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# Studies on Taiwan's Ethnic Relations

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## Abstract

This paper reviews the emergence and development of Taiwan's ethnic relations studies by emphasising its connections to democratisation. It divides Taiwan's ethnic relations studies into four periods according to the nature of ethnic relations or ethnic conflicts at different times: (1) before the early 1980s, (2) mid-1980s to 1994, (3) 1994 to 2000, and (4) after 2000. While focusing on the studies of relations among Han ethnic groups, especially the Taiwanese/Mainlanders dichotomy, this paper also shows the emergence of 'four great ethnic groups' (Holo, Hakka, Aborigines, Mainlanders) discourses during the 1990s, and to the new addition of a fifth ethnic group (the new migrants) after 2000. It concludes by urging reconceptualisations of Taiwan's ethnic phenomenon in a democratised Taiwan after the old ethnic relations characterised by institutional asymmetric relations were largely resolved in the democratisation process.

## Keywords

ethnic relations – ethnicity – Taiwanese – Mainlanders – Holo – Hakka

## Introduction

The study of ethnic relations has always been very controversial in postwar Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> Although the differences between Taiwanese and Mainlanders were

\* The author's research interests include ethnic relations in Taiwan, particularly those between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, ethnic movements and nationalism.

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quite salient and intergroup relations were rather intense following the 2–28 Incident of 1947, it was a political taboo to openly talk about, let alone to study, the relations between them in Taiwan before 1980. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, ethnic relations and their related studies became the most visible social and political issues as Taiwan underwent its democratic transformation. Ethnic relations and their studies, however, remained controversial until recently. This paper reviews the emergence and development of Taiwan's ethnic relations studies and tries to show its close interrelation to Taiwan's democratisation process.

By 'ethnic relations studies', this paper refers to academic research that deals specifically with *asymmetrical or unequal relations* between groups defined by certain ethnic characteristics (M. Chang, 1993, 1994). Such asymmetrical ethnic relations are typically articulated or elaborated by ethnic elites who seek to collectively change the unequal treatment or discriminatory institutions within the system, rather than to cut off intergroup relations completely by leaving the system to form a new one, as in the case of most nationalist movements. By this definition, ethnic relations studies are somewhat different from most 'ethnic studies' that focus on the cultural and social characteristics of certain 'ethnic groups', even though their contents are usually influenced by their relations, especially conflicts or competition, with other ethnic groups.

Since human conflicts usually attract more attention than cooperation, ethnic relations studies by their very nature are usually triggered by confrontational ethnic relations. The factors that lead to ethnic conflicts or competition are usually the same factors that give rise to ethnic relations studies in a particular society. At the same time, however, ethnic relations studies also affect the further development of ethnic relations in the same society. As this paper will try to demonstrate, this is especially true in Taiwan's case.

There are two caveats about the scope and depth of this review. First, given the limitation of length, this paper will focus on ethnic relations studies among the Han ethnic groups in Taiwan, especially between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, but not between Han and Aborigines. Although the Han/Aborigines dichotomy is in itself very important and highly related to the other dimensions of ethnic relations and studies in Taiwan, Han–Aborigine relations have a very different nature and trajectory of development that require more space than this paper can afford for an adequate review. The Han/Aborigines dichotomy, fortunately, will be reviewed in more detail by another contribution in this

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issue (see the paper by Scott Simon). Second, considering the cumulative nature of literatures in ethnic relations studies and assuming most readers may be less familiar with the works published before ethnic relations became more visible and controversial, earlier contributions will be reviewed in greater detail than the more recent studies in this review.

This paper divides into four periods according to the nature of ethnic relations or ethnic conflicts at different times or stages of democratic transition: (1) before the early 1980s when Taiwan was still under tight authoritarian control, (2) mid-1980s to 1994 when democratisation slowly began and achieved some early results, (3) 1994 to 2000 when democratisation transformation was finally consolidated, and (4) after 2000 when the change of power in national government occurred for the first time. A brief description of the nature of ethnic relations in each period will be provided as background for respective studies.

### Prior to the Early 1980s

A huge gap existed between the studies of ethnic relations within and outside Taiwan before 1980, when Taiwan was under the Kuomintang's (國民黨, KMT) authoritarian rule. The only 'ethnic studies' in Taiwan were studies on Taiwan's Aborigines, following the legacy of Japanese ethnologists' inquiries into the unique cultural, social, and physical constitutions of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Chinese social anthropologist Hwei-lin Wei (衛惠林) was among the first to use the term 'ethnic groups (族群, *zu qun*)' to describe certain tribal groups of Taiwan's Aborigines in 1950 (H. Wei, 1950). For the next two decades, cultural and social organisational characteristics of Taiwan's different Aboriginal groups were the main subjects of Taiwan's anthropological studies, and anthropologists used the term 'ethnic groups' exclusively to refer to different tribes or groups of Taiwan's Aborigines. For obvious political reasons, the differences between Chinese migrants who came to Taiwan at the end of the Second World War and the local Taiwanese of Han Chinese descent were considered to be 'regional' rather than 'ethnic'. Similarly, Holo (福佬, *fu lao*, or Minnan, or Hokkien) and Hakka people among the Taiwanese of Han descent were also not considered to be 'ethnic' according to those who had influence over official cultural policy. Using the criteria of 'common ancestry' among members when defining an ethnic group, there were as many as nine different ethnic groups among Taiwan's Aborigines, while all Han Chinese, including Mainlanders, Taiwanese Hakka, and Holo, were considered to belong to the same 'ethnic group', because they were presumably all 'descendants of the

Yellow Emperor' (Hsie, 1987: 8). Furthermore, the subject of 'ethnic relations' cannot be found in Taiwan's 'ethnic studies' before 1980.

