Contesting Memory:
Shifting Power of Narrating in Contemporary Paiwan Contexts

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Abstract:
Memory, through spoken or written language, can be highly contested when the authority of narrating is constantly shifting among the contemporary Paiwan people, one of the Austronesian language-speaking groups in Taiwan. Way before genealogies were written and published by local Paiwan villagers or the government officials, oral narratives by the elders in the form of either myths (milimingan) or experienced history (taucikel) used to be considered the more authoritative evidence for Paiwan “house” (umaq) status. The elders’ memory and their oral performance plays a very important role in the marriage negotiations between families from different Paiwan aristocratic (mamazangilan) hierarchies. Those Paiwan houses that are able to present convincing mythological or historical narratives and are able to trace back to ancestors as founding members of the village are often deemed of higher status. Higher aristocratic status has also been highly associated with better betrothal or dowry negotiations, much more prominent aristocratic names and heirloom objects. Based on my fieldwork in Puleti, a village in Taiyu Township of Taiwan’s Pingtong County, I will further explore the phenomenon in several aspects. After the widespread of genealogy documentation in recent years, either in Han-Chinese or in Romanized text formats, the authority of narrating has been staggering between the local elders who narrated genealogy orally and the outsiders who published written versions of village genealogies. This issue is further complicated by the strategic uses from different social agents, such as the Paiwan villagers who are constantly playing on the ambiguities of spoken and written language. This particular case of the contested memory in these contemporary Paiwan contexts, on the one hand, will shed light on the general research interests among social linguistics and anthropologists, who have often argued about the influences of writing on societies without previous written language tradition. On the other hand, it will provide another angle of how central interventions have been assimilated with the local culture.

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Introduction

Several years ago when I began my fieldwork at a Paiwan village in southern Taiwan, I was very much intrigued by the incongruity among various historical documents and local records. It has come as no surprise for anthropologists to find these materials or texts contesting with one another. It has become more meaningful, however, when these texts have intertwined with the “social reality,” with what is now happening around us. This paper is very much a preliminary inquiry into my fieldwork. Mainly I would like to respond to two anthropological research themes, one is related to the study of social memory and the other is on the comparisons regarding the differences between written and oral traditions.

Anthropological reflections on ethnographical writings have gradually emphasized on the notions of “self” and “other,” represented by the researchers and the researched. This difference can be explored and developed into major achievements of ethnographies, or becomes a trap for the anthropologists. While it is unavoidable to draw an invisible line between the researchers and the researched, the boundary is often obscured and challenged by various factors. When Margaret Mead (1961[1928]) studied the juvenile culture of the Samoan, what she intended to compare side by side was her contemporary American juvenile culture at crisis in the 1920s. Although Mead’s work on the Samoan was initially written for the American audience, it was widely read by the Samoan people afterwards, becoming a reference for cultural revitalization in later years but also met with heavy criticisms (Freeman 1983). I would like to point out in particular, in a post-colonial age and an era of massive transnational communications, many ethnography writings have come to face to face with a much wider audience. They are even entangled with the social memory of the researched, of many unintended local audience, who have become more informed of written resources in recent years.

What I am also trying to argue here is that there have been other types of social reality, especially in the forms of language contestations in daily life. Many ethnographical studies
on societies without written languages often depend heavily on interviews in the field or observations, the former through recording and transcriptions, the later through comprehensive participation. Eventually the research results are published in written formats. Although many of them are intended as reports for governments or even only to be read in academic circles, some do make their ways to the bookshelves of the local residents, or the researched. We must review this phenomenon in the contexts of post-colonial societies and the aggressive literacy policy of nation states. The social memory-in-the-making includes narratives of the elders, the publications by the researchers and local gazettes under the national policy, and other forms of written local records. Despite of their different sources and purposes, they are becoming part of the social reality in daily life and are being cited, argued about or re-interpreted.

In the past scholars of social linguistics have been debating on the difference between oral and written societies in terms of their social solidarity, inter-person relationship, modes of social memory and even the concept of “reality.” Ong (1977:18-19) once proposed that an oral society has more social solidarity and closer inter-person relationship on the base that orality requires more face-to-face communication. Lévi-Strauss also stressed that an oral society is closer to reality than a written society but was rejected by Jack Goody (1977:41-46) on the ground of false assumption of two such extremes.

