Aboriginal Autonomy and Its Place in Taiwan’s National Trauma Narrative

Craig A. Smith

Introduction

Since the 1980s, the events of the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror, taboo subjects under martial law (1947–1987), have been incorporated into common knowledge in Taiwan, and the construction of 2-28 as national trauma has accelerated in response to the demands of a pluralizing society. In the early stages of the construction of this narrative, the trauma was written primarily as a conflict between “Taiwanese” and “Mainlanders.” As it gained symbolic value, the narrative was naturally extended to other ethnic groups, who sought to gain space in this emerging national history centered on the traumatic past.

Understandings of an ethnically diverse Taiwan generally view the history of the island’s people as centered on internal interactions between aboriginal,¹ Hoklo, Hakka, and Mainlander groups, as well as external interactions with “empires” from Holland, China, Japan, and the United States. What relations are internal and external and which people are native and nonnative are, however, a matter of perspective. An aboriginal-centered perspective on Taiwan posits the primary ethnic interaction as that

¹ Whereas in many settler colonies the term “aboriginal” (yuanzhumin) has been rejected in favor of “indigenous,” it remains a term of respect in Taiwan, where it replaced the pejorative gaoshanzu (high mountain people) in the late twentieth century.
between aboriginal and Han ethnic groups. This perspective emphasizes the shared history and cultural and linguistic heritage of the Hoklo, Hakka, and Mainlander groups. The 2-28 Incident and the White Terror were considered, moreover, narratives of Han history. During the Martial Law period, Kuomintang perspectives on ethnicity maintained that all citizens of the Republic of China were of a common national group; it was only during the Lee Teng-Hui period that ideas of a multicultural Taiwan came to prominence and the term “ethnicity” (*zuqun*) entered the political vocabulary of Taiwan (Rudolph 2004: 239–240). Starting in the late 1980s, discourses of ethnic difference became commonplace, and discussions of political autonomy for Taiwan aboriginals, although generally muted and unsupported by the public, began to appear again.

In this essay, I examine the insertion of Taiwan aboriginals into the trauma narrative of Taiwan’s postwar history. I focus on writing about Uyongu Yatauyungana (1908–1954), but also touch on fictional and nonfiction accounts of the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror by other aboriginal writers. Seeking space in this narrative, aboriginal writers emphasize their difference from the Han majority. National narratives are particularly good at reconciling opposing worldviews to serve the modern nation. Aboriginal elites struggling to construct identities for themselves must work within the national narratives offered to them; although working within the colonizers’ language and symbolic narratives, they also transform and destabilize these narratives with the introduction of subnarratives that problematize the perceived unity of the nation and conflict with romantic tropes of nationalism. In this appropriation of the symbols of Taiwan’s nationalist narrative, particularly as it relates to the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror, these agents displace the Han-centrism that permeates previous representations of this history, thereby altering the narrative, adding to it, and decentering it.

Uyongu Yatauyungana, an early aboriginal modernizer, was incorporated into Taiwan’s national trauma narrative beginning in the
1990s. In 1947, Yatauyangana had proposed an aboriginal autonomous region; because of his struggle for aboriginal autonomy, as well as his assistance to so-called communists following the 2-28 Incident, the Kuomintang government executed him in 1954. His being restored to this narrative of 2-28 and the White Terror is a particularly significant development in the rewriting of the “national” narrative. Yatauyangana’s role in the narrative is a complicated one and reveals the difficulties and multiplicities of identity in Taiwan. His place in this narrative and the recent resurgence of interest in his life and works highlight the contradictory roles that the memory of this figure plays as a symbol both of the shared victimhood that the people of Taiwan feel because of the 2-28 Incident and of the fight for aboriginal autonomy.