1 *Debates on Taiwanese/Mainlander Relations in the United States in the 1970s*

Outside Taiwan, however, concerns about the relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders had been a subject of great interest or concern to many U.S.-based scholars. During the 1960s, Taiwan was described as being 'deeply divided between the islanders and the mainlanders' (Mancall, 1964: 23). The development of Formosan nationalism following the severe clashes between Taiwanese and Mainlanders in the 2–28 Incident of 1947 was one of the research topics that testified to Taiwanese's hostility toward their new Chinese rulers (e.g., Kerr, 1966; Meisner, 1964; Mendel, 1970).<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1970s, however, the decline of Formosan nationalism following the surrender of Liao Wenyi (or Thomas Liao, 廖文毅), the President of the Formosan Republic's Provisional Government based in Japan, to the KMT authority in Taiwan in 1965 (Gurtov, 1967), and the eventual withdrawal of the KMT's representative to the United Nations in 1971, had created new international predicaments for the KMT regime in Taiwan. As the KMT regime had been in Taiwan for more than 20 years by then, questions about intergroup relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders in Taiwan, especially among the younger generations, were again raised. Sheldon Appleton, for instance, posed the following questions:

Perhaps the most frequent questions about Taiwan asked by non-specialists are those concerning the relationship of 'native' Taiwanese to those of recent mainland origin. Are Taiwanese and Mainlanders one 'people' or two? How similar or different are their attitudes on a multitude of matters, especially political matters? Do they associate with one another very much socially? And how do Taiwanese fare economically and socially as compared with the Mainlanders on Taiwan?

APPLETON, 1970a: 38

These questions were addressed and answered in papers published during the late-1960s and 1970s. Based on a survey of Taiwan's college and high school students, these papers indicated no significant differences in political and social attitudes and values between Taiwanese and Mainlander youths,

2 Taiwanese who supported Formosan nationalism preferred to call themselves 'Formosan' rather than the Chinese term 'Taiwanese' (Meisner, 1964: 158).

who were equally apathetic about politics, supportive of the KMT regime, and more politically conservative than liberal (e.g., Appleton, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1973; Wilson, 1968). They also found, however, that the social division between Mainlanders and Taiwanese still persisted even among the younger generation in high schools or colleges (Appleton, 1970a: 43–44; 1973: 759; 1976: 709). Appleton reported that over 90 percent in both groups of students were willing and able to report whether the friends with whom they went to see movies were Taiwanese or Mainlanders, and they went mostly with those with similar background (Appleton, 1970a: 43).

Social division was accompanied by the 'educational, economic, and occupational advantages ... held by the Mainlander minority' (Appleton, 1976: 710). An island-wide survey with a stratified sample of 1,882 conducted by Wolfgang Grichting in 1970 in Taiwan also confirmed the higher educational and occupational attainment, and hence the higher economic standing of Mainlanders compared to the Taiwanese (Grichting, 1971: 67–68, 119–122, 128–130; also cited in Appleton, 1976: 706–708). Furthermore, Appleton observed that 'as claimants to rule all of China ... these [Mainlander] refugees have exercised most of the political power on Taiwan for upwards of 20 years, pending their anticipated return to the Mainland' (Appleton, 1970a: 57). Taiwan's political institution was thus commonly asserted as 'mainlanders dominat[ing] the system to the exclusion of native Taiwanese' (Jacobs, 1971: 136). The situation began to change only after 1969 when Chiang Ching-kuo assumed the position of vice-premier and began to implement an explicit policy of including more Taiwanese in national politics (Jacobs, 1971: 141–143).

In sum, the studies by foreign, mostly U.S. scholars seemed to conclude that while the expansion of education in Taiwan was rather successful in eliminating differences in values and attitudes between Taiwanese and Mainlander youths, it was not very effective in reducing the political, social, and economic inequalities between them. The expansion of education also brought about a new set of value changes, in that Taiwanese youths, and probably Mainlander youths as well, might no longer be satisfied with a withdrawal into being concerned about personal goals rather than social goals, like their elders were (Appleton, 1973: 759–760).

These findings, however, were challenged by several Mainlander scholars in the United States during the 1960s, especially by Jung Wei (魏鏞). Wei, in short, used a modernisation model to present Taiwan's social, economic, and political development under the KMT regime and argued against the portrayals of persistently sour intergroup relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders and the dominance of Mainlanders in Taiwan's politics. His arguments can be summarised as follows.

First, he specifically argued against the practice of treating Taiwanese and Mainlanders as belonging to different 'ethnic groups', which he believed was initially proposed by the Formosan independence movement to support their cause (J. Wei, 1974: 27). Second, Wei noted the signs of increasing assimilation and integration between Taiwanese and Mainlanders as reflected in the number of intermarriages and college students' acceptance of their siblings' intermarriages (J. Wei, 1973a: 94–95; 1973b: 478–479; 1974: 28–29). Third, Wei pointed out Chiang Ching-kuo's policy of recruiting more Taiwanese into the government and party organisation positions and holding the first election since 1948 for supplementary seats in the national congressional members in 1969, which were all won by native Taiwanese (J. Wei, 1973a: 99–101; 1973b: 479). He stated that Mainlander youths were quite concerned and even disappointed over Chiang's new policy:

Some of them felt that their elders have overcompensated for their 'uneasy feeling' by recruiting a disproportionately large number of Taiwanese into the higher-level political positions at the sacrifice of the younger mainlanders.