More recent discussions, such as the one proposed by Halliday (1989:98-101), consider that both oral and written traditions create meanings and reality but in different ways. Orality creates a world of happening but written tradition creates one with things. It is nevertheless hard to decide which is closer to reality. He further pointed out from researches on language learners that written texts tend to define a society or a cosmos as a fixed product or structure but oral tradition tends to look at it as a process, not as static as the written tradition. The case that I am examining, however, represents a society in transition, with different genres of oral and written traditions side by side.
The Origins of a Paiwan Village and its Hierarchy

Paiwan people are very much concerned with the origin narratives and the genealogy of family names. They are not only highly related with the status of individuals, families or houses (umaq) and villages (kinayan). Often they are also brought out during rituals such as naming of newborns, marriage negotiations and ceremonies, and in more daily life spectrums of allotting fishing and hunting boundaries, food distribution, and privileges of visual patterns in tattoos, sculptures and textiles, etc. The principle of “precedence” applied in the origin narratives or family names can be best exemplified by the Paiwan words “house” (umaq) and “first-born” (vusam). Umaq denotes the corporeality of a house, the house that one is born in, and even a grave. Up till the Japanese colonial period, many Paiwan people still buried their deceased family members underneath the slate floor of their own houses (Jiang Bin 1999). Vusam initially means “seed” but can be further used as “first-born.” The first-borns of a Paiwan family, especially as aristocrats (mamazangilan), usually inherit the house names (ngdan na umaq), the house itself and most of the important belongs in the house. The inheritance also includes appropriate portions of fishing and hunting games, privileges of patterns, such as the motifs of sun, snakes and feathers. On the other hand, the first-borns are often responsible for helping the younger siblings, such as assisting in building new houses when they have to move out (Wei 1960; Shi 1971, 1976; Jiang 1999).

Many ethnographies since the 1950s have generally characterized the Paiwan society with a stable system of hierarchy. Paiwan social institutions, such as its marriage and alliance, distribution of land use and properties and village organizations, were said to base on a certain hierarchical principles. Wei (1960:77) in his “Lineage and hierarchy of the Paiwan” asserted that a house-based “ambilateral residential lineage” was comprehensive in describing the Paiwan family or house. He further concluded that a society of ambilateral residential lineage was established on two related systems, that of the right to the land (atunagan), and the right to the products from the land (vadis). Also it was
operated by rules of family hierarchical sequences, determined by the birth order in a 
house/family and the status in a marriage. Based on an ethnography in the village of 
Su-paiwan in Pingtong County, Shi (1971:84-93) presented the social hierarchy and social 
mobilization with similar conclusions. He defined the Paiwan hierarchy as a C-type, which 
was typified by the first-born inheritance of status and exogamy among groups. C-type was 
thus different from A-type society, where an individual gains his social status through 
personal efforts or from B-type, which operates through endogamy within the privileged 
groups, such as in the Indian caste system (ibid:84).

Such conclusions and observations, made during the era of the structural 
functionalism, tended to look at social hierarchy from a static point of view and thus there 
seemed less disputes on the so-called principles or rules. Later ethnographies, however, 
have tried to amend or argued about their validity. Jiang Bin (1983), writing from his 
observations on another Paiwan village of Palilaijan (大社) in Pingtong County, argued 
that various hierarchical principles could be conflicting with one another. Individuals 
tended to manipulate various pre-existing principles for their own purposes, abiding to the 
rules yet offering different explanations. He proposed that there were at least four different 
principles: that of the cognatic principle of filiation, alliance through marriage, ancestral 
legacy or achievement, and domicile of origin (idumanang). Jiang Bin’s research brought 
in to the study of Paiwan hierarchy the perspective of social processes, of how certain 
principles were contested or amended.

Whose texts? Whose history?
The origin narratives and family names of Puleti

In 2003, when I was visiting a Paiwan village Puleti, an eldest daughter Muni 
(pseudo-name) of a mamazangilan family once said something that has triggered my 
interests in the origin narratives of the Puleti village:

Look at this piece of paper, it is a genealogy from the Japanese colonial era, 
which was recorded in Japanese, ghwa31-ma24-ku31-b42 (switching to
southern-Fokien, “I can not recognize this, either”). This is number 207 and 208. So they put us together. What is this? Paiwan? It is our Taljalub(Tariarp) family. And this is the Rovaniau family. And altogether it is heavily involved with the entire Qalangiyan genealogy. Once this genealogy has been reorganized and published again, it is all connected with us people of Puleti. But we did not know this before. If we do not work on our village history, the history of Puleti is up to other people’s interpretation. I got this from Chen Ming (pseudo-name), who has made a copy for me when he was working on the history of Qalangiyan. I told you that when the old Puleti was relocating, the Rovaniau family did not have any offspring to continue the *umaq* so they found someone from his sister’s family and this was the first time that Cenlu and Rovaniau families were united. So this is the evidence.