**Taiwan Aboriginals, the 2-28 Incident, and the White Terror**

Early writings on the 2-28 Incident frequently marginalize or completely ignore the existence of aboriginals. In *Taiwan’s February Revolution* (1948), a well-known account of the early violence across the island, there is only the line: “Our compatriots from the high mountains also came down in formations” (Lin Mushun 1992: 82). *Angry Taiwan* (1949) is similar; it merely mentions the existence of a “high mountain brigade” (gaoshan dui) under the command of the revolutionaries (Zhuang 1991: 130). George Kerr’s *Formosa Betrayed* (1965: 277), which is based on his experiences while living in Taiwan as a diplomat in the 1940s, contains slightly more, but is still limited to a few lines: “Down from the hills in the central districts came aborigine leaders and young men, offering to assist the Formosans in any way they might.” More interestingly, Kerr (277) discusses the fears of the Han people: “Rumors of the wildest sort were circulating in Taipei, relaying reports that ‘thousands of headhunters’ were coming down from the mountains and had already reached the capital city. This was nonsense, but it represented the survival or reactivation of traditional Chinese mainland views of Formosa, the savage island.”
Aboriginals were very involved in the events of the 2-28 Incident and played significant roles in the uprising against the Kuomintang, yet until recently their roles have been marginalized. In western Taiwan, there were many reports of aboriginal groups from the mountains descending to the plains and becoming involved in uprisings against the government, and in the east there were reports of aboriginal groups working to stop the violence (Harrison 2001: 63). Taiwan newspapers noted these involvements by aboriginal people. On March 7, 1947, the Minbao ran a short piece on a speech in Taipei by Sising (1886–1958), a renowned doctor of Puyuma ethnicity; Sising, Taiwan’s first aboriginal Western-style doctor, also served as a national representative in the writing of the Republic of China’s constitution. Concerning the goals of the 2-28 Incident, he said, “The objective of this struggle is a democratic Taiwan” (in Lin Yuanhui 2009: 2130; Kerr 1965: 478). The February 28th Committee (Erebera shijian chuli weiyuanhui) also recognized the importance of aboriginals to Taiwan society and their contributions to the 2-28 Incident. Demand 29, one of the famous 32 Demands—the requests of the Settlement Committee to Governor-General Chen Yi on March 7, 1947—dealt directly with the aboriginal people; it read, “The political and economic rights and social position of the aborigines must be guaranteed” (Lin Yuanhui 2009: 2064). Many aboriginal people were also victims of the violence of the White Terror. In 1996, Chen Suzhen (1996b: 104–105) listed the names of those victims in a special article in Taiwan Arts (Taiwan wenyi). Although there are only a few dozen names, and many victims are listed as “unknown name,” this article is important as the first attempt by a scholar to record the aboriginal victims of the White Terror.

Of the aboriginal victims, none has attracted as much attention as those involved in the “Tang Shouren Case,” which led to the execution of six prominent aboriginal elites, including the ethnic Tsou, Tang Shouren (1923–1954) (fig. 1). A military officer during the Japanese colonial period, he served the imperial army for three years in Manchukuo; after the war,
Figure 1: Orders allowing for the execution of Uyongu Yatauyungana, Tang Shouren, Losin Wadan and other aboriginal elite (February 8, 1954). Taiwan guoshi guan 2008: 932.
he joined the Kuomintang security forces on Taiwan (Taiwan guoshi guan 2008: 2). Those executed alongside Tang were: the Tsou head for Alishan Township; Uyongu Yatauyungana; and Losin Wadan (1899–1954), an Atayal member of the provincial legislature. Although Losin Wadan was not connected to the events of the 2-28 Incident, both Yatauyungana and Tang were involved in the events in Chiayi County. Historians of Taiwan have given considerable attention to the actions of these three aboriginal elites, as well as the work of the Tsou in Chiayi County during the 2-28 Incident. Beginning in the 1980s, writers and academics have often turned to their story as a focal point for remembering Taiwan aboriginals’ place in the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror. The focus of the present essay, writing about victims in the Tang Shouren case, particularly Uyongu Yatauyungana, plays a central role in the efforts to destabilize and decenter the national narrative through aboriginal memory. This return to traumatic history can be found in historical and fictional accounts, by both Han and aboriginal writers.

Aboriginal literature has received attention from both foreign and Taiwan scholars for decades now. Although the field remains surprisingly marginalized at academic conferences and in publications, more and more studies are appearing, and there is considerable growth in the number of works by and about Taiwan aboriginals. In the 1990s, a number of aboriginal writers took the White Terror as the focus of their fiction. Much like the fiction on the White Terror by Han writers, this body of literature often centers on the lingering trauma in the minds of survivors and the inheritance of that trauma by later generations.

Because of the relative scarcity of texts, there is still no study of aboriginal fiction related to the 2-28 Incident, but a number of scholars have written more general studies on what is known as "2-28 Fiction." Sylvia Li-chun Lin’s (2007) book *Representing Atrocity in Taiwan* provides a review of the focus on ethnicity in 2-28 fiction; she naturally concentrates on the dominant representation of the incident as a conflict between Taiwanese
and Mainlanders, but she also notes the appearance of aboriginals in 2-28 fiction, especially in her analysis of Lee Chiao's "The Tale of Mount Taimu," an early story about the post-2-28 violence that notably includes Tang Shouren as a minor character (Lin 2007: 40-46). In his comprehensive study of fiction and film related to the 2-28 Incident, among other traumatic events, Michael Berry states that the amount of fiction concerning the incident produced in contemporary Taiwan indicates "an obsession with writing and rewriting the incident, over and over again" (Berry 2008: 233). Such obsessive revisiting of past violence defines collective trauma; but what is fascinating about this trauma is the way it has provided a narrative that not only defines, but often is utilized by various groups to construct symbolic space. After the initial burst of writing in the 1980s and early 1990s, agents promoting gender, ethnicity, and queer causes began to appropriate the narrative; likewise, political parties have exploited the incident for their own causes. Not long after the 2-28 Incident, the Communist Party of China heralded the uprising's revolutionary implications. Beginning in the 1980s, Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) frequently invoked the incident's power, with Chen Shui-bian referring to it as a massacre of Taiwanese by Mainlanders (Smith 2008: 152-156). As the pro-Taiwanese nativist narrative came to prominence with the rise of the DPP, the popularity of their view temporarily marginalized aboriginal voices in Taiwan's collective memory. However, with the writing of aboriginal trauma fiction centered on the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror, these voices entered the expanding national narrative, at once demanding inclusion and questioning the narrative itself.