J. WEI, 1973a: 110–111, note 98

Similar concerns about the constraints on Mainlanders' opportunities for becoming political elites also appeared in Wei's other papers (e.g., J. Wei, 1974: 24–25; 1976: 264–265). Fourth, Wei also argued that because Mainlanders were concentrated in occupations with lower income, that is, in public administration and occupations related to national defence, 'the majority of Mainlanders on Taiwan belong generally to a lower income group' (J. Wei, 1976: 259–261). Wei therefore warned that:

If the financial situation of younger generations of Mainlanders does not improve and their opportunities for political participation remains limited for an extended period of time, it may create undesirable political consequences which are no less serious than the disaffection of the Taiwanese.

J. WEI, 1976: 268

Although Wei's observation was clearly contradictory to foreign scholars, it represented a common emic view held by Taiwan's Mainlander youths. The sense of insecurity among the Mainlander youths, however, did not emerge as a public political discourse in Taiwan at that time. It should also be pointed out that although Wei explicitly opposed treating Taiwanese and Mainlanders

as belonging to different 'ethnic groups', he nevertheless analysed the predicaments of Mainlander youths in Taiwan at the time in accordance with the newly emerged concept of 'ethnic minority consciousness' in Western societies.

## 2 *Hill Gates's Exploration of Ethnicity in Taiwan in the Early 1980s*

An important study that can be treated as the pioneer in studies on Taiwan's ethnic relations was Hill Gates's 1981 paper. Drawing on the emerging perspective of reconceptualising the nature and function of ethnicity in modern or 'state society' (as opposed to 'tribal societies') in anthropology, Gates applied a 'functional-ecological' theory of ethnicity to study the relations between Taiwan's 'provincial' groups (1981). Gates argued that Taiwan's ethnicity problem did not persist due to existing cultural differences between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. Rather, it was a result of the state's action to impose a distinction and to exclude or discriminate against Taiwanese (Gates, 1981: 243–249).

Gates's paper had several significant impacts. First, Gates was probably the first Western scholar to formally analyse the relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders as an 'ethnic' problem by utilising theories of ethnicity as an analytical framework (M. Chang, 1994: 143, note 22). Second, unlike the modernisation theorists, Gates introduced a new theoretical perspective to explain the continued saliency of ethnicity in modern state societies, like Taiwan, after the 1960s. Third, Gates pointed out that the KMT government's inheritance and adoption of much of the Japanese colonial government's discriminating system against Taiwanese after 1945 was responsible for fostering an ethnic minority consciousness among Taiwanese in the postwar era. Fourth, Gates also directed our attention to the significant influence of the KMT regime's official ideology of 'recovering the Mainland' on the political institutional designs and the size of military forces in Taiwan. Although the explanatory potential of this new insight was not fully explored in Gates's paper at the time, probably due to its sensitive political implications, it proposed a new approach to studying ethnic relations in Taiwan in the 1980s, when ethnic political competition at the national level increased.

In sum, there were no ethnic relations studies inside Taiwan before the early 1980s. The only 'ethnic'-related studies during this period focused on the cultural characteristics of Taiwan's Aborigines, and most such studies were conducted by anthropologists, following the 'cultural-idealist' theory of ethnicity formulated in Western societies before the 1960s. Intergroup relations between 'ethnic groups' were not the subject of studies among most anthropologists in Taiwan. In fact, treating the problem between Taiwanese and Mainlanders as 'ethnic' was highly sensitive and even forbidden in Taiwan.

Although some Taiwanese political elites had been protesting their generally powerless situation in national politics after the KMT regime relocated to Taiwan in 1949, this did not lead to public debate or academic research on ethnic relations before 1980. Ironically, it was the Mainlanders' complaint about the other side of the same issue that triggered studies of ethnic relations inside Taiwan.

### The 1980s and 1990s

#### 1 *The Context for the Emergence of Ethnic Relations Studies in the 1980s*

As overseas Mainlanders began to speak out about Mainlanders' dim political and economic prospects in Taiwan, the same issue also appeared in Taiwan's public domain later when these overseas Mainlander scholars were invited by Chiang Ching-kuo to attend the Conference on National Construction held in Taiwan in the late 1970s. Several returning participants' outspoken comments on the otherwise sensitive political issue were thoroughly covered in the major news media in Taiwan when these meetings were being held, which were referred to as 'democratic holidays' when the government allowed open discussion on normally prohibited issues. These comments, of course, provoked strong reactions from Taiwanese political dissidents, who were equally dissatisfied with the merely tokenistic inclusion of Taiwanese in national political institutions by the KMT regime under a dominating Chinese national imagination. The demands for more democratic reforms by the Taiwanese opposition camp escalated in 1979 after the United States broke formal diplomatic relations with the KMT regime and established formal relations with People's Republic of China (PRC), which eventually led to a severe repression of the political opposition camp following the Kaohsiung Incident (or Formosa Incident, 美麗島事件, *meilidao shijian*) in December 1979. A key cause of the violent clashes in 1979 was the KMT regime's discrimination against Taiwanese in national politics, arguably in response to the opposition camp's demands for more democratic reforms. For the first time since 1947, the asymmetrical political and social relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders were being openly discussed among social scientists inside Taiwan. The first systematic discussion appeared in a 1982 special issue on 'confronting the problems of provincialism' in the political commentary journal, *China Tribune* (中國論壇, *zhongguo luntan*). The 'provincial problems' seemed to become ever more salient as political competition between Taiwanese and Mainlanders intensified in the early 1980s. Apparently, the tokenistic incorporation of Taiwanese elites



could no longer meet their rising expectations, which seemed to come from a newly emerged Taiwanese national imagination in the 1980s.

