Chapter Nine

Wu Jinfu and the Melancholy Mountain Forests of China’s Border Cultures: New Voices in Taiwanese Literature

Daria Berg

Tang Yingshen’s death and Taiwanese consciousness

There was an outcry against the government among Taiwan’s leading intellectuals and writers when on 15 May 1987 the jurisdictional authorities of the Republic of China on Taiwan had Tang Yingshen, an eighteen-year-old youth from Mt. Ali in central Taiwan, sentenced to death and executed. Tang Yingshen hailed from the Tsou, one of the nine ethnic minority groups of indigenous or aboriginal ‘mountain tribes’ (gaoshan zu) living in present-day Taiwan. The Tsou consist of about 7500 members among the approximately 338,200 indigenous people who account for 1.7 per cent of Taiwan’s total population. Tang Yingshen’s execution brought the social and cultural problems of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples into the forefront of national consciousness. It sparked off a debate among Taiwan’s intellectuals which is closely linked to the issues of Taiwanese identity, democratization and independence.

In 1986, nine days after taking on a new job in a laundrette in the capital Taipei, Tang Yingshen killed his employer and his family in a fit of fury. As his employer had refused to return Tang’s identity card, Tang believed himself deprived of any possibility to quit the job which he perceived as oppressive. He had committed a serious crime, but intellectuals and writers perceived his conviction as highlighting one of the darkest corners of modern society in Taiwan: racial discrimination and oppression of the indigenous minorities. Tang Yingshen’s trial triggered off a public discussion among scholars and intellectuals in the national press. For one year Taiwan’s intellectuals endeavoured on behalf of Tang Yingshen to reverse the sentence of capital punishment. In the evening paper Ziti wanbao they still sought reprieve for Tang Yingshen on the eve of his execution. They failed to prevent it but gave publicity to the plight of the indigenous peoples. Political essays and fictional narratives by both Chinese and indigenous Taiwanese writers turned Tang Yingshen into a tragic hero symbolizing the fate of Taiwan’s ethnic minorities in the modern world.

The nine indigenous groups who populate Taiwan’s mountain areas today differ with regard to their language, kinship system and social structure, material culture and religion. So far modern scholarship has failed to resolve the enigma of their origins. Racial and linguistic features make Taiwan’s indigenous people appear as the northernmost branch of Austronesian or Malayo-Polynesian stock. Searce evidence of Palaeolithic origin suggests settlements of Melanesian populations of the late Pleistocene or post-Pleistocene era in Taiwan. When the South-East

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2 They are: the Ami and Paiyama in the eastern coastal plains, the Saisiat, Ayutal, Bunun, Tsou, Rukai and Paiwan in the central mountain range, and the Yami on the island of Lanyu, or Biotel Tabage, off the south-eastern coast (Frank Lebar, Ethnic Groups of Insular Southeast Asia, Vol. 2, Philippines and Formosa, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1975; Zhongguo jianyan, 1990, 14-15).


4 For Tang’s obituary see Guan Hongzhi, "Wo ba tingku xian gai nimen" (I am passing on the agony to you), Renjian, 20th June, 1987, pp. 18-43.

5 Li Yuyuan (Li Yih-yuan), Taiwan tusu minzu de shihua yu wenhua (Society and culture of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples), Taipei: Lianjing, 1982.

Asian land connection between Taiwan, the Philippines and Sulawesi dissolved into thousands of islands in the early Neolithic period (10,000-8000 BC), the population of this area developed into independent cultures.7

The first Chinese settlers in Taiwan were the Hakka (Kejia ren) who had migrated from northern China to Guangdong province, followed by the Hoklos or Southern Min people (Minnan ren) from Fujian province. Immigration on a large scale began only in the early seventeenth century.8 When the Chinese National Guomindang government fled to Taiwan in 1947, another wave of Chinese immigrants followed and settled on the island. While today all citizens of Republican Taiwan are Chinese in the political sense, they are perceived to divide into two categories from the ethnic point of view: the Han nationality and the non-Han. The term 'Han' however is problematic. In the Taiwanese context it is perceived to include Hakka, Hoklos and the other mainlanders who left China after 1947. As in theory all citizens of the Republic of China are equal before the law, Taiwan's indigenous peoples never obtained minority status.9

The writer Wu Jinfà (1954- ) was among the first intellectuals to speak out for Tang Yingshen. While admitting that he was no specialist in legal affairs, Wu claimed that 'the judges ought to have taken into account the mitigating circumstances of discrimination against the young indigenous man and the oppression of indigenous minorities in contemporary Taiwanese society'.10 Tang Yingshen’s fate threw Wu Jinfà into despair as he discovered the schism between his 'the world of letters' and the 'world of real life'. He decided that this split world could only be joined again by 'action'.11 Wu accused the R.O.C. government of lacking humanitarian ideals and human rights and perpetuating the tradition of

China oppressing her border cultures.12 Wu Jinfà here draws attention to an issue that the Western historian Wolfram Eberhard has also described in the broader context of his research on local cultures in South and East China:

The Chinese ruling elite, of all times, has always insisted upon the oneness of Chinese culture and society, and foreign students have tended to accept this view... Although it was well-known to everybody that there always were and still are millions of "aborigines" in the area claimed as a part of the Chinese state, their existence and importance was more or less denied. One way to do this is the present way of calling these non-Chinese "brothers", indicating that they are but the more backward brothers of the Chinese, not the remains of large and even of some developed societies which were incorporated by force, often to the point of almost total annihilation, into the political system of China.13

In response to the case of Tang Yingshen, Wu Jinfà composed an essay entitled "Bingqi jiaotian, xunhui rendao" (Discarding dogmatism and re-establishing humanitarianism), demanding the return to moral values such as benevolence and compassion and stressing the importance of mutual understanding between Han and non-Han. Wu Jinfà claimed:

Tang Yingshen is dead, but his death has lead for the first time to a common debate among the Taiwanese and mainlanders about the problems of Taiwan's indigenous peoples. Seen from this perspective, his death was not meaningless.14

Tang Yingshen's death had brought the plight of China's border cultures not only into the limelight of attention in Taiwan but also onto the political agenda of the late 1980s. The novelists Huang Chunming (1939- ) and Chen Ruoxi, along with professors from Taiwan National University and Zhongzhi University and other prominent writers such as Li Ang (1952- ) and Li Qiao, publicly declared their compassion for Tang Yingshen and offered their condolences to his family.15 Wu Jinfà,
however, expressed his regret that their support had come too late: ‘Had they spoken out before Tang’s death, I would have admired them even more.’

The debate about human rights and ethnic minorities on Taiwan has been tightly intertwined with the topic of Taiwanese consciousness (Taiwan yishi) and the search for Taiwanese identity. In the 1980s certain groups of intellectuals advocated Taiwanese consciousness, which has been described as a subjective cultural identity system, as opposed to Chinese identity. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987 Taiwanese consciousness appears not just as a political issue concerned with Taiwanese independence but implies the construction of a Taiwanese cultural tradition and future development of an autonomous culture. The non-Han population of Taiwan plays a crucial role in the concept of Taiwanese consciousness because acknowledging their presence and status requires a rethinking of Taiwanese history while shedding light on the way China has treated her border cultures. ‘Taiwan wenxue’, literature with Taiwanese consciousness — no longer merely ‘xiangtu wenxue’ (nativist literature) — appears not only as a literary genre but also as a social movement and a political attitude. A rethinking of Taiwanese history from the perspective of the ethnic minorities has been a major concern in the literary works of Wu Jinfa. Hoping that literature may have the power to change attitudes and to reduce ignorance and misunderstanding, Wu Jinfa had already begun to make his contribution to the dialogue between Han and non-Han well before 1987.