Walid Norgan (1961- ), the most prolific of Taiwan aboriginal writers, has written a number of essays and short stories that concern the White Terror and best exemplify the entry of aboriginal voices into this narrative. Pasuya Poiconu (2009: 891) notes that "among aboriginal writers, Walid Norgan's works are the most outstanding, in terms of both quality and quantity." In "Man! Man" (Ren a! ren; Norgan 2003a), he first discusses
the complicated choices Atayal faced during the 2-28 Incident, and then describes the trauma that has afflicted aboriginal elites for decades. In “Sakura Corner” (Yinghua quchi; Norgan 2003b), Norgan again examines Atayal elites; although it does not focus on the White Terror, the story depicts the tragedy of Atayal history and therefore falls loosely within the realm of White Terror fiction. Norgan’s (1999) “W’s Super Citizen” (W de chaoji daguomin), however, directly criticizes Taiwan’s trauma narrative. The central character, “W”—possibly referring to Walis Norgan himself—is a nephew of the “super citizen” Losin Wadan, the Atayal leader executed alongside Uyongu Yatauyungana in 1954. (Like Yatauyungana, Losin Wadan wrote about the need for aboriginal autonomy based on ethnic consciousness [Wu 2009: 214]). In “W’s Super Citizen,” W and his wife watch Super Citizen Ko, a popular 1995 film about the Taiwanese victims of the White Terror that exemplifies the Han-centric Taiwan trauma narrative hastily constructed in the 1980s and 1990s. Upon leaving the theater, W laments in frustration, “Who will celebrate our ‘Super Citizen’?” In contrast to W’s pessimism, however, the narrator ends the story with a dash of hope: “One day the fog will evaporate and we will awaken from this dream” (Norgan 1999: 60). This story displays evident frustration with the popular Taiwan national narrative, showcasing at once the desire of aboriginals to be part of that narrative and the necessity of maintaining difference, a conflict that is especially pressing for indigenous groups dealing with nationalism in settler colonies.

**Taiwan Aboriginais in the Settler Colony**

Although Dutch, Spanish, Manchu, and Japanese empires all colonized Taiwan at one time or another, Han ethnic groups continuously settled its land and have long since become the majority. The imperial powers controlling Taiwan may have changed numerous times, but Taiwan’s colonial status has remained constant throughout. In this context, it is helpful to differentiate the colonial from the imperial and view Taiwan,
like Canada and the United States, as a “settler colony.” Beginning in the Ming dynasty, Taiwan experienced waves of immigration from China that would continue from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, roughly parallel in time to the colonization of Canada and the United States and subsequent waves of immigration there. Recognizing Taiwan as a settler colony that suppressed aboriginal peoples allows us to consider it in relation to other settler colonies and to the usually Western-centric theories of postcolonialism.

Here, I employ Ato Quayson’s (2000: 9) definition: “postcolonialism has to be perceived as a process of postcolonializing. . . . It is important to highlight . . . a notion of the term as a process of coming-into-being and of struggle against colonialism and its aftereffects.” Therefore, postcolonialism is a process of what we can call anticolonialism or decolonization, efforts to reverse the various economic, political, social, and psychological effects of colonialism. As such, the process of postcolonialism has a close connection with the development of nationalism. Nationalism, despite its position at the root of imperialism, has long been a defense against imperialism and colonialism. Ania Loomba (1998: 186) reminds us that “in widely divergent contexts, the idea of the nation was a powerful vehicle for harnessing anticlonial energies at all these levels.”

Despite its sometimes ugly side effects, nationalism (and possibly a pan-ethnic aboriginal consciousness) has been an important defensive strategy for Taiwan aboriginals in resisting Han hegemony, albeit within the confines of the modern nation-state. Threatened by the forces of Han assimilation, aboriginals use nationalism as a means to highlight and protect their ethnic difference. Although such nationalism was certainly evident in writings and political movements during the Japanese era, after 1945 the Kuomintang used violent coercion to suppress the political nationalism of aboriginal peoples and ideological hegemony to suppress their cultural nationalism.