As the new generation of post-Formosan Incident political dissents began to construct a Taiwanese nationalist discourse to counteract the Chinese nationalist discourse of the KMT regime in the early 1980s, a new perspective on examining the asymmetrical relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders emerged (F. Wang, 2005a). Previously, the domination of Mainlanders in national politics was typically justified by treating Mainlanders in Taiwan as political representatives of their respective Chinese provinces in Taiwan, under the official ideology of 'recovery of the Mainland'. If, however, the government in Taiwan only ruled and represented the *de facto* population and territory it effectively ruled since 1949, then the same 'provincial composition' of national political elites would become evidence of systematic discrimination against Taiwanese, who made up more than 85 percent of the population. As a new strategy of promoting political reforms and democratisation, the political opposition camp in Taiwan started to propose that Taiwan residents should have self-determination for their own future in the 1982 electoral campaign.<sup>3</sup> This confrontation between these two national imaginations was usually characterised as a conflict between the 'China Complex' (中國結, *zhongguo jie*) and the 'Taiwan Complex' (台灣結, *taiwan jie*). As the pressure for an election of all congressional seats increased by the early 1980s, some younger Mainlander political elites began to propagandise a sense of ethnic minority consciousness among the younger Mainlanders as a strategy to consolidate ethnic solidarity, with the aim of fighting for proper political representation in a democratising Taiwan. Chao Shao-kang (趙少康) openly claimed that Mainlanders were a political and economic minority in Taiwan after he won a seat in the Legislative Yuan in 1986 (Global View Monthly, 1987a: 33–34; see F. Wang, 2016 for more details). This statement, along with other similar claims in the mass media made by Mainlander scholars from the United States, provoked strong reactions from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) legislators, particularly Wu Shu-jen (吳淑珍) who made a counterargument on 24 March 1987 in a formal congressional session (S. Wu, 1987). This statement then triggered another series of reactions from the government, mass media, and academics later in the same year and marked the emergence of ethnic relations studies in Taiwan's academic domain (F. Wang, 2008a).

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3 The first common platform for *Dangwai* (outside of the KMT) candidates in the 1982 local election was: 'Taiwan's future should be jointly determined by the 18 million residents in Taiwan'.

An important contextualising event at this point was the KMT regime's decision to finally end martial law, in effect since 20 May 1949, on 15 July 1987, allowing much more freedom in academic research. Most people considered this moment to be the starting point of Taiwan's democratisation transition. This event was followed by the elections of all seats in the National Assembly in 1991 and the Legislative Yuan in 1992, the Mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung and the Governor of Taiwan Province in 1994, and finally the President of Republic of China (ROC) by popular votes in 1996.

## 2 *The Content and Debates of Ethnic Relations Studies in Taiwan in the 1980s*

In July 1987, in response to rising concern over the 'provincial problems' issue, several political commentary journals either organised academic conferences or featured special issues that explored the 'China Complex and Taiwan Complex' or the 'provincialism problems' (China Tribune, 1987; Global View Monthly, 1987b). Later in the same year, two conferences were organised by the Department of Sociology at National Taiwan University and the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica. Several papers explored ethnic relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders (Hsiao, Cheng, & Chan, 1989; F. Wang, 2008a: 471–474; K. Yang & Chiu, 1988).

These opening moves were followed by an academic conference held in the United States in December 1990 specifically on the historical and contemporary ethnicity questions in Taiwan. Proceedings were later published as the first English work on the subject, entitled *Ethnicity in Taiwan* (C-m. Chen, Chuang, & Huang, 1994). In April 1992, Mau-kuei Chang organised a conference on 'Ethnic Relations and National Identity', the first academic conference on ethnic relations inside Taiwan, which was later published as a collective volume under the same title (M. Chang, 1993). The 1992 conference in Taipei aroused such strong and immediate reactions from the mass media and the general public that Chang, the conference organiser and editor of the collected volume, considered the out-of-proportion reaction to be part of the 'provincial problem' that the conference intended to engage in the first place (M. Chang, 1993: 3–4).

The above-mentioned edited volumes published between 1987 and 1994 addressed four major themes in ethnic relations studies. First, many scholars raised a new question of why 'provincial problems' had become, or remained, a salient issue among the younger generations (see the several contributions in M. Chang, 1993). Mau-kuei Chang's contribution in *Ethnicity in Taiwan* was among the most noteworthy papers on this subject (M. Chang, 1994). By treating *Shengji* (省籍, i.e., 'origin of province' or 'native place') as a social and historical construct, Chang went on to elaborate how the Mainlanders'

dominance in the political sphere carried over to their advantageous positions in the economy and culture, and hence created the asymmetric relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders before political liberation in 1986. The political changes that occurred in 1986 and 1987, however, indicated a trend toward a reversal of political power between the two groups and therefore led to the protests and new organising efforts among second-generation Mainlanders after 1986 (M. Chang, 1994: 135–137). ‘Problems of provincialism’ (省籍問題, *shengji wenti*) thus took on new meanings and forms of expression in these new circumstances, especially after Lee Teng-hui succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988 to become the first Taiwanese President and Party Chairman of the KMT.