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16 Wu Jinfa, Yuan jia shandi lang, p. 316.
18 On nativist literature see Anke Pieper, “Xiangtu wenxue: eine literarische Gattung im Zentrum des Diskurses über die nationale Identität” (Nativist Literature: a literary genre at the centre of the discourse on national identity), in Eberhard Sandachmeier and Helmut Martin, eds., Interdisziplinäre Aspekte deutscher Taiwans-Forschung (Interdisciplinary aspects of German research on Taiwan), Dortmund: Projekt, 1994, pp. 83-98.
19 Wu Jinfa, Yuan jia shandi lang, p. 8.

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The writer Wu Jinfa

Wu Jinfa ranks among the pioneers in exploring through the medium of literature the processes of fusion and friction on the borders of Chinese civilization in present-day Taiwan. He was born into a community of Hakka in Meinong village, Kaohsiung county, Taiwan, on 14 September 1954. During his time as a student in the Faculty of Sociology at Zhongxing University in Kaohsiung from 1973 to 1977 Wu who had grown up speaking Mandarin Chinese and the Hakka dialect, began to learn the Minnan dialect (minnan hua). As part of his sociological studies he made his first field trip to the mountain tribes in 1974 and further excursions followed. Wu derives his interest in the lives of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples from these experiences as well as from his claim that his great-grandmother belonged to the Bunun, an indigenous tribe living in Taiwan’s central mountain range. His contacts with the indigenous peoples made him question the Sino-centric ideals and the values his previous education had taught him.

Upon graduation Wu Jinfa moved to Taipei, worked in the film industry and began to write. Between 1976 and 1979 twenty-one of his stories appeared in newspapers and magazines and won two prizes. At the age of 26 Wu published his first collection of stories. He co-directed a film production in Korea before leaving the movie business in 1981. The following year he became the editor-in-chief for the feuilleton of the national newspaper Taiwan shibao and in 1984 he moved on to Minshong ribao. In 1983 Wu Jinfa married Zheng Shuhui, a native Taiwanese woman of Southern Min origin, with whom he has one daughter. He has travelled in Europe and the United States. Currently he works as the editor in chief at Minshong ribao in Kaohsiung.

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Apart from his collections of short stories, Wu also published in newspapers and magazines stories about indigenous mythology and critical reviews on gender equality and women in literature and society. Wu has received literary awards from Zhongguo shibao and Lianhe wenxue and the Wu Zhonglu prize for his short and medium-length stories, including those featuring protagonists from Taiwan’s indigenous peoples. Literary critics have discussed and drawn attention to these works.

Wu Jinfu ranks among the younger generation of Taiwanese writers. Together with Zheng Qingwen, Li Qiao, Chen Yingzhen and Lin Shuangbu (alias Huang Yande, 1950s), he counts among the authors who paved the way for political literature in the 1980s by breaking political taboos and throwing light on events in the 1940s and 1950s that had been neglected so far. He has also played a part in the Taiwanese nativist literature movement of writers propagating independence and self-rule in Taiwan while rejecting the Republican Government’s ideology of unification with mainland China.

In 1987 Wu Jinfu became the first Taiwanese author to edit an anthology of literary narratives on the indigenous peoples, written by authors of mainland Chinese, Hakka, Hoklos and indigenous origins. This volume, entitled Beiging de shanlin: Taiwan shandi xiaohua xuan (‘Melancholy Mountain Forests: Selection of Fictional Narratives on Taiwan’s Indigenous Peoples’) introduces for the first time the writings of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples in Chinese which here serves as a lingua franca. Its frequent reprints attest to its popularity in present-day Taiwan.

In 1989 Wu edited another anthology, Yuan jia shandi lang: Taiwan shandi sanwen xuan (‘I Want to Marry an Indigenous Man: Selection of Prose Writings on Taiwan’s Indigenous Peoples’), which comprises non-fictional narratives on the lives of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples such as reports, travel diaries, historical and sociological essays based on personal experiences and interviews, and political commentaries. Wu divides the authors into two groups: Han authors (including Hakka writers such as Wu himself) and indigenous writers. This anthology includes the essay ‘Gei Tang Yingzhen de yi feng xin’ (‘Letter to Tang Yingzhen’) by Zhao Guizhong from the indigenous Rukai group and an essay by Wu Jinfu in which he comments on Tang Yingzhen’s case. According to Wu, his anthologies primarily target Taiwan’s intellectuals as the intended readership.

Women from Taiwan’s indigenous peoples also feature repeatedly as the heroines of Wu Jinfu’s fictional narratives. Four stories by Wu Jinfu written between 1980 and 1988 dramatize the contact and conflict between Han Chinese men and indigenous women in the modern metropolis. The voices that speak out through these stories have never been heard in Taiwan’s Chinese-medium literature before.

23 Wu Zhonglu (1900-1976), a teacher from Xinlu county, Taiwan, counts among the major Taiwanese writers active during the Japanese occupation (1895-1945) and the 1950s. In 1964 Wu founded the journal Taiwan wenxue.

Ye Shi Tao, Xiaying de moji (The swansong of the S rayya), Taipei: Qianwe, 1990.

26 Mohr, Taiwanisches Bewusstsein, pp. 3-4.
The image of the exotic lover

In analyzing the women from ethnic minorities in Wu Jinfai’s fiction, we shall attempt to gain insight into the perceptions of non-Han peoples through Han eyes. In order to explore the literary and historical context to these stories, we shall also compare them to texts written by other Han and non-Han authors. The aim is to let the texts speak to us, to identify the voices in these texts and to listen to what they have to say. The following analysis will focus on the image of the exotic lover in four of Wu Jinfai’s stories featuring indigenous women protagonists as a teacher, a singer, an actress and a child-courtesan.

The teacher

‘You yueguang de he’ (Moonlit River) is Wu Jinfai’s first story with a heroine from Taiwan’s indigenous peoples. This short story (duanpian xiaoshuo) was first published in Zhi wenbao in 1981, later reprinted and turned into a movie in 1986.27 Youma, an Atayal woman in her early twenties, plays the role of the female protagonist. She works as a teacher in her native village in the mountains of north-eastern Taiwan.

The first-person narrator who also plays the role of the male protagonist in the story is a young Han Chinese man who visits Youma’s village as part of his sociological field work. He feels an affinity with this ethnic minority as his grandmother was Atayal. The anonymous narrator, a semi-biographical version of the author’s persona, later gives up his studies and goes into business, personifying a Mr Everyman living and working in Taiwan’s big cities. The narrator tells the story of his encounter and relationship with Youma from the vantage point of a hotel room by a moonlit river in retrospect after her death. The story deals with a range of issues characterizing the lives of the indigenous peoples and their plight as Wu Jinfai perceives it.

Migration into the cities

Since high school graduation Youma has been working as a kindergarten teacher for the Christian church. Youma lives in one of the 30 counties belonging to the reservation areas for aborigines in the central mountain regions of Taiwan. The Republican government has used such reservation areas to protect the aboriginal rights of land ownership by law and to ensure tax relief for their inhabitants.28 When the narrator visits her village to research the role of alcohol in Atayal society, Youma remarks: ‘In our village the young people have become fewer and fewer.’ A couple of years later the narrator meets Youma again in the metropolis. Youma too has left her native village for the city.

