Taiwan’s Indigenous Activism in Transition: From ‘Counter-Hegemonic Presbyterian Aboriginality’ to the ‘Bureaucratization of Indigeneity’

ABSTRACT
In most parts of the world, on-going globalisation and the destruction of natural environments constantly reduce indigenous peoples’ chances for independent development and cultural survival. The political paradigm shift in Taiwan during the 1990s brought new hope for the island’s Austronesian aborigines. In the course of the process of demarcation and emancipation of Taiwan’s Han from mainland influences, these ethnic minorities became a crucial factor in Taiwanese identity construction and hence were awarded with specific protection- and support measures. In a more and more multicultural Taiwan, the pan-ethnic movement of Taiwanese aborigines – a movement that was founded by intellectual elites in 1984 and that had a strong Christian orientation in the beginning – now prospered with great speed and induced a long line of political successes, starting with the constitutional recognition of aborigines’ status in Taiwan and the self-chosen pan-ethnic name ‘Yuanzhumin’ (Aborigines) in 1994 up to the implementation of a quasi-ministerial ‘Council of Indigenous Peoples’ on the central government level in 1996. In the whole process, however, the leading intellectuals were only reluctantly encouraged and supported by the common people of aboriginal society. This gulf between elites and people can still be observed today.

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Introduction and discussion lead by Dr Astrid Lipinsky – University of Vienna
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