Second, researchers began to use nationally representative survey data to explore persistent patterns of differences between Taiwanese and Mainlanders in various spheres, such as educational achievement, status attainment, family income, class positions, and voting behaviours (e.g., M. Chang, 1989; Lin & Lin, 1993; Ting, 1989; Tsai, 1988; N. Wu, 1993). Contradictory to most Mainlanders’ subjective feelings of being an economically disadvantaged ethnic minority, these analyses found that Mainlanders, on the whole, held advantageous positions compared to Taiwanese in all aspects related to socioeconomic status and achievements. Significant and persistent differences between Taiwanese and Mainlanders in partisan support were also confirmed by these studies.

Third, many authors also explored the interaction between ethnicity and national identity (M. Chang, 1993; N. Wu, 1993). As stated above, the ethnicity issue became important in Taiwan in the mid-1980s in seeking a new ideal intergroup relations formation and institutional arrangements under a new conception of national community. Ethnic equality in all important aspects of political and social life developed from this new ideal and became an essential prerequisite in the nation building project in a de facto multiethnic Taiwan.

Fourth, many authors noted issues of ethnic minorities other than the Taiwanese/Mainlanders dichotomy. Studies of Taiwan’s Aborigines from an ethnic relations perspective began to appear after 1987. Both *Ethnic Relations and National Identity* (M. Chang, 1993) and *Ethnicity in Taiwan* (Chen et al., 1994) had several contributions specifically on this subject. Unlike previous anthropological studies, which usually studied specific tribes or tribal groups, some of this newly emerging research studied the ‘pan-indigenous identity’ of Taiwan’s Aborigines as opposed to Han ethnic groups (terms coined by Danapan, 2000: 126; see also Hsie, 1987; M. Hsu & Li, 1989). Furthermore, as some urban Hakka elites also began to protest against the KMT’s language policy of suppressing ‘local dialects’ and the DPP’s neglect of Hakka in promoting a bilingual policy

in TV programmes after 1988, Hakka ethnicity emerged as a new element in Taiwan's ethnic relations and studies (e.g., Constable, 1994, 1996; C. Hsu, 1992).

As such, the conceptualisation of Taiwan's ethnic relations began to shift from the Taiwanese/Mainlanders dichotomy to a multiethnic formation. The political rhetoric of 'the four major ethnic groups' of Taiwan, that is, Mainlanders, Taiwanese Holo (or Minnan), Taiwanese Hakka, and Aborigines, began to emerge after 1992. The new ethnic conceptualisation, as exemplified by DPP's official cultural and ethnic policy, emphasised equal rights in political power, economic opportunities, and social esteem for different ethnic groups, and opposed any form of ethnic discrimination (DPP, 1993).

### Between 1994 and 2000

There were several important developments in Taiwan's ethnic relations in the mid-1990s. First, ethnic political competition between Taiwanese and Mainlanders further intensified in the process of democratisation. The 1994 elections of Taipei and Kaohsiung city mayors and the governor of Taiwan marked an important watershed in Taiwan's ethnic politics. In particular, Taipei's mayoral election was a fierce competition between the Mainlander political rising star Chao shao-kung, representing the newly formed New Party (新黨, *xin dang*) and two Taiwanese candidates, Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) of the DPP and Huang Da-chou (黃大洲) of the KMT. Chao tried to counteract the political trend of Taiwanisation by framing his campaign as a war 'to defend the ROC' and accused President Lee Teng-hui of leading the nation toward Taiwan's independence. Moreover, he openly stated that Lee asked the KMT's Taiwanese voters to shift their support from the KMT's candidate Huang Da-chou to the DPP's Chen Shui-bian to prevent Chao Shao-kang, a Mainlander, from winning the election, an ethnic voting tactic that came to be known as 'Abandoning Huang to ensure Chen's victory' (棄黃保陳, *qi huang bao chen*) (F. Wang, 1998). Although this conspiracy theory was never verified, ethnic tensions between Taiwanese and Mainlanders among the general populace rose to a new high during the electoral campaign and expanded beyond the election after the DPP's Chen eventually won the critical vote. Similar rumours about how Taiwanese voters conspired to vote across party lines to prevent Mainlander candidates from winning also surfaced during the campaigns of the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections.

Second, ethnic competition between Taiwanese and Mainlanders also encouraged Hakka and Aborigines, both of which were considered as true 'ethnic minorities' in Taiwan, to fight for their rightful ethnic group rights in the

democratic transformation process. In 1994, with strong support from the DPP, the Aborigines' movement successfully changed their collective name in the constitution to 'Indigenous Peoples' (原住民族, *yuanzhu minzu*) from 'compatriots in the mountain' (山胞, *shan bao*). Furthermore, 1996 saw the establishment of the Council of Indigenous Peoples, a cabinet-based government organisation (Parod, 2008). Similarly, as Hakka voters became more and more critical in determining the results of local and national elections, several local governments controlled by the DPP had set up special bureaus or sections to deal with Hakka affairs. KMT's central government finally submitted a draft law to establish a new organisation in the cabinet to handle Hakka affairs after its candidate lost the 2000 presidential election (C. Fan, 2008: 169–201).

Against the background of rising ethnic political competition, many scholars began to criticise the emerging ethnic relations studies in Taiwan, because these studies allegedly provided justifications for the ascendancy of the Taiwanese nationalist movement and for excluding Mainlanders, along with other ethnic minorities, and hence fuelled ethnic tensions in the democratising Taiwan. Some of these scholars tried to discredit the findings of Mainlanders' dominance in economic or social/cultural spheres (e.g., K. Chao, 1998; Johnson, 1997); others began to question the validity of treating 'Mainlanders' as a homogeneous and dominant ethnic group in Taiwan (e.g., Y. Chao, 2001).