Like Youma, many younger members of indigenous ethnic groups seek a new life in the big cities. The Atayal writer Liu Ao, alias Wu Junjie, (1961- ) reported in 1989 that many rice fields which in his youth still belonged to the people in his native mountain village Heping in Taidong county had been sold to Hakka people. Such developments changed the lives of the Heping villagers, forcing them to turn to the mountain forests for a living. Many young Atayal however preferred to sell their land and move to the cities.30 The Chinese writer Yu Ronghui — who calls himself ‘half Bunun’ — notes that nowadays only the old and the disabled remain in the Bunun village in the mountains of Hualien where he grew up.31 According to the Hakka journalist Liu Huanue (1958- ), political changes since 1945 and the impact of modern Chinese society such as the development of the mountain regions, the establishment of state-owned forests, the ban on hunting, obligatory military service, and educational measures gradually endangered the aborigines’ traditions and

28 Wu Jinfai, “You yueguang de he” (Moonlit river), in Xiaoshi de naowang (The last male), Tsichung: Chening, 1981, pp. 155-176, p. 159.
their livelihoods. The end of subsistence farming among aboriginal societies in the 1960s, low income due to their backward agricultural technology, the infertility of the soil in the mountains and a low level of education increased the economic gap between aborigines and Han citizens. Life in the reservation areas exclusive for aborigines led to lack of both communication and exchange of technical know-how between Han and non-Han. Economic pressures caused by isolation and fraud count among the major reasons for the flight from the mountains. By 1985, around 83,000 or one quarter of the mountain aborigines had moved to the capital Taipei and the industrial cities along the western coastal plains. Yumia represents the new minority of 'urban aborigines' who have migrated to the cities in search of a livelihood.

Prostitution

Yumia however fails to find a better life in the city. Having graduated from high school, she is well educated by standards of ethnic minorities, but not in comparison to the Han population. She follows in the footsteps of many other Atayal women, choosing prostitution for a livelihood. Today the majority of all Taiwanese prostitutes come from ethnic minorities. According to recent estimates, 30,000 indigenous women are involved in prostitution. Around half of all women working in Huaxijie, the main pleasure quarters of Taipei, are aborigines. Yumia presents a typical case: among all ethnic groups, the Atayal show the highest involvement in prostitution, accounting for seventy to eighty percent of all aboriginal prostitutes. Field studies by the ethnologist Yu Guanghong from Academia Sinica found that women from more than one fifth of all Atayal households earn money by prostitution.

The Atayal however have no tradition of prostitution, as Yu Guanghong points out. Traditionally they were strictly monogamous. The moral and sexual education of youngsters consisted of clear-cut norms and taboos. Incest, adultery and pre-marital sexual relations were regarded as a deviation and a moral offence requiring peneum. Gender segregation started with puberty. Both girls and boys had to observe strict moral guidelines in their behaviour with the opposite sex and were exhorted to display modesty. An old Atayal female shaman remembers the moral values of traditional society while deploring their loss in the modern world:

When I was fifteen years old I would meet boys and girls of my age on the free evenings to sing songs and to dance. In those days girls were different from today. They were shy and modest with the boys, not like today when girls break into loud laughter in front of men. When we were drunk, both girls and boys could sleep in the same bed, but no sexual relations were allowed. When something did happen between the girls and boys, it was possible to get married after informing the chieftain

33 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 22.
34 Mohe, Taiwaneseisches Bewußtsein, p. 60.
35 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 23.
36 In 1978, 6.51 per cent of the indigenous population graduated from senior high school as compared to 15 per cent of the total population of Taiwan (Li Yiyuan, "On the Taiwan Aborigines", p. 25; Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 23).
37 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 6.
38 Shen Meizhen, Taiwan beihui changji ye changji zhi cong (Taiwan's battered prostitutes and the policy concerning prostitutes), Taipei: Qianwei, 1990, p. 111; Wang Xiuji, Qiaoshang xishang zhi yanjiu (Research on illegal prostitution in Taiwan) M.A. Thesis, Donghai University, 1984, p. 65.
39 Yu Guanghong, "Dongnaiide Tiaoyuan de liangxing guanxi" (Relations between the sexes in the Dongnaiide Atayal), Zhongkong yinjiuyuan minzuke yanjiu zikan 48, 1979, pp. 31-35.
40 Yu Guanghong, "Dongnaiide Tiaoyuan", 31-35.
41 Xu Muzhu and Li Yiyuan, "Shenhe wenhua bianxian yu gutananzu qingshonian wenti, yi Huashan Tiaoyuan wei li de chubu yanjiu" (Social and cultural change and the problem of the indigenous youth, a preliminary survey taking the Atayal from Huashan as an example), Zhongkong yinjiuyuan minzuke yanjiu zikan 44, 1978, pp. 281-297, 283.
43 Li Yiyuan, "Nanao de Tiaoyuan", p. 86.
but it was also necessary to do penitence and kill a pig for all to eat. When sexual relations were held secret, the result would be that one of the men of the same goga [ritual group] would get injured while hunting.48

The Atayal traditionally depended on agriculture and a barter economy. They remained remote from modern society under the policy of isolation during Japanese rule (1895-1945) until the 1960s when the Chinese Republican government began to develop the infrastructure of Taiwan’s mountain regions, build roads and extend the network of modern communications to even the remotest villages. The confrontation of the Atayal tribes with the money economy and the modern world resulted in the dissolution of their “ritual groups” (kutux goga) that had been responsible for social control, integration and economic production. Without the kutux goga, the family has become the main unit of production while failing in its new tasks of teaching the young responsibility and independence as individuals. Taiwanese ethnologists regard this failure as one reason for the special difficulties of the Atayal to adapt to modern Chinese society.46 As the German sociologist Michael Rudolph suggests, a job without direct supervision, fixed hours, rules and regulations would present a certain attraction to the Atayal who were struggling to adapt to the rhythm of modern industrial society.47 As in Youma’s case, prostitution may often appear to the Atayal woman as a more viable option than work in the fields under the supervision of Han peasants or in Chinese-run factories.

Alcoholism

The disappearance of the kutux goga and the disintegration of traditional family structures make it difficult for the modern-day Atayal individual to orientate him/herself on the values of his/her own ethnic group. The individual is left alone to cope with problems outside the familiar social and cultural context.48 As Youma tells the narrator during their first encounter in her native village: “Our Atayal ancestors were fond of drink... We Atayal are still fond of drinking alcohol... However the reasons for drinking nowadays are no longer the same as in the past.”49

Early eye-witness accounts of Chinese officials, Christian missionaries and other Western visitors testify to the role of alcohol in traditional aboriginal societies. In the early seventeenth century the Dutch missionary the Rev. George Candidus described the production of alcoholic drinks:

The people in this south-western part of Formosa have neither wines nor other spirituous liquors extracted from the trunks of trees as in other parts of India; but they have an exceedingly strong and deliciously flavoured beverage of their own, which has the same effect as Spanish and Rhine wine in intoxicating a person.50

The Chinese merchant Yu Yonghe (fl. late 17th century) who visited Taiwan in 1697 observed in his travel diary: ‘The barbarians, men and women alike, are all great drinkers’.51 In 1722 China’s Imperial Provincial Censor to Taiwan Huang Shujing (ca. 1677-1753) noted: ‘They drink heartily and sing and dance, dispersing when it is far into the night’.52 In 1879 the Qing dynasty traveller Wu Guangliang wrote:

The youth among the barbarians (fan) have a certain predilection for wine. A few of people soon make up a group for drinking. They hold each other’s arms, dance and sing while the women and girls giggle and join in their songs. The barbarians enjoy this

45 ibid., pp. 84-85.
46 Wu Jinhua, “You ye guang de he”, p. 159.
47 W. Campbell, Formosa under the Dutch: Described from Contemporary Notes and a Bibliography of the Island, Taipei: Ch’eng Wen, 1987, p. 11.
kind of entertainment tremendously. It is called zwaxiang ['village feast of wine and dining'].