As famously explained in the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is power achieved through the combination of coercion and
consent (Loomba 1998: 29). Because of the hegemonies of the various “imperial” dominations of Taiwan—the Qing, the Japanese empire, and the Chinese Nationalists—aboriginals from Taiwan have had little success in their struggles for political autonomy. The coercion during the Nationalist period of White Terror is clear, and the result of the Tang Shouren case, when the Kuomintang government executed six aboriginal elites, was to effectively silence any talk of aboriginal autonomy for the next forty years (Chen 1994b: 40). Consensual hegemony is more complicated and reveals that the true power of hegemony lies in multiple layers of authority. Whereas “coercion” denotes the threat of violence upon the physical body, “consent” refers to instances in which the oppressed willingly submit to the authority of the oppressor. Gramsci (1971) explored consensual hegemony as part of the larger construction of “common sense,” or naturalized and conventional views of the state of affairs. Why would any ethnicity, class, or sex be willing to allow another group control over their economic or political interests? In the system of cultural and ethnic difference established during the period of Japanese colonial control, Taiwan aboriginals occupied a subaltern class. The system was similar to that in Northern Africa, which Frantz Fanon (1966: 40) criticized, where the invaders are given privilege as a ruling class over natives. Not surprisingly, many aboriginal victims of this system are unwilling to return to such a system of difference based on ethnicity. Aboriginal society in Taiwan today thus remains divided: some, hoping to gain economic and political advantages, are willing to assimilate; others, with the same goals of economic and political advantage but also with an amount of national pride, hope to use ethnic nationalism as a way of putting their differences with the Han majority on display.

Researchers have found that in many cases aboriginal peoples are uninterested in returning to their traditions. In his studies of East Coast aboriginals, Michael Rudolph (2003: 126) has noted that after decades of Han education and assimilation, many aboriginals are now unwilling even to use their non-Chinese names. In the 1990s, he found that the
majority of the people he met had grown accustomed to the belief that both aboriginal people and Han Chinese were bearers of the “5000 years of Chinese history.” Because of such instances of Nationalist education and assimilation policies, the vast majority of aboriginals looked down on their own culture, a condition that Shih-Chung Hsieh (1994: 404) calls “stigmatized identity” (rentong de wuming). This stigmatized identity has caused Taiwan aboriginals to suffer doubly: both from the discrimination of Han Chinese and from self-discrimination against their own culture and traditions. Therefore, aboriginals “consent” to Han hegemony. In confronting this issue, many aboriginal elites have turned to a strategy of pan-nationalism to promote aboriginal nationalism and to preserve their traditions and cultures; foremost among groups that have used this strategy is the Association for the Promotion of Taiwan Aboriginal Rights (Taiwan yuanzhuminzu quanli cuinhui). However, as a result of both stigmatized identities and the scars remaining from the violence of the White Terror, differences in aboriginal-consciousness and imaginings of the future between the elites and the people have become important obstacles. Shih-Chung Hsieh has found that aboriginal voters will rarely support aboriginal candidates. He points out that after the 1989 elections, many aboriginal elites felt extremely saddened that they had become “elites without people” (Hsieh 1994: 414). Straddling both the Han Chinese and the aboriginal worlds, these elites grappled with issues of modernization while struggling to maintain links to their peoples’ past.

As Han control became absolute across the island, Taiwan aboriginal elites realized that the only avenue of defense open to them was modernization. To elevate the position of aboriginals in Taiwan society, they had to accept the rules and system defined by the Japanese and/or the Han Chinese in the realm of material society, while preserving their cultural and spiritual value systems. In a modernizing Taiwan, Uyongu Yatauyungana had no choice but to emulate the intellectuals of Japan in order to bring Tsou society into the modern economy. Yatauyungana
attempted to modernize every aspect of his tribe, including education, the economy, and agriculture (Chen 1994b: 15). The impetus for Yatauyungana’s modernization program was the construction of the Alishan Railway, an ambitious Japanese-sponsored rail project that was intended to connect the resource-rich forests of Alishan with the plains of Chiayi. Because new products were suddenly available, the Tsou better understood the differences between their lifestyle in the high mountains and that of people on the plains (Poiconu 2006: 22). The gaping inequalities between the two caused Yatauyungana to be concerned for the future of his tribe; he therefore embarked on a project of complete modernization, encouraging Tsou youth to join youth groups, promoting the national language of Japanese, and speaking out against superstitions. He also reformed cultural practices, such as indoor funeral rites, and carried out massive agricultural reforms, including the planting of cash crops and rice paddy cultivation (Gao 2006: Preface). In promoting assimilation, Yatauyungana was in many ways responsible for the Japanization of the Tsou, a phenomenon mentioned in the records of the visiting Russian anthropologist Nikolai Aleksandrovich Nevsky (1892–1937) during his stay with the Tsou in 1927.⁵

Because he was the first Tsou modernizer, Yatauyungana remains a controversial figure to this day. As in every colonized society before and after the Tsou, the question was: to what degree and in what areas does a nation pursue modernization and assimilation? Those in Yatauyungana’s tribe still have very conflicting opinions about him: some see him as a national hero, but others consider him an enemy who has forsaken their national traditions (Poiconu 2006: 100). Whether it is seen as a defensive necessity or an abandoning of his people, his imitation of the Japanese colonizers was more complete than that of any Tsou before him, and he was the first to use what he learned to dramatically transform Tsou society.

