentioned previously, the interaction between the indigenous identities of individuals and collectives in Taiwan, given the co-existence of multiculturalism and tribalism, is a central issue in rethinking the identity of indigenous people in contemporary Taiwan. Likewise, to achieve the goal through music, this article would like to explore the definition of being an indigenous people, rather than being 'the other' from an outsider's viewpoint when discussing the relationship between music and the indigenous identity in Taiwan.

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