The German travellers J. Thomson and P. Ibis who visited Taiwan in the 1870s described the indigenous peoples' fondness of wine as an innocent expression of joy. The celebration of happiness however soon turned into havoc. Only two decades later Wu Guangliang remarked on the indigenous peoples' frequent rioting caused by wine: 'Intoxicated and inebriated, they boast of their strength and fights erupt. Such incidents occur with great frequency'. Chinese officials of the Qing dynasty reacted with Confucian consternation and a ban on drinking. The German ethnographer Gudula Linck regards the process of sinicization on the Chinese frontier as the uprooting and marginalized of traditional indigenous societies which resulted in the deterioration of morals and manners.

Nineteenth-century Western observers already perceived alcoholism as symbolizing the demise of traditional aboriginal societies. The British missionary W. Campbell wrote in 1889: 'The males among them are rapidly being slain by simple downright laziness and drink...'. The Canadian missionary and medical doctor G. L. Mackay noted in 1895:

The aborigines cannot survive the coming and presence of the dominant race... the future... is not hard to forecast... Theirs is the tragedy of many savage tribes alike in the East and West: the first touch of the civilized man is the touch of death. China's civilization in the Kilai plain [south-east Taiwan] is represented by the soldier and trader, and in their footsteps follow carnal passion and deadly lust. Already poisonous

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liquors and corroding licentiousness have begun their havoc, and instead of strength and vigour, physical haggardness and wreckage are added to intellectual degradation and moral poverty.

Mackay already implies that social problems among the indigenous population, such as alcoholism, have been aggravated by virtue of contact with Chinese civilization.

More recently Liu Huanyue has also pointed out that, contrary to the widespread opinion that aborigines have an inborn predilection for intoxicating drinks, the consumption of alcohol used to be limited to festive occasions such as harvest festival, marriage ceremonies and worship of the spirits. The Chinese journalist and writer Hong Tianjun (1951-) from Kaohsiung city states that the rate of alcoholism among aborigines has been soaring for the last few years and exceeds that among the Han Chinese. Nowadays alcoholism is widespread even among indigenous youths. Young men in particular engage in drinking bouts to prove their strength and courage. The story 'Jiali po' (The Indigenous Grandmother) by the novelist writer Zhong Lihe (1915-1960) depicts how the excessive consumption of alcohol changes the behaviour of the aborigines, turning them into a laughing-stock for the Chinese. Alcoholism among the Atayal has also been described as the result of


For similar views see also W. Jorost, 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Eingeborenen der Inseln Formosa und Ceram' (Contributions to the knowledge about aboriginal peoples on the isles of Formosa and Ceram), Verhandlungen der berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, 1882, pp. 53-63, p. 55; cf. Gudula Linck-Kesting, Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgeschichte, p. 290.


Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan" (The sun sets over endless mountains), in Wu Jinfa, ed., Yuan jia shandong, Taichung: Chengxing, 1989, p. 278.

Liu Huanyue, "Liaolang de tudi", p. 213.

frustration and depression in a social context that prevents them from developing and realizing their traditional individual.  

When the narrator meets Youma again in the city she has changed her name and identity. She aspires to live in mainstream society - the realm of the Han. Faced with the realities of life in the Chinese city, Youma tries to seek refuge in alcohol, submitting to the same fate as her brother and many other young Atayal. The narrator begins a love affair with her but fails to save her. She tries to forget her ethnic background and sever the links with her origins and traditions. When the narrator remarks, ‘You no longer resemble an Atayal!’, she replies: ‘Let us not talk about the Atayal any longer’. She begins to suffer from insomnia and a fear of the dark.

The German scholar Thomas Hollmann cites the following reasons for the wide-spread phenomenon of alcoholism among Taiwan’s ethnic minorities: difficult working conditions in the mountain regions, lack of professional alternatives, unemployment, the feeling of powerlessness in front of the Chinese, loss of orientation, lack of norms and values for identification, and the absence of specific plans for the future - as Youma’s case demonstrates. The narrator questions her: ‘What plans do you actually have for your future?’ He can feel her shudder as she replies with silence. Eventually she admits: ‘I don’t know’. Her bouts of drinking become more frequent and serious. Several times the narrator has to collect her in a state of inebriation from the police quarters. Youma’s alcoholism also constitutes a form of self-destruction, signalling her alienation from her native tradition and the beginning of her mental and physical breakdown.

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65 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 76.
66 Wu Jinfa, “You yueguang de he”, p. 166.
69 ibid., p. 169.

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Christianity

Christianity plays an important part in Youma’s life but eventually fails to bring her salvation. The first Christian missionaries arrived with the Dutch in Taiwan. The pioneer missionary from the Dutch Reformed Church Candidius was active in Taiwan from 1627 to 1631 and again from 1633 to 1637. He and his successors, notably Robertus Junius (1629-41) and Daniel Gravius (1647-51), functioned as middlemen between the Dutch colonial authorities and the Chinese and indigenous populations. The missionaries lived among the indigenous peoples, in particular the Siraya who by now have disappeared, learned their language and set up schools to give them education. Candidius reported:

I have used great diligence to learn their language, and from the outset to instruct them in the Christian faith; and I have succeeded so far that a fortnight before Christmas of the year 1628 there were a hundred and twenty-eight persons who knew the prayers and were able to answer in the most satisfactory manner with regard to the principal articles of our Christian faith.

For the indigenous peoples, conversion to Christianity became yet another reaction to Chinese invasion and sinicization. The Westerners and their religion seemed to offer salvation in their flight from the expansionist Chinese settlers. Accounts by missionaries confirm this:

Shortly after this time work was opened up among the civilized Chinese-speaking aborigines... among the foothills. Here remarkable tribal movements took place. The people seemed to move towards the Gospel by whole villages rather than from personal conviction.

The British custom officer W. A. Pickering reported in 1898: ‘The Roman Catholics have made some progress amongst the Chinese, but their chief success has been with the civilized aborigines’. Three churches

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60 Campbell, An Account of Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa, p. 25.
exist in Youma’s village: one Catholic, one Protestant, and the ‘Church of the True Christ’ (chēn Yēsu jiàotiān), probably a church of Methodist origin, to which Youma professes herself. The Atayal, like other egalitarian aboriginal societies, would rather incline towards evangelistic sects while indigenous societies with hierarchical social structures would accept more readily the Catholic church.73

Opinion as to the role of the Christian church is divided among Taiwan’s modern intellectuals. The story ‘Yuan jia shandi lang’ (‘I want to marry an indigenous man’) by the Shanghai-born Chinese writer Hu Taili (1950- ), a scholar at Academia Sinica, describes how the indigenous priest Shihe believes in the power of the Christian church to eradicate alcoholism by spreading knowledge.74 Hong Tianjun praises the church for improving living conditions, promoting education, providing medical care and fulfilling spiritual needs. But he also warns of the dangers of a fatalist attitude to life as the aborigines tend to submit to their fate, regarding it as the trial of God. In Hong Tianjun’s opinion, schisms between different Christian churches may moreover lead to unnecessary divisions among the aboriginal believers.75 The narrator in Youma’s story questions the role of Christianity in helping Youma and her people to cope with the problems of the modern world. He asks: ‘Youma, what if your God does not hear your prayers?’.76

The introduction of Christianity, the knowledge of modern science and the Republican government’s attempts to eradicate superstition and shamanism led the Atayal to abandon their belief in supernatural powers (rutux) which previously had ensured social control and encouraged individual responsibility.77 Without the power to influence ghosts, spirits and ancestors by means of prayer and sacrifice the individual feels helpless to avert fate which he/she perceives as dependent on environment or
destiny. The German scholar Michael Rudolph notes that the eradication of indigenous religions results in the peoples’ loss of their dignity and self-esteem.79 The pressures of her profession, the loss of self-esteem and the absence of a social group (the pure yogo) or spiritual force (the rutux) to give guidance and solace lead to Youma’s tragic end.

