

The Reinvention of Ethnicity and Culture: A Comparative Study on the Atayal and the Truku in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I have examined the ethnic classification based on the Japanese colonial background in the first part. Secondly, I have discussed the process of the Truku Name Rectification Campaign and the standards of definition of an ethnic group proposed by the leaders of the campaign. These standards reflect the objective classification in contemporary society; therefore, the “objective” standards led to many conflicts. In order to understand the name rectification campaign, understanding the Taiwanese political and economical background is necessary. On the one hand, the government in power supported the ethnic group campaign to highlight that Taiwan is a country with multiple ethnic groups or to gain votes. On the other hand, elite aboriginals could participate in politics and increase the numbers of members in Congress. Also, they could promote a self-governing movement to change the aboriginal disadvantages in politics, economics and culture.

When the name campaign succeeded, how to reconstruct “Truku culture” became an important issue. The ancestral ritual provides a field on which to congregate the “Truku” collective consciousness. Although ancestral rituals disappeared when the Presbyterian Church questioned their legitimacy, these processes created a chance for people to integrate modern beliefs into traditional culture. This cultural reinvention is continuing.

Finally, I have made a comparison between the Atayal and the Truku cultures, especially focusing on their two key cultural concepts – gaga (gaya) and lyutux (utux). This illustrates how cultures are redefined and practiced

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differently, according to their local contexts. The invention of culture is ongoing in the locals' everyday lives, rather than only taking place in the social movement, e.g., the Name Rectification movement.

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