The former approach resulted in harsh criticism on existing studies and effectively intimidated further studies on ethnic relations surrounding provincial problems. As democratisation reforms between 1987 and 1996 had reversed the past unequal relations between Taiwanese and Mainlanders in national political power, many people thought it was no longer 'necessary' to study those past ethnic relations.<sup>4</sup> As a result, only a limited number of new researchers in the field published their studies on this important subject over the next ten years (e.g., Corcuff, 2000, 2002; Li, 2002; Shih, 1997; H. Wang, 2001a).

The latter approach, however, initiated a new topic that studies the internal heterogeneity within the 'ethnic' category of 'Mainlanders'. These studies were only somewhat related to ethnic relations studies, because most of them did not deal with 'ethnic relations' (with Taiwanese) directly; rather, the focus was on the 'neglected' differences among Mainlanders. The rationale was that previous ethnic relations studies ignored the differences of gender, class, age (cohort), life experience, or (military) ranks among 'Mainlanders', and treated them as members of a homogeneous and self-conscious group. The new research approach, in contrast, tried to demonstrate the 'nuances of *Waishengren*' (外省人, meaning 'people of other province') (M. Chang, 2010; D. Yang &

4 See for instance K. Chao (1998).

Chang, 2010). Consequently, the processes and mechanisms employed by the KMT regime in building a prolonged system of Mainlanders' ethnic domination before the 1980s and its lasting social and political influence on Taiwan's ethnic relations afterward are still insufficiently studied even in the present day.

### Post-2000

Ethnic relations in Taiwan took a drastic turn after Taiwan witnessed the first transfer of political power in the national government in 2000 when the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won the presidency. This historical event was no doubt a significant step toward democratic consolidation after people in Taiwan were finally allowed to choose their head of state in 1996, which concluded a long process of democratisation. However, the impact of governmental change on ethnic relations was quite mixed, at least before 2008. Since eliminating institutional ethnic inequalities was one of the major driving forces for Taiwan's democratic movements, most grievances claimed by ethnic movement activists during the 1980s and 1990s seemed to lessen as the past asymmetric ethnic relations were largely resolved in the political transformation, especially among Taiwanese. Similarly, following the model of the Council of Indigenous Peoples, the DPP administration quickly established the Hakka Affairs Council in the Executive Yuan in 2001 after it took control of the central government to respond to the demands of the Hakka movement.

However, given that most Mainlander voters were shocked by the unexpected election results, their reactions were quite different. As Chen Shui-bian's victory was a result of the KMT's internal split in the 2000 election, many KMT supporters expected their candidates to win four years later when James Soong decided to join Lien Chan to challenge Chen in the 2004 presidential election. They became extremely disappointed and angry when the DPP won the second term by a slim margin following a controversial shooting incident on the eve of the election. Consequently, hostility between Taiwanese and Mainlanders escalated between 2000 and 2008 as both parties adopted political actions that fuelled ethnic tension. Dafydd Fell argues that during the 2004 presidential election, DPP 'fell back on anti-Mainlander appeals in some campaigns' (2011: 83). In particular, DPP organised a 'million people hand-in-hand to protect Taiwan' rally on 28 February 2004, which was considered by many Mainlanders as an exclusionary campaign tactic. Likewise, the KMT also took political actions that were 'widely perceived among Taiwanese as playing the divisive ethnic card' (Fell, 2011: 83). Inside Taiwan, the nature and cause of political turbulences during Chen's presidency was a highly debated issue.

While some considered them conflicts between 'Blue versus Green' camps rather than ethnic competition per se, others perceived them as an old ethnic tension between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The latter perception, however, was often accused of being manipulative and deemed politically incorrect or even immoral by the more opinionated media platforms. According to research conducted around 2010, the younger generation not only expressed strong resentment about ethnic divisions between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, but also claimed that they were not able to tell the 'ethnic' backgrounds of their friends, classmates, or co-workers, and that they did not really care about it (Le Pesant, 2011).

Given the generally unfavourable political and social atmosphere, the typical 'ethnic relations issues' between Mainlanders/Taiwanese gradually lost their saliency in ethnic relations studies in the first decade after 2000 within Taiwan. Although issues related to the four major ethnic groups and their divisions were still popular topics for academic research, the focus and content were quite different. For instance, the growing Hakka studies conducted by researchers in Hakka colleges and research centres in various universities established after 2003 mostly focused on Hakka's history, migrations, early settlements in Taiwan, languages, traditional social organisations, and relations with fellow Hakka in other countries, rather than on 'ethnic relations' with other ethnic groups in Taiwan (e.g., C. Hsu, 2007).

Similar changes can also be observed in the studies of socioeconomic attainment among different ethnic groups. Since the early 1990s, and following the conceptualisation of the status attainment model in social stratification literature in the United States, some sociologists and economists had tried to explore whether differences in educational or occupational achievement among first-generation Taiwanese and Mainlanders in the postwar era persisted into the following generations and, if so, why (e.g., W. Chen, 2005; Y. Fan & Chang, 2010; Luoh, 2001; Su & Yu, 2007; Tsai, Gates, & Chiu, 1994; N. Wu, 1997, 2013). Most works before 2001 tried to explain the historical formation of inequalities between Taiwanese and Mainlanders among those in the first generation of the postwar era, which was consistent with the focus of 'ethnic relations studies'. The key and continued debate in this literature has focused on whether Mainlanders' relatively higher educational attainment compared to other ethnic groups in the past resulted from the state's tuition subsidy to the children of government officials, teachers, and military personnel (e.g., Y. Fan & Chang, 2010; N. Wu, 1997, 2013). But the focus of study changed substantially after 2001. Some recent works, such as Su and Yu (2007), tried to demonstrate what happened 'when social reproduction fails' by focusing on the decreased gap in inequalities between Mainlanders and Taiwanese among the later generations.