I have often heard from the elders in the village that such and such names were different, which made me wonder if there were actually many different names for a particular person and he simply adopted a different name according to the place he was staying at. So it was not a question of not being able to find his particular name but it was because that he used his other name when he was living in that village and used his *paumaq* (origin house) name when he was in *paumaq*. This is why we have noticed that one particular person has more than one names. Recently we have tried to incorporate the family history of Qalangiyan and both family histories got all mixed up together. According to our elders there is a legend that can trace our ancestors back to the very early days. Now this should be the source of the legend and there really existed such an individual. It is not a legend but very possibly a part of genuine history. (13 August 2003 in Puleti)

Muni has been a member of the village gazette-writing team, trained and sponsored by the government to work on the village’s history. She has been collecting the historical materials and other information concerning the present-day Puleti for a while. Her puzzles exemplify one of the social realities resulted from the various “texts” of origin narratives. Or, conversely, the denial and recognition of various texts as a result of contemporary social reality of the local contestations of status and hierarchies of these closely related Paiwan villages.

During the 1950s to 1960s, Puleti and other dozen Paiwan villages were relocated to
their present locations from the previous settlements as a continuation of Japanese
government policy of the “Three Major Principles for the Indigenous Peoples.” These
villages were formerly located on mountain regions of an elevation of 1500km and have
later moved down to lower hills.

First there was an argument about the use of land for the head mamazangilan. The
head mamazangilan of old Puleti Taljalub tanuvag was said to oversee Chalaabus (Laiyi
來義) so during the relocation in the 1950s he decided to moved to Chalaabus. The locals
of Chalaabus would not grant him the right as the head mamazangilan there and thus he
was forced to move back to the present location of Puleti. On the other hand, Taljalub
tanuvag’s younger sister, who was married with a new house name Katu, moved to the
present location of Puleti in 1954 and has registered the land ownership with the
government. Her descendent Katu camak also became the village chief administrator
through open elections. Adding on to that achievement, her descendant had an alliance
marriage with one of the most prestigious house, the Rovaniau family. After Taljalub
tanuvag moved back to Puleti in the 1980s he was still honored with the title of the head
mamazangilan and he was hosting marriages and other important ceremonies in the
villages. The Taljalub house, however, does not excel much in terms of economic gains or
political authorities in the village. Some villagers even worry that a weak head
mamazangilan will eventually bring down the status of other mamazangilan in this village.

For the purpose of drafting up a village gazette, we should work on our
genealogy first. Then we can go back to the old village and build up some
houses. At least we should draw out the borderlines while the elders are still
alive. If they have drawn out the borderlines, I will certainly return to build a
house, a traditional Paiwan house with slates. The village of Su-paiwan has
received a grant from the “Vitalizing Old Village” project and their villagers
are starting to build houses in their old settlement. The total grant amounts to
(New Taiwan dollar) 15,000,000. They can split the money but those who do
not want to can give up their shares. The project has been initiated by the
Council of the Indigenous Peoples. Although it seems well intended but there
must be problems after a certain years. For all we can do now is to bring in tourists. Since we do not have good academic degrees we have to make good use of our ancestor’s land. If we can restore the houses with kitchens and stoves it will certainly be a wonderful view to see the cooking smoke coming up from each house again. All of this would be possible if only our brothers and sisters could work together. The government has started with the head mamazangilan but ours is so weak! We need to help him. Although we have come up with similar conclusions but nothing has gone through so far. What are the problems? (20 August 2003 in Puleti)