Trained in the Japanese education system from a young age (fig. 2), Yatauyungana entered the Tainan Teachers’ College (Tainan shihan gakkō) in 1924 and was one of the first aboriginal students to graduate
Figure 2: Uyongu Yatauyungana (middle, seated), on graduation from the Kagi Jinjyō School in Chiayi, 1924.
from this elite Japanese school; before 1945, which is twenty years after Yatauyungana's admittance to the program, only nineteen aboriginals had graduated from Taiwan's three teachers' colleges (Poiconu 2006: 24). Immersed in the Japanese educational system and separated from his own people and language, Yatauyungana became very much like the Japanese of his time. He was interested in socialist theory and believed strongly in the need for modernization. He felt passionate about the works of Nietzsche and Marx (Poiconu 2006: 29). Moreover, he took on many of the cultural attributes of the Japanese, including his taste in music, which would lead him to reform the Tsou arts with an infusion of Japanese influence. Listening to Tsou music today, that influence is still very strong, as is the influence of Yatauyungana himself, whose songs are the best known of Tsou traditional music. Despite the Japanese colonial government's policy of dōka, or assimilation, it is clear that Yatauyungana viewed his assimilation as a process not of Japanization but of a modernization that was necessary for the survival of his tribe. Yatauyungana willingly "consented" to the hegemony of modernity to protect his nation and to preserve some aspects of its culture, just as aboriginal elites in post-martial law Taiwan today are forced to assimilate to protect aboriginal political and economic interests. This is the hegemony of modernity: global capitalism has set the rules, and ethnic minority groups must play by these rules to protect and preserve their traditional cultures, as well as economic and political privilege. Aboriginal elites are therefore forced to negotiate between their attachments to Taiwan as a nation and their allegiance to the continuity of aboriginal traditions, just as they struggle between finding space in Taiwan's national narrative and asserting their ethnic uniqueness.

**Nationality Construction and Autonomy**

Balancing this protection of ethnic difference and an engagement with the majority society is the principal task for elites seeking to secure their people's place in Taiwan society: they must maintain ethnic difference,
but at the same time negotiate with the Han Chinese from a position of equality. Paul Brass's (1991) theory of "ethnicity and nationalism," which Michael Rudolph (2004: 241) has employed in his discussion of the work of elites in the struggle for ethnic autonomy in Taiwan, is particularly relevant. Brass makes two major arguments in his monograph:

The first is that ethnicity and nationalism are not "givens," but are social and political constructions. They are creations of elites, who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their wellbeing or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves. The second argument is that ethnicity and nationalism are modern phenomena inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralizing state. (Brass 1991: 8)

These are important points to consider. Brass is not saying that ethnicity does not exist, but that it is constructed, and constructed by elites for material advantages for themselves and their peoples. Of course, the Tsou have existed for a long time, but it is only in the modern era that they came to be seen as an ethnicity. This construction of the Tsou ethnicity is an ongoing process, and like the construction of the Taiwan national identity, victimization in the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror is central to that process. The symbolic power of this victimization narrative can be used as a binding force for those who seek to construct the Tsou in relation to greater Taiwan identity, yet it can also create difference; herein lies the crux of my argument about the writing of Taiwan's trauma narrative and what it means for Taiwan's aboriginal peoples.

During the Japanese colonial period, Yatauyungana played the pivotal role in this narrative construction of Tsou identity through his songs and poetry. These works, written in Tsou or Japanese, depict vivid images of life in the mountains. Poems such as "The Ancient Way," "The Hunting Song," and "Climbing Patunguono [Jade Mountain]" clearly show pride in
both the land and the traditions of the Tsou people (in Chen 2001: 59, 72, 81). Before he began imagining political autonomy for aboriginal peoples, he had developed and propagated a Tsou ethnic consciousness in the late Japanese colonial period. The poem “Hocubu” (1940), titled after the mythical mountain homeland of the Tsou, showcases this consciousness and its relation to the land and the importance of their collective memory:

The young people tread the steep slope,  
As the day brightens, they walk to the lookout point,  
The elders tell them of these mountains’ names,  
And they listen with surprise. In these places, our ancestors once walked.

Climbing up Hocubu, the view becomes ever extensive,  
Here is Heisiana, There is Psosyogana [Alishan],  
All lie beneath our gaze,  
There is Patunguonu [Jade Mountain]. It is covered in snow,  
The stories tell us that it is there from whence our ancestors came.  
(my translation; the original Tsou poem and Chinese translation in Chen 2001: 75) (fig. 3)

Tsou elites, including Yatauyungana and his biographer, Pasuya Poiconu, have recognized that the construction and solidification of ethnic awareness are necessary strategies to prevent the Tsou people's assimilation into the Han majority and as a justification for the eventual creation of autonomous aboriginal territories in Taiwan. Tsou nationalism then has both political and economic advantages that go hand in hand with cultural preservation (Brass 1991: 8). In the construction of this nationalism, as it coincides with the writing of a new modern Taiwan in the 1980s and 1990s, Uyongu Yatauyungana plays the role of tragic hero perfectly: he brought the Tsou into the modern nation, but his work was cut short by the violence of the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror that followed.
Figure 3: The Alishan area as seen from Jade Mountain. Photograph courtesy of Josie Wu.
Uyongu Yatauyungana’s Entry into Taiwan’s Trauma Narrative