The decreased gap in ethnic inequality resonated with the new situation of increased obscurity of ethnic identity among younger generations resulting from ethnic intermarriages and cancellation of the official registration of one's original domicile in 1992 (F. Wang, 2005a; N. Wu, 2002). In particular, many young people with Mainlander fathers who were conventionally identified by others and self-identified as 'Mainlanders' before 2000, would not identify themselves as such after 2000. This resulted in a substantial drop in the percentage of self-reported 'Mainlanders' samples in survey research conducted after 2000, from 13 percent to less than 10 percent, when the traditional measurement of one's ethnic background was applied (Hakka Affairs Council, 2004: ii).<sup>5</sup>

There were, however, new types of ethnically related problems and/or ethnic relations in Taiwan in the first decade of the new millennium. As the DPP had been more supportive of the Taiwan Independence movement in the past, the DPP administration under Chen Shui-bian adopted Taiwan-centred values as the guiding principles for national policies, in contrast to the previous China-centred values under the KMT regime. Clashes of national identities therefore became a new dimension of political conflicts in Taiwan, especially in questions about how to reinterpret Taiwan's history and to envision Taiwan's future relations with a rising China. These conflicts were highly related to ethnicity due to the differential collective historical memories and life experiences of different ethnic groups, especially among older Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The interpretation of Taiwan's historical connections with China, the Japanese colonial legacies, the causes and responsibility of the 2–28 Incident of 1947, and KMT's rule in Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo in school textbooks were, and still are, fiercely debated among those with different national imaginations. These national imaginations coincide significantly with the ethnic dichotomy between Taiwanese and Mainlanders (Corcuff, 2005; F. Wang, 2005b). Some Mainlanders with strong Chinese nationalist sentiments felt that their historical memories and preferences for the Chinese language and culture would not be recognised or respected in a de facto independent Taiwan.

The debates on Taiwan's future relations with China were even more intense. Since many Mainlanders preferred closer economic and political relations with China and were quite outspoken about their opposition to a Taiwan-centred national imagination, they became targets of political distrust among

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5 According to a recent survey in 2016, only 6.1 percent of the population identified themselves as 'Mainlanders' in a survey question that measures single self-identity (Hakka Affairs Council, 2017).



some Taiwanese who accused them of 'not loving Taiwan' (N. Wu, 2002). The issue became even more complicated after the KMT administration under Ma Ying-jeou initiated a series of policies to establish stronger relations with China, including more trading with China and allowing Chinese tourists and exchange students to visit and to stay in Taiwan. As more Taiwanese people began to realise their differences with the Chinese, and resented the continuing military threat by the PRC to coerce Taiwanese into accepting unification, their sense of being Taiwanese nationals rose considerably. According to surveys on national identity by the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, those who identified themselves as 'Taiwanese' passed the 50 percent mark for the first time in 2009 and fluctuated around 60 percent ever since.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, unlike past ethnic relations characterised by unambiguous dominations bluntly justified by the Chinese national imagination, the new ethnic dynamics are covertly demonstrated in issues related to the competing national identities. These new issues cannot be adequately analysed by utilising the typical 'ethnic relations' concepts or theories developed to study the asymmetric relations between ethnic majority and minority.

Besides the new ethnic issues related to the 'old' ethnic groups, there also emerged a new set of issues among new 'ethnic groups' after 2000, that is, those migrants who came to Taiwan through marriage and as foreign guest workers (Hsia, 2001; Lan, 2005, 2006; H. Wang, 2001b; H. Wang & Chang, 2002). The numbers of these new migrants increased quite rapidly beginning in the mid-1990s and made up about 3.4 percent of Taiwan's 23 million population by 2009 (H. Wang & Chang, 2011: 445). More importantly, among the infants born in 2009 in Taiwan, 91.3 percent were by (national) Taiwanese mothers; 4.6 percent were by mothers from China, Hong Kong, and Macau; and 4.0 percent were by other foreign mothers (H. Wang & Chang, 2011: 483). The 'New Children of Taiwan' (新台灣之子, *xin taiwan zhi zi*) and their mothers are gradually changing the composition of Taiwan's population.

Although it is still under debate whether these marriage migrants or temporary guest workers constitute another 'ethnic group(s)', their situation of being victims of 'ethnic prejudices' or 'racist slurs', and institutional discriminations due to their 'non-citizen' or 'quasi-citizen' statuses in Taiwan is quite evident. Research on the ethnic relations experienced by new migrants, however, seems to be quite divided in their focus. On foreign spouses, the major research topics are their social adaptation in Taiwan and their children's health conditions and educational performance (H. Chang, 2007: 3-4) and public attitudes on immigration policies or social distance toward them (e.g., C.-j. Chen & Yu, 2005).

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6 The survey results are available at <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/app/news.php?Sn=166>.

For migrant workers, who by law are not allowed to become citizens and can work in Taiwan for only up to twelve years, the most visible research topic is their generally poor working conditions and the local (national) Taiwanese's prejudice against them.<sup>7</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

This brief review tried to demonstrate that Taiwan's ethnic relations and studies are closely related to the causes and dynamics of democratic transition. The emergence of the political discourse of 'the four ethnic groups of Taiwan' in the early 1990s reflected the major ethnic injustices claimed by different agents. The political reforms and social development in Taiwan's democratisation since the mid-1980s have largely responded to the demands made by ethnic movement activists and therefore fundamentally changed the patterns of ethnic relations in Taiwan.