My own research may not and will not be able to pinpoint the status of Puleti but my special interests is to shed some light on the different types of texts for the Puleti origin narratives, especially the house names of important mamazangilans. These various types of texts have to be structured and re-interpreted within the contexts of a society transforming from a mostly oral society to one with written languages since the Japanese colonial era. First of all, for the past one hundred year or so, the Paiwan people has transformed from a group with mainly oral traditions into one with written legacies. Such transformation has to be closely observed with how the local Paiwan people narrate their origins and genealogies. Secondly, how is the Chinese or Japanese sense of “history,” combined with different concept of time and brought into the Paiwan narratives through the contacts with the Han-Chinese and the Japanese colonial government, operates in a certain specific contexts, such as in a marriage negotiation or status contestation? Last and maybe the most important of all, among the recent movements of “locating our native land” and “writing our own history,” how does this “sense of history” play its role in terms of village origins and narratives of family names? To cite one example, Gao Jiaxing (2001), born as a native of the Paiwan Mudang Township, wrote her Master thesis on the famous “Mudang Village Event” from a Paiwan point of view. Instead of just focusing her topic on historical accounts from the Chinese Qing documents or the Japanese historical records, she has also interviewed the local Mudang elders who presented a very different view and memory from the typical Han-Chinese historical narratives. Tan Changguo (2003) has linked this
recent “writing our own history” phenomenon to historical “subjectivity” and points out that it should be studied together with the issues of colonial politics and the concepts of nation states. Compared to texts in written and even published formats, oral narratives are no longer the sole authority in the village. What will this transformation bring to the local contest of status?

Oral tradition or family memory, as indicated by Eric Hobsbawm (1997), is seldom comparable with the collective memory supported directly or indirectly by the nation states:

…We must be aware that this is so, particularly at a time when alternative ways of preserving the past – oral tradition, family memory, everything that depends on the effectiveness of intergenerational communications which are disintegrating in modern societies – are disappearing. In any case the history of large collectivities, national or other, has rested not on popular memory, but on what historians, chroniclers or antiquarians have written about the past, directly or through school textbooks, on what teachers have taught their pupils from those schoolbooks, on how writers of fiction, film producers or the makers of television and video programmes have transformed their material. (Hobsbawm 1997:275-76)

What Hobsbawm has pointed out is indeed happening to Puleti but in different contexts and in very different ways. What we need to take precaution is who is narrating or writing, and to whom, where, how and why are these various texts of memory being presented in terms of power struggles? In Puleti, origin or genealogy narratives take place in several occasions, i.e. during the marriage negotiations, naming of newborns, and sometimes in storytelling. First of all, village elders, especially those of important status and good memory, are the major narrators. These narratives are knowledge passed down generations through generations, to younger people when they are mature enough to participate in narrative occasions, such as in a marriage negotiation. Origin stories are often presented with a certain prototype but come in many different versions. For example, a story prototype of how the first founding family moved to Puleti often involves the
unfortunate incidents of two daughters, one missing in a lake and another disappearing after a swing-ride. Different versions vary on the details of the misfortunes.

Secondly, these narratives often combine two specific Paiwan genres, myth (*milimilingen*) and legend (*taucikel*), the former refers to stories passed down from the ancient days but can not be verified by the speakers themselves, while the later refers to events that have happened to the speakers or someone they know in person. Past research (Jiang Bin 1983; Ku 2002) has shown that Paiwan aristocratic status was often supported by several types of oral tradition, narrative of the origin myth, the relocation of the village, and the genealogy of important family names.

These two genres, specific to the Paiwan people, are distinctively different from what researchers regard as myth or history. Early ethnographic records already took note of this particularity. In *Research Report on the Customs of the Aborigines* (*Banzoku Kanshu Chosa Hokokusho* 蕃族慣習調查報告書 [1915-1922]), compiled by Taiwan Colonial Government (Taiwan Sotokofu 臺灣總督府) during the Japanese colonial era, described the Paiwan term of *milimilingan* as such:

Paiwan people normally refer to the stories from ancient time as *milimilingan*, which is similar to the Japanese *jindaiki* (神代記) or *soseiki* (創世記). For example, the ancestor of the *mamazangilan* was born out of an egg of the sun. Or through the act of singing, a certain ancestor has created human beings, millets, taro roots and pigs. In the old days the sky was so close to the land and there were two suns. Or such as another story about how our common ancestors were originally brother and sister, who have survived the flood and later married to each other. Normally this kind of narratives is considered *milimilingan*.

The southern group of the Paiwan people now refers to unbelievable items as *milimilingan*, such as telephones, photos, music players, clocks and movies.