The first major incorporation of Uyongu Yatauyungana into the narrative of 2-28 and the White Terror was in the pages of Taiwan Arts in 1994. Chen Suzhen introduced Yatauyungana in the first issue of the newly revived series, and then published a number of detailed articles in the second issue that were based on her extensive research. In the short article in the first issue of Taiwan Arts, Chen Suzhen explains the reasons behind her research on Yatauyungana. Writing about her discussions with tribe members in Alishan, she notes the differences between their words and their thoughts: “From their mouths came words that said Yatauyungana was a bad person. They said that he was a traitor to the Tsou. But in their tone was not the least bit of anger or hatred. On the contrary, they wore expressions of pride as they conversed in Tsou. They then thought on the matter deeply before saying that Yatauyungana’s death was the beginning of Tsou misfortune” (Chen 1994a: 79). Chen Suzhen related this story as part of the movement to expose the injustices of the White Terror period. The editors of Taiwan Arts believed that it was their duty to support the democracy and liberalization movement of the 1990s to right the wrongs of the past decades. In the preface to the first issue of the magazine, Lee Chiao (1994: 1) writes:

Because of special historical circumstances, Taiwan literature has always been closely linked to cultural enlightenment, societal reform, and the movement for national liberation. In the future, we shall continue with this tradition by making it our duty to respect the land and the people, as well as to create a subjective Taiwanese literature and culture.

As this preface hints, this inaugural issue was devoted to those other victims of the 2-28 Incident. The editors wrote that they chose the 2-28 Incident as their focus to “allow people to understand that 2-28 did not just victimize a small number of people, but was a tragedy for the entire age” (Taiwan
Arts editors 1994: 5). Placing Uyongu Yatauyungana into this narrative was an important part of this searching for a pluralized Taiwan; his story was a natural choice for the second issue of the revitalized Taiwan Arts. The issue contains fifty-six pages of material on Uyongu Yatauyungana: essays, numerous photographs, letters, poetry, song lyrics, and interviews. The cover shows a photograph of Yatauyungana with his family, and the inside cover advertises an album of new music set to Yatauyungana’s songs.

Chen Suzhen’s (1994b) essay in this issue is not overconcerned with the events of the 2-28 Incident and the White Terror; rather, she concentrates on Yatauyungana’s songs, his lifestyle, and the special nature of life in the Alishan region, placing particular emphasis on the differences between the Tsou and the Han Chinese. Chen portrays Yatauyungana as an innocent victim, playing into notions of shared victimhood that weigh heavily on the Taiwan cultural consciousness: Yatauyungana is a hero who stands in stark contrast with the villainous Kuomintang government. Chen’s essay is representative of many works produced during the democracy movement of the 1990s that were an important part of the counterhegemonic rewriting of Taiwan’s history. Connecting the Tsou tragedy with Taiwan’s historical trauma, she presents her readers with this question: “Why is it that the example [of Uyongu Yatauyungana] leaves those of us living on this piece of land with such feelings of familiarity and loss?” (1994a: 80).

Twelve years after this special issue appeared, Pasuya Poiconu published the life story of Uyongu Yatauyungana (fig. 4). Poiconu and Chen’s perspectives on this history are generally similar, although with some marked differences. As a member of the Tsou himself, Poiconu learned about the stories of Yatauyungana as a tribe insider; his father, who had been a student of Yatauyungana, was a major source of this information. As he was growing up in the tribe, he heard many different opinions about Yatauyungana, but despite (or perhaps because of) this insider knowledge, Poiconu’s biography refrains from creating a simple hagiography that only sings the praises of the man. He wrote the book to provide an alternative
Figure 4: Cover of Pasuya Poiconu's 006 book, the first full-length work on iyongu Yatauyungana.
view of the life and works of Yatauyungana, but also to suit the need for a Tsou-centered history in a more pluralized twenty-first-century Taiwan; defining the Tsou as an ethnically unique and politically empowered part of the national narrative has become an important goal.

Poiconu makes interesting use of a parallel narrative to frame his discussion of Yatauyungana. This narrative centers on N. A. Nevsky and his 1927 visit to Alishan, where he conducted research on the Tsou language and oral literature. After Nevsky returned to the Soviet Union in 1929, he became a victim of Stalin’s purges in 1937; he and his Japanese wife were executed for being spies for Japan. The parallel story serves the interests of the narrative, but it was also a reflection of a deeply personal experience for Poiconu: he learned about Nevsky’s story from the well-known sinologist Boris Riftin (1932–), whom he met in Taipei in 1991. Riftin, who was then working at the same academic department that Nevsky had been a part of in Saint Petersburg, asked him all sorts of questions about Yatauyungana and the Tsou (Poiconu 2006: 6, 35–36). Disappointed to hear of Yatauyungana’s tragic end, Riftin could not help but notice the similarities between the stories of these old friends. Comparisons between the authoritarian regimes of Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek are perhaps predictable, but through this tragic trope, Poiconu brings a personal narrative and Taiwan’s White Terror into the global narrative of twentieth-century totalitarianism. At the same time, however, he is issuing a clear call for the local specificity of the Tsou in describing the tragic events that followed Yatauyungana’s early work toward aboriginal autonomy. Discussing both Yatauyungana and Losin Wadan, Poiconu (2006: 126) concludes:

These first intellectuals to appear out of the Alishan Tsou eagerly hoped to find a way through these new circumstances with ethnic nationalism, but in that particular age, and as they were tangled up with the 2·28 Incident, they found themselves caught up by the strict laws of the ruling government and could not escape their cruel fate. This is the tragedy of this ethnic group. Is it not the tragedy of this country and society as well?
This facet of the book suggests another major difference between Chen Suzhen and Poiconu: their political motivations and goals are very different. Although the two accounts of Yatauyungana’s life overlap to a great extent, Poiconu felt a need to retell the story, but with the emphasis now placed on a strong Yatauyungana with agency and on the tragedy of the crushing of aboriginal autonomy. As with the fiction of Walis Norgan, Poiconu’s book shows that the trauma of fifty or sixty years ago is still written deep in aboriginal society today and that the democratic victories of the Taiwanese people in the post-martial law period have not necessarily reached all corners of the island. In his biography, Poiconu notably emphasizes the issue of ethnic autonomy; the violence of the White Terror powerfully stifled aboriginal autonomy and hindered aboriginal control over their economic and political interests. For aboriginal elites such as Poiconu, this tragedy continues today as renewed efforts to establish an autonomous region have failed to bear fruit.

From the title of his book, *A Life Mixing Politics and the Arts: A Biography of a Pioneer in Aboriginal Autonomy, Uyongu Yatauyungana*, it is clear that Poiconu intended to emphasize Yatauyungana’s contributions to aboriginal autonomy. After the war, Yatauyungana promoted and made plans for an autonomous aboriginal area in Taiwan, what he called a High Mountain Autonomous Region (*gaoshan zizhiqu*). On March 17, 1947, Yatauyungana and An Mengchuan announced their hopes in a proclamation that called for aboriginal elites to gather in Taichung on April 10 to discuss the terms of such autonomy. The initial text is short and lacking in detail, but the attached notes are an emotional plea that explicitly calls for political autonomy. The text, in Japanese, was appended with a detailed diagram of the levels of government and their relation to each other that Yatauyungana envisioned for this new autonomous zone. Because this has become an important text in the history of Taiwan aboriginal autonomy, it is necessary to provide a rather long translation:
(1) We, the aboriginal peoples of Taiwan, who should be the masters of our land, despite hundreds of years of loyalty to the government, are consistently derided as barbarians and savages. At the same time, when an incident occurs that requires the use of force, we suddenly find ourselves receiving the friendship of and being roused to battle by ambitious people and revolutionaries that live on the plains. They praise us, saying the mountain people are brave, just, and strong. But this has led to our people being hit by the bullets intended for the people of the plains. It has also led to our being branded as bandits and being hunted down.

The fate of the high mountain people has been largely the same for hundreds of years.

(2) This sorry and miserable fate has been thrust on us. Fortunately, democracy has now become Taiwan's motto. Now that there is democracy, we high mountain people must unite as one for the well-being of all those of the high mountains. Through peaceful negotiations, we must establish a region over which high mountain people are the true masters. Although we call this an autonomous region, things such as government offices and police stations will fall within the jurisdiction of the county officials. In all other respects, we will be constructing a mountain region that is completely autonomous. We wish to establish a true mountain peoples' peaceful area.

To all the gentlemen and all the scholars of the high mountains across the island! (Yatauyungana/An 1994: 286) (fig. 5)

In this passage, Yatauyungana points to the 2-28 Incident as a catalyst for this call to political autonomy, though the seeds for his rising ethnic consciousness can be found, as mentioned earlier, in his poetry. However, the political ideology that led to his imagining of an autonomous region within the Republic of China also stemmed, ironically, from his reading of Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People* (Vayayana 2001: 26). Despite this base in early Kuomintang writing, there was no possibility for Yatauyungana's ideal to reach fruition in postwar Taiwan. Releasing such a statement right in the opening days of the White Terror was an unfortunate choice: proposals for aboriginal autonomy simply did not fit within the
Figure 5: Uyghur Yatauyungana and An Mengchuan devised this simple plan for the political structure of an autonomous region in 1947. The handwritten document was included as evidence against them in their trial.
framework of Kuomintang policies toward ethnic nationalities and were viewed as acts of revolt (Poiconu 2006: 53). In the years that followed, when the Kuomintang branded Yatauyungana a feidie, a communist spy, and a corrupt official, it may well have been a way of suppressing the annoying problem of aboriginal autonomy. This is certainly the perspective of many historians today.  