Suicide

The place of her dalliance with the Chinese man protagonist sets the stage for her ultimate act of self-destruction. Youma commits suicide in the hotel by the moonlit river, the place of her romantic encounters with the narrator. The narrator regards the contact with Han society as the source of disaster in the cases of Youma and her brother: ‘Both were Atayal defeated by Chinese society’.79 As a Chinese man the narrator too plays a part in Youma’s tragedy.

After initial attempts to identify with Youma’s people and their plight, the narrator gradually withdraws from his insights. He gives up sociological research as his analysis of human society leads to attacks of fear and depression. He begins to identify with mainstream society instead. He spells out what ‘ordinary life’ in modern-day Taiwan looks like: a life consisting of nothing but work, money, alcohol and sex’. He satirizes the repression of awareness of social problems in Han-dominated Taiwan: ‘I understood that the only way to happiness in this society was not to think’.80 The narrator thus takes on the persona of the average Chinese businessman in Taiwan’s economic centres. His flirtation with Youma becomes but an excuse into eroticism. As he initially describes his attraction towards the Atayal: ‘I was most fascinated by their cultural characteristics, their mysterious soul, their romanticism, independence of mind and unconventional lifestyle’.81 Youma’s union with her Chinese lover ultimately symbolizes her embrace of Chinese civilization, the source of her melancholy.

75 Hong Tianjun, “Xiyang shan wai shan”, pp. 292-293.
76 Wu Jinfu, “You yueguang de he”, p. 162.
77 Rudolph, Prostitution, pp.49-50. On rutux see Li Yuyuan, Taiwan zahu minzu, pp. 389-390.
78 Rudolph, Prostitution, pp. 78-85.
80 ibid, p. 165.
81 ibid p. 157.
The singer

In 1983 Wu Jinfa published another short story featuring a heroine from Taiwan's indigenous peoples, entitled 'Yarning de jiedao' ('Path of the Swallows'), for which he received the Wu Zhoului prize in the same year. In 1986 the story was turned into a film by Yang Qingchu.

Youma, the heroine of 'Yarning de jiedao', is a young Saiyait singer and actress. Yet another member of the new 'urban aborigines', she shares her name with Wu Jinfa's first indigenous Atayal heroine. In a hotel in Taipei's pleasure quarters she conducts a love affair with her boss, a film director, although at work he makes racially discriminating remarks to her. When the film director abandons her, she works in a nightclub and then becomes the mistress of a company director. The first-person narrator and male protagonist, another semi-autobiographical figure called Wu, cannot understand her motives. But Youma is not a single case.

New attitudes in modern Taiwanese society make poverty appear as shameful, but not so the loss of human dignity through prostitution (xiao pin bu xiao chang). Female promiscuity such as prostitution was traditionally despised by both Han and traditional non-Han societies but seems to have gained a certain acceptability as a means of livelihood in modern Taiwan. Eighty percent of Taiwan's indigenous prostitutes choose their profession voluntarily. As most prostitutes come from financially stable households, poverty alone does not appear as the main reason for their choice of livelihood. An increasing desire for luxury and also loneliness have emerged as the major driving forces. Youma chooses the company of affluent men in society who provide her with a higher standard of living. As the company director's mistress, Youma enjoys the privilege of living in an elegant urban residence.

Prostitution here appears as a means of social mobility. According to the scholar Bernard Wolfe who carried out research on prostitution in Taiwan in the 1970s, many indigenous girls were primarily motivated by the desire for social mobility when they moved to the cities to marry retired mainland Chinese soldiers or to go into prostitution. In a condition of permanent inferiority, the rise to a higher social status by material affluence must have appeared as a desirable goal to many indigenous women. They might have seen it as the only chance to overcome their inferior status. Many were willing to pay a high price: the renunciation of their own ethnic and cultural identity and/or the way into.

With the demise of the kuitu gaga and the rutux, the breaking of sexual taboos no longer entails social sanctions or supernatural retribution among the Atayal. Prostitution appears as one way of attaining consumer goods and other material attractions. The ethnologist Li Yiyuan deplores in his studies of the Atayal their consumer orientation:

The worst consequence [of prostitution] is the degeneration of moral standards and the loss of any feeling of shame. Many young women become able to make a lot of money and to run around proud and made up like a pheasant. Parents are proud of their daughter, because she promises a "great future". Neighbours and friends look on with admiration. There are even husbands who allow their wives to act as prostitutes with the attitude that their money will fulfill all their wishes.

This process also applies to the Saiyait, another society among Taiwan's indigenous peoples based on egalitarian principles like the Atayal. With only four thousand members, the Saiyait form the smallest indigenous group. They live in a pocket north-west of the area inhabited by the Atayal. The use of the same name for the Atayal heroine in Wu Jinfa's

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64 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 81.
65 ibid., p. 67.
66 Li Yiyuan, Taiwan rui tu mu ru, pp. 449-450.
earlier story and for the Saisiat protagonist suggests to the reader that similar issues are at stake in both cases. As members of Taiwan’s indigenous minority, Youma the Atayal and Youma the Saisiat would share similar experiences in their encounter with Han society.

By creating a ‘world of make-believe’, Youma the Saisiat can get the illusion of gaining status and recognition through her individual capacities. Here Youma manifests the kind of ‘avoidance behavior’ described by E. F. Frazier in his study of black American minority groups as one reaction to discrimination.\(^8\) Instead of avoiding contact with the dominating group, i.e. Han society, Youma places values attributed only secondary or marginal importance by the dominating group top of her world of make-believe. By fulfilling goals that are within her easy reach, she can avoid the feeling of failure. This way of coping also has a close affinity to ‘status acceptance’\(^9\): in coming to accept her inferior social status, Youma can bear an inferior or despicable role in society.

In Taiwan Chinese men have been known to take mistresses from the indigenous peoples for centuries. As the Fonsu zuji states: ‘They [i.e. Chinese men] take barbarian girls as wives or mistresses while the barbarian men become old without ever having been married’.\(^9\) To prevent intermarriages, the Chinese authorities issued a ban in 1736 which was again lifted in 1875 as it had been largely ineffective.\(^4\) In the nineteenth century W. Joest reported on the indigenous women’s willingness to marry Chinese men: ‘Die Mädchen heiraten gerne Chinesen, trotzdem sie von ihren einheimischen Männern durchaus nicht schlecht behandelt werden’ (The girls like marrying Chinese men although the indigenous men do not treat them badly at all).\(^5\) At the turn of the twentieth century Campbell also noted about the indigenous population: ‘the neighbouring Chinese always succeed in carrying off their best-looking daughters’.\(^6\)

Nineteenth-century Western observers regarded the contact between the Chinese and the indigenous peoples as having a corrupting influence on the latter. Mackay, for example, points out that moral decay among the indigenous population can always be traced to their contact with Chinese civilization:

In several points of morality these mountain savage will compare favourably with other and higher races. Like their nearest kin, the Hill Dyaks of Borneo, whom they resemble with significant closeness in most of their distinctive features of character and in their customs and habits of life, they are truthful and honest to a remarkable degree; and gross immorality, when found among them, is nearly always traceable to border-land association with the Chinese.\(^7\)

This story too stresses that Youma’s attempts to meet the demands and challenges of Han society cause her moral fall.

Youma the Saisiat appears as the morally loose woman who challenges the narrator and other Han men to seduce her.\(^8\) But her behaviour only masks an underlying feeling of loneliness: ‘Lonely, yes, all Saisiat are lonely.’\(^9\) As for many indigenous women on Taiwan, she chooses prostitution as one way to combat her loneliness.