Besides, the *mamazangilan* Ruvaniau of Kuvulj owns a dagger with bronze handle, which his family considered a heirloom of *milimilingan*. According to a story, *milimilingan* was actually the name of a deity. Long time ago when our ancestor Saraqac set off from his homeland paumaumaq to look for new
lands, a deity named milimilingan followed him and sang along, in the meantime creating millets, taro roots and human beings. Saraqac has duplicated the deity’s image on the handle of his weapon to commemorate his contributions after he died. Another version of this story says that he died in pinavavuqacan and his body has turned into iron. So milimilingan was actually the name of a deity. (*Research Report on the Customs of the Aborigines* V (1) 2002[1915]: 111-112)

In the Japanese records, the milimilingan genre was portrayed firstly through a comparison with the traditional Japanese genre *Jindaiki*. Secondly the term milimilingan, derived from the name of an ancient deity, was rooted in a story of an aristocratic family and has further reinforced its correlation with authority and high status. Except for the ones detailed in the *Research Report*, a thorough collection of Paiwan milimilingans were published in 1935 by Ogawa Naoyoshi (小川尚義) and Erin Asai (淺井惠倫), indicating keen interests on this type of genre in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Commission on the Taiwan Customs of Taiwan Colonial Government was established in 1901, initially not for academic research but for the purpose of colonial management. Led by a Kyoto University Professor Okamatsu Santaro (岡松參太郎) and his colleague, this commission focused on Taiwan’s local customary laws and aimed to resolve problems regarding to lands, properties and local customs. Furthermore, members of this commission have also collected information on daily lifestyles and religious practices (Chen 1974; Liu 1975: 9-11; Fujii 2001; Zheng 2002a, 2002b). The Office of the Aborigines (蕃族科), established in 1909, was proposed by Kono Kiroku (河野喜六) and other fellow investigators, approved by Okamatsu Santaro and was at the same time the result of a request from the Administration of Aboriginal Affairs (蕃務本署) under the policy of “Aborigines Management” (理蕃). This office was comprised of four members, including Kojima Hoshimichi (小島由道), and other experienced contract anthropologists such as Ino Kanori (伊能嘉矩) and Mori Ushinoshuke (森丑之助). The Office of the Aborigines mainly investigated the so-called the “‘raw’ aborigines” (生蕃) and considered
the “acculturated aborigines” (化番) and the “‘cooked’ aborigines” (熟番) as a part of Han-Chinese society. Consenting to the establishment and the investigations of the Office of the Aborigines, Okamatsu Santaro nevertheless exerted that these investigations only served the anthropological research purpose but would not contribute towards much legal significance.

Although I was a minister overseeing this office, I was not familiar with the anthropological approach of the Office of Aborigines and could not participate in or give instructions on the basic investigation principles. I was not interested in this endeavor and did not even bother to read the final reports. In my personal opinion, this report might have great values for anthropological research but did not contribute towards much legal significance. (Haruyama 1980, cited from Zheng 2002b:31-32)

Mori Ushinoshuke, one of the participants of this project, emphasized that during investigation, everyone should make efforts to understand the viewpoints of the aborigines objectively and tried not to interpret with Japanese standpoint (Zheng 2002b:40). I have come to notice that in the Research Report, there are more descriptions and relatively less analysis or critiques. Origin narratives and records of family names constitute a great part of this report, including both genres of milimilingan and taucikel. What I am not so sure, however, is how these records were selected. Conflicting narratives did occur and no explanation was offered in the report.

We might have come to a quick conclusion that milimilingan, as such a privileged and unique genre, will be treated as some sort of literature fictions and that the elders might not be able to differentiate between what is real or not. I argue, however, that a mythical genre such as milimilingan, no matter in its oral or written forms, exerts a greater symbolic significance in its structure and plots. For instance, a Puleti milimilingan recorded by Tong Chunfa’s History of the Paiwan People (2001) mentioned the Puleti head mamazangilan house name used to be Curuvu. While the previous Curuvu family was residing in the oldest settlement, the eldest daughter was taken by a mountain deity into a lake and another
eldest daughter of a prominent family accidentally flew over to the County of Chaozhou (潮州) when she was swinging. The family head interpreted these incidents as punishments from the deities and henceforth changed the house name to Taljalep, and relocated the entire village (Tong 2001:80-81). I have heard of similar stories in the village but without exact house names or other details of the incidents. Within the plots or structure of the narrative, the significance lies not in the correctness of the stories but in the messages of the ill-fated locality, the episode of relocating and the legitimation of changing their house name.