Both Poiconu and Chen Suzhen recognize Yatauyungana’s role in the struggle for aboriginal autonomy in Taiwan; it is unclear, however, what that contribution means for aboriginals in Taiwan today and their ongoing efforts for political autonomy. It may seem odd for the aboriginal autonomy movement to assert its legitimacy by turning to the narrative of 2-28 and the White Terror, because these were, after all, Han-centered historical events. However, drawing attention to a shared victimization appeals to the sympathy and concern of a collective consciousness; it constructs the narrative of Tsou autonomy in relation to Taiwan’s larger national narrative and search for Taiwanese autonomy. In the late twentieth century, the people of Taiwan achieved newfound freedom through the democracy movement, but the autonomy and political rights of aboriginals have not yet been secured (Simon 2007: 233–238). The ideals of the Aboriginal Basic Act (yuanzhumin jiben fa), a kind of declaration of rights that the Legislative Yuan enacted in 2005, have yet to be realized. Despite campaign promises by Ma Ying-jeou, and indeed by the Democratic Progressive Party, the issue of political autonomy has been repeatedly postponed. Kuomintang efforts to introduce a draft of the Aboriginal Autonomy Law in late 2011 were protested by aboriginal leaders, who have criticized the law for being hollow; they have repeatedly called for it to be completely rewritten based on the United Nations’ 1997 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Although the dialogue has begun, aboriginal autonomy and redemption from the 2-28 Incident remain a far-off dream for aboriginals today.

7 Today, many scholars directly assert that Uyongu Yatauyungana was executed because of his autonomy movement. For example, in Research on Chiayi: Society and Culture, Yan Shang-wen (2008: unpaginated introduction) simply states: “This is not actually a feidie case. It is about the aboriginal autonomy movement.”
Conclusion

According to Pasuya Poiconu (2006: 6), Japanese educators gave Yatauyungana the Japanese name Kazuo, meaning “first born,” because he was the first Tsou to receive a modern Japanese education, the first modernized or hybridized Tsou elite. He was also the first to fight for aboriginal autonomy. Like aboriginal leaders today, he had to negotiate with Han Chinese for the power to control resources. As global capitalism entered the Tsou homelands around Alishan with the completion of the Alishan Railway, the fight for autonomy took on real significance. Empire required the collaboration of colonizer and colonized, and the creation of so-called “native” intellectuals such as Yatauyungana, aboriginals who would follow the laws and the ways of the modern system, was critical. Decades later, aboriginal leaders must still negotiate within the rules and norms of mainstream Taiwan society: in the vocabulary of postcolonial theory (Ashcroft et al. 1989: 37, 38), they must both “appropriate” and “abrogate” the symbolic language of Taiwan’s trauma narrative—appropriate it to achieve their own political ends and abrogate the Han-centrism within these symbols and this symbolic narrative to define their cultural and political difference. In imagining and constructing their own nationalism, aboriginal elites have had to find space within Taiwan’s national narrative, not reject it altogether.

Postcolonial theory helps us to understand the constructed nature of national narratives, and offers a useful perspective on Taiwan’s aboriginal postcolonial voices and the counterhegemonic methods of the colonized. Through further comparison of national narratives in settler colonies, we can come closer to understanding how narratives of aboriginal autonomy are consumed, brought in line with, or validated by dominant narratives of the modern capitalist state. Such studies also shed light on how these aboriginal narratives alter, enrich, or abrogate the dominant state or national narratives. However, there remains a need to further theorize settler colonialism and thereby advance our understandings of the
workings of power interactions between colonizer and colonized within such colonialism. The absorption of the discourse of aboriginal autonomy into Taiwan’s dominant trauma narrative is a process that appears in other settler colonies, such as the appropriation of pan-Indian autonomy-seeker Tecumseh by patriotic Canadians during the time of confederation in the 1860s. In 2012, the 200-year anniversary of the War of 1812, some Canadians still remember Tecumseh for his contributions in defending Canada from the United States, rather than his pioneering efforts for pan-Indian autonomy.

Unlike early writing on postcolonialism, recent efforts to theorize settler colonialism have fortunately included places in Asia, such as Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria, in their discussions (Elkins/Pederson 2005). However, they view Taiwan in terms of its colonial position in the former Japanese empire and do not consider the larger forces of settler colonialism that saw Han settlers displace aboriginal peoples. Elkins and Pederson begin their book with the line “The age of settler colonialism may be behind us, but its legacies are everywhere” (Elkins/Pederson 2005: 1). For Taiwan aboriginals and Canadian First Nations, the age of settler colonialism is far from over. Although the imperial center may have lost its throne, the realities of colonialism today are not only legacies of the past, but continuities with the present that stretch back centuries.
Glossary

An Mengchuan
Ererba shijian chuli weiyuanhui
dōka
feidie
gaosuhan dui
gaosuhan zizhiqu
Hocubu
Lin Shuangwen
Losin Wadan
Min Bao
Paiwan
Sising
rentong de wuming
Tainan shihan gakkō
Taiwan wenyi
Taiwan yuanzhuminzu quanli cujinhui
Tang Shouren
Tsou
Uyongu Yatauyungana
Yata Kazuo
Yuanzhumin jiben fa
zuqun

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