Youma’s contact with Han men makes her the victim of violence, suffering suppression in the most literal, physical sense. First she receives a beating from the company director’s betrayed wife who has found out

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\(^9\) Wen Ji, Taiwan fonsheng zhi (Record of administrating Taiwan’s indigenous peoples), vol. 2, Taipei: Tainwuheng wenxian weiyuanhui, 1957, p. 569.
\(^4\) Dai Yangu, “Qingdai Taiwan xiangzhuang shenhui dekaka” (An investigation into Taiwan’s rural society in the Qing era), Taiwan jinkang jikan 14, 4, 1963, p. 356; Wen Ji, Taiwan fonsheng zhi, p. 571; Gudula Link-Kesting, Ein Kapitel chinesischer Gremiumgeschichte, p. 195 and 289.

\(^6\) Campbell, An Account of the Missionary Success in the Island of Formosa, p. 400.
\(^7\) Mackay, From Far Formosa, p. 268.
about her husband’s philandering. The later film director beats her when she resists his attempts at rape. She has become nothing but a commodity in the eyes of Chinese men, as the film director asserts: ‘This barbarian bitch was originally my booty!’ The indigenous woman here appears reduced to a sexual object. Youma’s story illuminates the darker corners of Han chauvinism.

As in the first story of Youma the Atayal, melancholy characterises the life of the indigenous heroine. Youma the Saiasit is happy within her native environment but lapses into melancholy upon her return to the city and Han-dominated society. Her story however has a happy ending. Youma plays out the possibility of what happens when she gives in to the narrator’s desire for a relationship. Wu rescues her from the fangs of the film director and becomes her partner. The solution here too means Youma’s embrace of Chinese civilization. But what distinguishes Wu from her previous Chinese lovers is his sympathetic understanding of her situation and his desire to form a serious partnership built on love, not exploitation. His union with Youma thus ultimately succeeds in eliminating her feeling of loneliness. He embraces her ‘as if embracing all lonely Saiasit’. The story celebrates the sympathetic union of Han and non-Han as one solution to the perceived problem of discrimination.

The actress

In 1984 Wu Jinfu published the story ‘Anyue de wu’ (‘Fog as Dark as Night’) with an indigenous heroine called Maya who, like Youma the Atayal, works as a teacher in a Christian kindergarten in her native aboriginal village. In her late teens, she leaves her village for the city to become a singer. She first finds work as a model and then becomes an actress. Maya gains fame and gets recognition for her talents in Han society but she experiences disappointment and exploitation in her relationships with Chinese men. She meets various men in the city: a photographer trained in America, an insurance broker many years her senior whom she marries, then the son of her film producer, and finally the

scriptwriter of the film she stars in who also acts as the first-person narrator of the story. They all regard her as a sex object rather than a friend or partner in a love relationship.

The Han men Maya meets are only interested in her exotic allure and she even suffers attempted rape at the hands of her father-in-law. Although she is an innocent victim, her husband abuses her when he hears about it.

Her story pinpoints the ambiguity of Chinese attitudes towards the indigenous population, containing both contempt and desire. This ambiguity can be traced back to the days of the Qing dynasty. The Chinese settlers voiced their disgust at the perceived uncouthness of the ‘barbarians’, e.g. their nudity, their promiscuity, their breaking the taboo on incest and the custom of head-hunting. To Chinese minds, the aborigines resembled animals: ‘They live in...holes in the earth, are of limited intelligence and wild disposition, and hardly differ from birds and animals’. Chinese sources stress the lack of civilization among the indigenous peoples:

Both men and women all go naked or wear clothes made from bound pieces of deer fur and leaves. They drink blood, eat hair and devour everything raw. Their character is wild and cruel and they are devoted to killing.

The authors of other Chinese sources from the Qing dynasty however went into raptures over the perceived naivety, simplicity and innocence of the indigenous peoples who appeared to them as children of nature true to the Daoist ideal. The Chinese military commander Chen Di

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100 Wu Jinfu, “Anyue de wu” (Fog as dark as night), in Chunjii chashii, Taipei: Lianhe wenxue, 1988, repr., p. 77-96, pp. 92-93.
101 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 70ff; p. 108ff.
102 Huang Fengchang, Taiwan shenghuofan jishii, pp. 45-51; G. Linek-Ketting, Ein Kapitel chinesischer Grenzgesichte, pp. 280-282, 308.
103 “Qing ji shenbao Taiwan jishi jihu” (Collected articles from the Shenbao on Taiwan during the Qing Dynasty), Wenxuan congkan 247, 1968, p. 47.
104 “Qingyi tongzhi Taiwanfu” (Recordings from Taiwan Prefecture during the unified Qing dynasty), Wenxuan congkan 68, 1842, p. 47.
In Search of the Hunters and Their Tribes

(1541-1617) who wrote one of the earliest eyewitness accounts of Taiwan’s indigenous peoples observed in 1603:

Strange indeed are the Eastern Barbarians! ... And then, that there should be people who do not know the days and months, who are without officials and directors, who go naked and use the quipu - is this not also strange? Moreover they ... live mixed up together, males and females, but are not licentious; the males and females [freely] exchange positions [in their society], ... to the present day they are completely without the calendar and writing - how strange indeed! The Southern and Northern Barbarians all have writing, like the ancient chuan "bird-tracks" (script of China), one assumes at the beginning there were wise men who invented it. Why should this [place] alone have been lacking such wise men? But these Eastern Barbarians, when they have eaten to the full and are enjoying themselves, contented and happy, what need have they for wise men? They are [carefree] people of [the ages of the ancient mythological emperors] Wuhuai and Getian.109

The Chinese merchant Yu Yonghe included in his travel account Piibai jiuou ("Small Sea Travel Journal") in 1697 the following observations about Taiwan’s indigenous peoples:

[Wearing] a single cloth winter and summer, satisfying their hunger with coarse grain, innocent, unambitious, they enjoy themselves in the carefree age of [the legendary emperors WuHuai and Getian], keeping to the simple pleasures which have been handed down from the past.110

In these accounts the indigenous peoples appear as the remnants of a long lost paradise, inhabitants of a Chinese vision of utopia in the golden age of the mythological past. Longing and envy appear among the emotions expressed in such passages.

Rudolph has pointed out that such attitudes appear as paradox only on a superficial level.111 According to Hayden White’s analysis of the

109 i.e. Japanese and Manchus.
110 Laurence G. Thompson, “The Earliest Eyewitness Accounts”, p. 177 (Romanization adapted by the author).
111 ibid. p. 189.
112 Rudolph, Prestitution, p. 110ff.
attempts to find fulfillment in love but is eventually driven to fulfill the expectations imposed on her by Han society.

Negative stereotypes still dominate Chinese perceptions of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan. In the 1980s indigenous students professed in interviews that Han people regard them as living an inferior lifestyle, being stupid and backward, having a well-developed body but low intelligence, lacking knowledge and understanding, and not much differing from animals. A survey among the Han Chinese showed that they were aware of the physical differences. They noted characteristics such as 'big eyes', 'sharp features', 'black skin', and 'strong built'. They perceived the behavior of the indigenous peoples as characterized by excessive drinking habits, low standard of living and low levels of education, laziness, simplicity, modesty and passion. All Han Chinese people in the survey agreed that members of the indigenous population were best suited for jobs that would make use of their talents in singing and dancing. Both Youma the Saiyat and Maya represent typical professions of members of indigenous groups. Scholars have noted that this type of discrimination which attributes certain occupations as suitable and others as unsuitable to members of indigenous groups is reflected in the national statistics on job distribution and income.

Despite the negative stereotypes about the indigenous peoples' appearance and behavior, Han Chinese people also feel a certain attraction to the simplicity and independence of the 'savages'. The indigenous peoples also represent Han Chinese dreams of freedom from social obligations and the pressures of civilization. This too forms part of Maya's attraction.