Most of all, narrative regarding village origins and house names are always flexible and highly strategic in terms of its purpose. Heroic achievements or important alliances from earlier generations are often recited as evidence of higher status and are reinforced in the genealogy narrative. Narrators can selectively trace back to the more prominent sides of his or her family without restricting to a particular maternal or paternal lineage. This strategy is especially evident in terms of naming. For example, the head mamazangilan’s name is Taljalep tanuvag, with Taljalep as his inherited house name and tanuvag as his personal name. In Puleti, however, the personal name tanuvag is also considered a prestigious name and is only reserved for the Taljalep family or their marriage alliance.

I will illustrate this point with a similar case taken from a genealogy from the house of Mavaliv at another Paiwan village of Masilid (北葉), Pingtong (Tong 2001:76-). The names listed here are all personal names, passed down from earlier ancestors of both paternal and maternal sides. It is often considered a great honor to have names from prominent ancestors.

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remereman♀ tjanubak♂
↓
selep♀ danubak♂
↓
baru♂ muni♀
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This genealogy at Masilid might not be at all “genuine” since it is taken out from myths or legends but its structure has reflected a certain reality from the real life. Naming after one’s ancestors is prevalent among the Paiwan people but within a much more complex contexts. In a study on the naming of the Sakuliu family, personal names were taken down from ancestors of both sides but not always in regular intervals (Jiang Bin 1999). Many names of ancestors who died in accidents were avoided by their descendants. A recitation of a family’s personal names during a marriage negotiation is both symbolic and effective for claiming the family’s eminent history of past alliances and also the present status. Keeping personal names from important alliances in various generations is thus to ensure that their descendants will stand out in the future status competitions (Ku 2002).

**Texts in Written Forms**

What happened when oral narratives were recorded in written forms and were even published in terms of what I have discussed above? I will tentatively focus on a few Puleti texts that are dated differently.

The first one is about the descriptions on Puleti in *Research Report*, first published by the Japanese colonial government in 1915 in Japanese, but later was translated into Chinese by the Academia Sinica and published in 2002. In the Chinese version, the editor has stated that the purpose of this translation was to “provide with the Chinese readers and researchers the precious documents compiled in the Japanese colonial era” (*Research Report* V(1) 2002:4).

I have included a paragraph on Puleti for discussion. The descriptions on Puleti are mainly concerned with its geographical location and population. It has categorized Puleti
as a vuculj section of Paiwan calisian subgroup. This categorization has further been adopted by the KMT government after 1945 and also by later anthropologists.

This village is situated to the left bank of the upper Puljti river and at the foothill of south Kavulungan Mountain. The elevation is about 2000 (Japanese) feet. Facing its north and across the river are the villages of Kaviyangan and Kulaljuc. There are about 80 households in Puljti and this village is about five (Japanese) miles to the east of its administrative center of Chaozhou. The original meaning of Puljti is lost. (Research Report V(1) 2002:11)

Other chapters of this Research Report refer to the conflicts between the two origin houses of Pataljinuk and Tjuruvu more than once. According to this report, as a result of the competition for Puleti leadership among these two houses, the Pataljinuk house decided to relocate to another village, whereas the Tjuruvu(Curuvu) house was assimilated by the Taljialep house (ibid:65-66). The story of house competition is told differently in History of the Paiwan People (Tong 2001), compiled by a Paiwan scholar Tong Chunfa (童春發), himself also a mamazangilan. Tong did not mention any arguments among the two houses but chose to list the unfortunate incidents of the old settlement to account for the change of house name from Tjuruvu to Talijalep (Tong 2001:80-81). I have tried to compare similar incidents of other Paiwan villages in these two publications and have come up with similar observations. Research Report often gives detailed descriptions on the conflicts among different houses within a village or settlement by listing tirelessly all the rivaling houses and their alliances. In History of the Paiwan People, the status of the head mamazangilan is less challenged and conflicts in the village are seldom described. Both publications were products of government projects, the former Research Report was compiled during the Japanese colonial era, for the purposes of either anthropological research as claimed by the minister, or actually might have been used for better management of the rebellious aborigines. But it was certainly not meant to be circulated in the local Paiwan villages. The latter, History of the Paiwan People, compiled by a Paiwan mamazangilan and under the
sponsorship of a national archival commission, strives to provide an orthodox history from the claimed native point of view. In an era when Chinese language education is so prevalent in the Paiwan villages, this “history” is expected to be read and judged by the local Paiwan people themselves. My categorization of these two publications and their contexts may be way too simplified and over-generalized at this stage but it is obvious that these two publications, both as written texts, share many similarities in their purposes but provide very different narrative approaches. What entangled with the contemporary social reality is such occasion as in the case of Muni, who is well informed in Chinese, Japanese and elder’s narratives or texts. When confronted with the discrepancy among these various texts, she could maneuver her knowledge of these texts for either the purpose of reclaiming the house status of her village (in the form of presentism), or would pursue the historical truth with evidences from the village elder’s narratives (in the form of historicism).

