Reclaiming Taiwan
Indigeneity &
Indigenous Language Reclamation

Asia-Pacific Indigenous Studies Seminar
May 27th, 2022
Huiyu Lin
Key Concepts

Taiwan Indigeneity

Indigenous language reclamation

Indigenous Pedagogies

Indigenous Methodologies

Decolonization
Taiwan Indigenous peoples

- Austronesian speaking groups
- 2.46% of the country’s 23.5 million population
- Peoples of the Plains and peoples of the Mountains
- 16 officially recognized tribes
Historical Contexts of Taiwan

- **Time immemorial**
- **1624-1662** Dutch & Spanish Colonization
- **1662-1684** Kingdom of Tungning colonization
- **1683-1895** Qing Dynasty Colonization
- **1895-1945** Japanese Colonization
- **1949** Chinese Nationalist - Kuomintang (KMT)
- **1987** Removal of Martial Law
- **1996** First Direct Presidential Election
- **2016** President Tsai’s Apology
1. What are missing in the current movements of Indigenous language revitalization?

2. How does understanding the historical context set premise for reclaiming Taiwan Indigeneity?

3. How does centering the community efforts enable a transformative change in the work of Indigenous language reclamation?
To answer these questions...

- Misuses of Taiwan Indigeneity
- Challenge and limitation to the work of ILR in Taiwan
- A new understanding of history & Indigenous activism
- Center community efforts & Indigenous pedagogies in the context of ancestral language learning
Misuse of Taiwan Indigeneity

Misunderstanding about the history

Four hundred years of colonization has shaped Taiwan into a multicultural society, and to portray Taiwan as a diverse country, all cultural practices should be preserved and sustained.

Harms of multiculturalism

The early intermarriage of Han settlers and Plains Indigenous peoples was used to stress the potentially multi-ethnic origins of the population on the island today, resulting the erasure of Indigenous peoples on the island.
Challenge and Limitation of ILR in Taiwan

Savior myth

Language Ideologies

Top-down & Han-settler centered practices
A New Understanding of History

“In the Atayal language, truth is called "Balay”, and reconciliation is called "Sbalay”, so you simply add an "S" sound to "Balay". Truth and reconciliation are in fact two related concepts. In other words, only by facing the truth sincerely can reconciliation be attained” (Tsai, 2016, para. 16).

- History is important for understanding the present and that reclaiming history is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization (Brooks, 2018; Smith, 2021).
- “History and long tradition of Indigenous resistance provide possibilities for futures premised on justice” (Estes, 2019, p. 256).
Indigenous Activism

- In 1984, a group of Indigenous peoples established the Alliance of Taiwan Aborigines (ATA), kicking off a number of important movements.
- Indigenous activism has played a critical role in Taiwan’s transition towards democracy (Chi, 2016).
- These movements also indicate that the heart of Indigenous resistance is for the relation with the human and non-human lifes on their lands (Chang, 2017).
A new understanding of history

Indigenous activism in contemporary Taiwan

Centering the interplay between Indigenous language, land, identity, and thought
Indigenous Epistemology, Indigenous pedagogies, & Language Reclamation

1. How do Taiwan Indigenous communities perceive the ancestral languages in relation to Indigenous culture, thoughts, and relationships with the lands?

2. What have been the community-oriented efforts in Taiwan Indigenous communities to pass on their ancestral languages and cultures?

3. How are the Indigenous pedagogies practiced in the context of ancestral language learning? What do these pedagogies tell about Indigenous epistemology and knowledge system?
Working with Indigenous Community

- Community-based Participatory Research
- Indigenous & Decolonizing Methodologies
- Relational Accountability
Implications

1. Center Indigenous perspectives and how they make sense of their experiences and world

2. Importance of understanding the nuances of specific community

3. Cultivate an equal, authentic, and reciprocal partnership between community and researchers