Maya's exotic looks moreover correspond to current ideals of beauty in modern Taiwanese mainstream society which have changed in recent decades under the influence of the West. Han Chinese women often resort to operations to enlarge their eyes. Bernard Wolfe notes the sexual attraction of the indigenous women's naturally big eyes on Taiwanese men. Han society perceives both Ami and Atayal women as specially attractive because of their tall build and fair skin. Han men also appreciate the indigenous prostitutes' talents of singing and dancing which are rare in most Han prostitutes. In all these respects, Maya can deliver.

The narrator of this story embodies a perceived image of the average Han man on modern Taiwan who would fancy a fling with an indigenous woman. It has been suggested that Han men's fantasies about the promiscuity of indigenous women may be a sublimation of the idyll of unrestrained consumption, or its alternative, the destruction of what cannot be consumed. Rudolph even speaks of a Han fetishism for indigenous women and calls prostitution the badly masked rape of young indigenous women and the climax of Chinese exploitation of the indigenous peoples. Maya embodies the strange brand of disgust and desire in the context of Han people with their border cultures.

The child-courtesan

In 1988 Wu Jinfu published the medium-length story 'Chunqu' chashii' ('The Teahouse "Spring and Autumn"') with another Atayal heroine. The story received the first literary award from the magazine Lianhe wenxue and appeared in a film version in 1989. Longer than Wu Jinfu's previous stories about indigenous characters and a precursor to his first full-blown novel Qiuju (Chrysanthemum) (first published in 1989) about love and youth in rural Taiwan, it is a novel about growing up.

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107 For a report on Xie Shizhang's survey in 1987 see Rudolph, Prostitution, pp. 70-75.
108 ibid., pp. 72-73.
appearing as a modern Taiwanese nativist version of the Ming (1368-1644)/Qing (1644-1911) dynasty novels about the pangs of adolescence such as the seventeenth-century novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuans* and the eighteenth-century *Honglou meng*.

The story ‘Chunju chashi’ tackles the problem of child prostitution among the indigenous minorities of Taiwan. The heroine Chen Meili, an Atayal girl like Wu Jinfa’s first heroine Youma, is a young indigenous girl cheated into prostitution. She is the only indigenous Taiwanese heroine Wu Jinfa calls by her Chinese name. Meili has lost her original name and identity. We follow her fate through the eyes of Wu Zaifa, a seventeen-year-old Chinese schoolboy who acts as the first-person narrator.

The story bristles with humour as we watch Wu Zaifa and his classmates experience the pangs of puberty and adolescence. They spend their schooldays with mischief and play until both Wu and his friend Fulin, the son of the madam who runs the teahouse, fall in love with Chen Meili. The slapstick comedy about the teenage boys thus gives way to tender romance and a bitter-sweet tragedy on the theme of first love. Meili has to earn money to help her parents pay their debts. Slave traders cheated her parents when promising to employ her in a teahouse and Meili finds herself trapped in the brothel run behind its façades. When she tries to escape, she is brutally beaten up by the manager.

Trade in humans was forbidden since the days of the Qing dynasty but this practice still continues even today.127 Eighty percent of all cases in Taiwan involve members of the indigenous tribes.128 The Han Chinese writer Yu Ronghui who grew up among the Bunun and lives in a small village near Hualien reports how three girls in his school class suddenly disappeared while many others were recruited on their graduation day.129

Fulin cannot bear to see Meili tortured and becomes her friend. He wants to hide her but needs money for the bus transport and tries to borrow from Wu Zaifa. Wu has no money but is keen to help because of

127 Mohr, *Taiwanesisches Bewußtsein*, pp. 59-64.
128 Liu Huanyue, "Lilang de tod", p. 211.
129 Yu Ronghui, "Hualien jinyou yoyu", pp. 157-158.

his infatuation with Meili and steals money from his mother’s purse. Meili manages to escape. Wu feels triumphant despite receiving punishment for his theft. When Meili arrives home, however, her parents still have to pay their debts and she has no choice but to return to the teahouse.

In 1987/88, Taiwanese newspapers featured articles almost daily exposing the cruel treatment indigenous girls suffered at the hands of slave tranders and procurers.130 According to these reports, many indigenous girls are bought out of the mountains by criminal gangs after agreements with their parents and relatives. Representatives selling luxury articles and other products with a special trading licence for the mountain regions (which remain inaccessible for other Han citizens without special permission) function as the middlemen. Sometimes the sale takes place with the help of a local dignitary such as a primary school teacher or a politician.131 In the 1980s the price for a girl ranged from NTS 100,000 up to 500,000 for two years of work.132 Unemployment and alcoholism among the mountain tribes provide a fertile ground for human trade. Human traders do not have much to fear from the indigenous peoples due to their ignorance in legal affairs and unwillingness to get involved in legal squabbles.

The girls and women would be sold to the innumerable brothels in the cities masquerading as barber’s shops, massage parlours, hotels and teahouses as in Chen Meili’s case. The madams and procurers would give hormone injections to many minor girls to accelerate sexual maturity or make them undergo operations to become fit for the business at a tender age.133 So-called bodyguards would control and supervise the minors

132 Hong Tianjun, “Xiyang shan wai shan”, p. 280; Lu Huazhong, “Liulang de tudi”, p. 211.
among the prostitutes. Minors could not leave the brothels without their bodyguards and when Chen Meili does so, she receives corporal punishment. Many girls have to work ten to fifteen hours a day.

Chen Meili's case is no exception. The support agency for indigenous prostitutes Rainbow Project conducted a survey of the brothels in Huaxijie in 1985 which showed that the Atayal have a particularly high proportion of prostitutes under the age of 18. Sixty-three percent of the prostitutes interviewed by Rainbow Project, most of them Atayal, had come into prostitution as minors. Rainbow Project found that the youngest indigenous girls were the most desired. They had to deal with thirty to forty clients every day but most of them could keep only a small percentage of their income as pocket money. According to the statistics of the women's education institution in Nantou, the youngest indigenous girl was eight years old, six were under twelve, twenty-seven were thirteen, fifty-seven were fourteen, and over three thousand were between fifteen and twenty-two. After two years most girls remain in the profession because even if they have received a simple manual training in reintegration institutions, they find only badly paid jobs and therefore return to prostitution.

Hong Tianjun also points out that most girls come into the profession due to the bad financial situation of their parents or due to fraud by slave traders who originally have promised other jobs to the girls and their parents. Interviews conducted for Renjian magazine also showed that most parents who had sold their children were the victims of fraud.

Often they had been deceived by dignified persons from their own ranks such as indigenous members of parliament or teachers. In order not to arouse suspicion many slave traders promise those heads of family who insist on their honour only small amounts of money for arranging a job for their daughters. Chen Meili's story appears as a classic case study. By dramatizing her fate, Wu Jinfu appears among the first writers to anchor the image of the indigenous child-courtesan in the public imagination, offering it as part of modern-day Taiwanese consciousness.

Other writers in Wu Jinfu's literary circle have also begun to focus on similar issues. The Chinese author Lin Wenyi (1953-) from Taipie city tells how he met a brother and sister from an indigenous tribe near a mining area playing alone in the streets. When Lin asked them about their parents, the boy started to cry and the girl said that the father worked in the coal mine while their mother was in Taipie.

In the story 'Biyeucun yishi' (Memoirs from Biye village) by the Taiwanese writer Gu Mengren (alias Lin Riyang, 1951-) from Yunlin, an elderly member of the indigenous peoples offers his help to a Chinese man in procuring an indigenous girl for him. "Our girls are really pretty. I'm sure you'll like them!" he entreats. When the Chinese man leaves, the old man regrets that it did not work this time.

In 1994 the Atayal poet Walisi Yougan wrote a poem of lament for the fate of the child prostitutes from his tribe, entitled "Record of the Prostitutes' Cry to Heaven" (Changji yuian lu):

Our daughters have to entertain clients
Every day thirty times, forty times...