The decline of old ethnic relations issues in Taiwan's ethnic relations studies, however, did not seem to lead to the erasure of the relevance of ethnicity in Taiwan. New ethnic relations issues and studies arose when the new marriage migrants and foreign guest workers became targets of ethnic prejudice and institutional discrimination in Taiwan. Studies of the four 'old' ethnic group relations also faced a new challenge when the past political system of ethnic exclusion was restructured in the process of democratisation and institutional reforms to establish government organs to handle specific ethnic affairs in a different administration. And yet, some recent political conflicts in Taiwan seem to suggest a continuing relevance of ethnicity in the democratised country, though in a somewhat changing form. The KMT's strong opposition to the pension reforms and ill-gotten party asset settlements initiated by the new DPP administration under Tsai Ing-wen, who won the 2016 presidential election, was considered by many as out of proportion by the standard of a functional democracy.<sup>8</sup> Again, sentiments or vested interests related to the

7 Pei-chia Lan's work on the agency of migrant domestic workers is an important exception (Lan, 2006).

8 The anti-pension reform alliance staged a protest at the opening ceremony of the 29th Summer Universiade held on 19 August 2017 in Taipei, which interrupted the ceremony in a worldwide live broadcast. This protest was severely criticised in the subsequent days in all mass media in Taiwan. See, for instance, Liu et al. (2017). Likewise, a poll conducted in July 2016, showed that over 60 percent of Taiwanese people supported the reform of ill-gotten party assets and believed it would benefit Taiwan's democracy, see [www.thenewslens.com/article/45492](http://www.thenewslens.com/article/45492) (retrieved 18 September 2017).

old Taiwanese/Mainlanders dichotomy were suspected to be among the major factors that contributed to the unexpectedly high intensity of resistance to the otherwise widely supported and long-overdue reforms.<sup>9</sup>

There are, however, strong indications of generational differences in those old ethnic sentiments and vested interests. Those who initiated or participated in the ethnic political mobilisation or conflicts in the 1990s are still holding important positions in various domains in Taiwan and therefore have more substantial influence on framing recent political debates and conflicts. The ethnic sentiment is expected to decline when older generation are eventually replaced by the younger generation who could not care less about these old ethnic divisions.

On very different paths, Hakka and Aborigine identities seemed to be on the rise. While the proportion of self-reported Mainlanders in survey research declined significantly after 2000, the proportion of those identified with Hakka and Aborigine went up (Hakka Affairs Council, 2004: ii; 2017: 49). Despite the significant language shift and loss of traditional cultures among the younger generations, more and more people are willing to embrace and to reveal their Hakka or Aborigine identities (Hakka Affairs Council, 2017: 49, 75–78; Huang, 2015).

Questions about how the new social meanings and political and/or economic functions of the ethnicity among the four ‘old’ ethnic groups or ‘categories’ in Taiwan can be conceptualised or even theorised have become an important challenge for students of Taiwan’s ethnic relations studies. This, however, may involve different tasks for different groups. For the Taiwanese/Mainlanders dichotomy, the task requires a reconceptualisation of ethnic politics in a competitive democratic system while considering the unique legacies of Taiwan’s past ethnic relations. For example, instead of treating Mainlanders’ higher educational attainment in the past as ‘individual achievements’, they should be seen as ‘group resources’ that allowed them to exercise far more influence on Taiwan’s media, academic, and government agency than their population size might suggest on vital issues like competing national identities, given Mainlanders’ overrepresentation in those ideological apparatus or domains. For the Hakka and Aborigines, on the other hand, their symbolic significance and political leverage as critical minorities in a proclaimed multiethnic democratised society should be carefully evaluated in the reconceptualising of their new ethnicity.

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9 A member of the Examination Yuan, Huang Jintang (黃錦堂) stated that the pension reform will create hostility between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, see <https://newtalk.tw/news/view/2017-01-06/80791> (retrieved 18 September 2017).

An even more challenging task is to understand the connections between the 'new' and 'old' ethnic relations issues in Taiwan. The lessons learned about the 'old' ethnic inequalities and asymmetric relations that deeply divided Taiwan before did not seem to prevent the 'new' and yet similar situations of prejudice and discrimination faced by marriage migrants and temporary guest workers from happening. One important reason for this is the misunderstanding of the nature of 'ethnic problems' or 'ethnic issues' among the general public in Taiwan. Ethnic differences in cultures, languages, customs, experiences, and so forth, and the lack of social interactions, are often considered to have been the main cause of ethnic conflict or hostility in Taiwan before the 1980s. Thus, people expected ethnic conflict or hostility to decline when cultural assimilation or social interactions and ethnic intermarriages became more common after the 1970s.<sup>10</sup> The real causes of ethnic conflicts, that is, ethnic inequalities from institutional classifications and exclusion of certain ethnic group members, were considered politically sensitive issues, because they would be harmful to social solidarity and harmony in public discussion. In the 1980s, the KMT government accused those who rose to protest against institutional ethnic inequalities of being responsible for ethnic conflict or hostility. The racist ideology of excluding certain groups of people, especially Taiwanese, from equal political or social rights on the basis of their distinct culture or ancestry, however, was effectively disguised and justified by the Chinese nationalist discourse in Taiwan until the late 1980s, when an alternative Taiwanese nationalist discourse rose up in the public domain. An important topic for ethnic relations studies in Taiwan is: Is a similar kind of racist ideology responsible for the ethnic relations issues faced by new migrants in the democratised Taiwan, and if so, why?

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10 For example, see Kuo-shu Yang and Shao-ting Chen's statements in *China Tribune* (1982: 11–14).

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