134 Zong Shumei, “Chuji yuian lu — Taiwan chuji de xuelei zhengyan” (Record of the child prostitutes’ and slaves’ cry to heaven — the testimony of Taiwanese child prostitutes' blood and tears), Renjian, 3, 1987, pp. 8-23.
137 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 130-136.
138 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 128.
139 Wang Xiaorong, Taiwan tichang zhi yanjiu, p. 65.
140 Wang Xiaorong, Taiwan tichang zhi yanjiu, p. 75.
141 Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 5.
142 Rudolph, Prostitution, pp. 280-284; Meht, Taiwaneseisches Bewafheitsein, p. 62.
143 Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", in Liu Huan Yue, "Linshang de tudi", p. 214.
144 Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", pp. 283-284; Meht, Taiwaneseisches Bewafheitsein, p. 62.
145 Hong Tianjun, "Xiyang shan wai shan", pp. 280.
Taipei gained importance as a port city in the nineteenth century, prostitution began to flourish.\textsuperscript{149} The new settlers also brought with them the yangmou slavery system of 'adopted daughters' which was widely practised during the Qing dynasty.\textsuperscript{150}

In 1987 the government on Taiwan targeted the problem of the prostitution indigenous women and minors, and trade in human beings as requiring urgent action.\textsuperscript{151} Delegates of the legislative Yuan called on the administrative Yuan to deal with it as a social, moral and legal problem, but the latter merely pointed to various moral campaigns already undertaken that year and a tightening of police patrol in the mountains. The law prescribes five years imprisonment and corvéé labour for tempting or buying minors into prostitution even with parental agreement and a lifelong prison sentence if there has been no parental agreement.\textsuperscript{152}

Chen Meili writes a letter to Wu Zaiwa stating that she has returned to the teahouse and resigned herself to her fate.\textsuperscript{153} Her real-life counterparts have not all been so compliant. On 10 January 1987 thirty-one groups of women's organizations, human right groups, religious organizations and indigenous peoples' support agencies staged a demonstration against the trade in humans. Both indigenous and Chinese men and women protested with slogans against human trade, child prostitution and the indigenous women's loss of dignity.\textsuperscript{154} In the wake of their protest, Chen Meili's story joins their voices in daring to speak out for the first time about themes that had remained shrouded in silence in Taiwan for so long.

\textsuperscript{149} Rudolph, Prostitution, p. 87ff.
\textsuperscript{151} Rudolph, Prostitution, pp. 138-139.
\textsuperscript{152} Liuyuquangongbuxu (Reports and information from the Legislative Yuan), 76.54, 1987, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{154} "Tsianjii cihai jieju chuji wenzhu" (Unite to solve the problem of child prostitution), \textit{Fanjun xunzheng}, 2, 1987, pp. 4-8; Rudolph, Prostitution, pp. 133-137.
Concluding remarks

In all the four stories discussed above the semi-autobiographical traits of Wu Jinfa’s narrators create the illusion of removing the stories from the realm of fiction and bringing them closer to reportage journalism. This effect heightens the topical interest of the stories in Taiwan in the 1980s. By creating a literary construct of the indigenous heroine, Wu Jinfa presents a catalogue of the trials and tribulations that afflict the indigenous peoples when they enter the urban spheres of Taiwan and mainstream Chinese society.

Wu Jinfa belongs among the first Chinese writers from Taiwan to break the taboo on the theme of the indigenous peoples in Taiwan’s Chinese-medium literature. In the 1980s his love stories between Han men and non-Han women, his involvement in matters concerning Taiwan’s indigenous peoples and his systematic critique of mainstream attitudes towards ethnic minorities in Chinese society appeared as highly subversive. As Wu Jinfa proclaimed during an interview with the author in August 1996, the secret police would be right there to eavesdrop every time he arranged literary meetings and discussion groups concerning the indigenous minorities in the 1980s - a phenomenon hard to imagine in the 1990s as the issue of the indigenous peoples has become a popular and politically correct topic.156 His fictional themes form part of the political agenda of many Taiwanese intellectuals in the late 1980s when the democratization and liberalization movement gathered momentum, riding the tide of interest in the indigenous peoples and their cultures as part of the path towards democracy and appearing in the wake of a movement for Taiwanese independence.

Wu Jinfa criticizes mainstream Chinese society as sporting too much ‘Han chauvinism’ and questions the current sinocentric value system. He stresses the importance of looking at the world from the point of view of the indigenous peoples and suppressed minorities.156 He advocates as the solution for the problems of the indigenous peoples in modern-day Taiwan a stronger emphasis on ‘humanitarianism and compassion’157 while also appealing to his fellow citizens’ innate consciousness (liangxin).158 Ironically, his rhetoric in his critique of Chinese culture appears as thoroughly Confucian.

In all the stories featuring indigenous heroines Wu Jinfa also perpetuates the traditional stereotypes of the conflict and culture clash between Han and non-Han people. His narrators classify themselves as Han men who happen to come into contact with exotic lovers. Wu Jinfa never questions the composition of mainstream society as Han and counts himself, a Hakka, as a member of Han society. Recent research however has questioned the composition of the Han as a homogenous group while pointing to the more complex nature of so-called Han mainstream society, suggesting that the creation of the Han myth in China may require further analysis in terms of local cultures and differences.159

The indigenous peoples on Taiwan have over the last decade become a popular and politically correct theme in literature and other areas, turning the exploration of their lives into a commercialized venture and their culture into a theme park and tourist attraction. Their life-styles have become romanticized as Taiwan’s media tend to present indigenous festivals as joyous and lively occasions and report about the strange and mysterious rituals among their tribes.160

As recent publications about the indigenous peoples have flooded the market, Wu Jinfa’s stories take on a special importance as pioneering work in this field. He may be credited with placing the theme of the indigenous heroine on the literary map of Taiwan’s modern-day Chinese-medium literature. Other writers such as the historian of literature Ye Shitao, for example, have followed suit. Ye published in 1990 the narrative Xilayazu de moyi (The Swansong of the Siraya). A tide of publications including poetry, essays and fiction on the theme of the indigenous peoples

155 D. Berg, interview with Wu Jinfa, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, 11 August 1996.
156 Wu Jinfa, Zuo yige xin Taipaiwen, p. 347.
158 Ibid., p. 6.
has emerged during the 1990s, both by Chinese and indigenous writers. Indigenous women, too, now make their voices heard for the first time in the Chinese-medium literature of Taiwan, such as the Paiwan woman writer Ligelale Awu (1969- ). Their contributions are changing the face of Taiwanese literature, creating a new, multicultural identity and consciousness.

While the theme has caught on, Wu Jinfu however seems to have lost interest in the indigenous peoples as a topic of his fictional narratives. During an interview with the author in August 1996, Wu Jinfu implied that this issue had lost its topical importance and political sensitivity. He has instead turned his attention to poetry modelled on Japanese haiku writings. Nature and the elements, such as the stars and the sky, but also the fairy-tales of the indigenous peoples still continue to provide him with inspiration, he claims, for the subject-matter of his verses. Wu Jinfu's last publication to deal with an indigenous theme was a diary of the indigenous dance troupe Yuanwuqie (The Original Dancers) published in 1993. If there is also an element of disappointment over the lack of recognition of his support among the indigenous peoples, he does not show it.

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161 Ligelale Awu, Shei lai chuan wo zhi de meili yishang (Who will wear the beautiful clothes I weave?), Taichung: Chenxing, 1996; idem, Hong Zuiba de Yu Yu (The Yu Yu with the red lips), Taichung: Chenxing, 1997.

162 Wu Jinfu, Yuanwuqie (The original dancers), Taichung: Chenxing, 1993.