On the contrary, any attempt to override the chaotic oral narratives with the authority and power of written texts is highly possible. A book **Civilization of Paiwan Kavulungan People: a Society without Written Language and Monetary System** (Pan 1998), sponsored and published by the Pingtong County government, has become very controversial in many Paiwan villages. The author Pan Lifu has tried to replace the “mistakenly named Paiwan” with a new group denomination “Kavulungan,” named after the holy mountain Kavulungan and origin home of many Paiwan villages. To provide a strong legitimate evidence for this claim, he attaches two pages of meeting agenda and records by seven prominent Paiwan head *mamazangilans*, some of them carried official posts in the local governments. Another controversial publication on the prestigious Ruvanuyeav house **Drifting for Two Thousand Years** (Jiang Hai 2000:253-254) simply collapses the categories of *milimilingan* and *taucikel* into one coherent history in a chronological order, paralleled with a Western chronology. Focusing on the Ruvanuyeav house as the center of the Paiwan history, Jiang Hai (2002) admits that any history from the point of view of a single house will definitely invites arguments but there is no better way to do it. As a
juxtaposition, Pan (1998:11) reminds his target audience, the Paiwan younger generation, that even though they are all well educated in a Han-Chinese society, cultural misunderstanding will “present our own (Paiwan) culture as merely a periphery or only a segment to the *Huaxia* (華夏) culture.”

Even so, in these incidences, what really worried many Paiwan elders at Puleti is the fact that any published genealogy or narratives will take away their credibility and flexibility in status establishment. In Taiwu County, where many Paiwan people reside, efforts on compiling a written genealogy of the Qalangiyan in this county have been continued for many years and the genealogy was never formally published. Led by a Legislative Yuan member of Paiwan ethnicity, it takes on the format of Han-Chinese genre of *zupu* (祖譜) and even adopts anthropological terminologies. Yet many families are not satisfied with the structure of the written genealogy and have disclaimed its validity.

**Whose subjectivity?**

Oral tradition, passed down from generation to generation, seems to heavily rely on the recognition and reinterpretation from the narrators, who have control over the “texts” and are constantly exerting their agencies. While written texts, especially those public and widely circulated ones, seems to escape the control of the original author and roam into unexpected contexts. I would argue that both in oral and written traditions the interactions between human subjects and the texts are equally complex. Many researches have proposed that people often use narrative on past (or history) to legitimize the present. Examining *mele koihonua* (genealogical, chanted panegyrics) as opposed to *mo’olelo*(historical narratives), Valeri (1990) asserts that texts used for legitimizing the present depend on different contexts. *Mele koihonua* focuses on continuity, setting hierarchies in terms of birth orders and marriage alliance of the first-born families. Any comments on the first-born families in *mele koihonua* hint toward unavoidable fates. While *mo’olelo* stresses changes and discontinuity, especially when describing the ten
generations from King Līloa to Kamehameha I. Their power did not derive from the precedence in birth order but challenges made by younger siblings towards the older siblings (Valeri 1990:165-167). These two types of narratives both point to the reality of historical process but not similar models repeating themselves.

My initial fieldwork observations have point out that a Paiwan village, such as Puleti, can be placed within a similar theoretical frame work, with similar correlation of a hierarchical society and its oral tradition. The hierarchical status, however, is never stable and both written texts and oral narratives often end in contestation rather than reconciliations. In the end, it is always significant to find out how they compromise with each other. In my field experience, one Puleti marriage negotiation went through at least seven meetings by both families and yet without a conclusion. Elders from both families often play very important roles in these occasions but written texts of genealogy have been gradually introduced into these contestations. The authority of the elders is challenged by the younger and educated generation, citing the government version or publications as their new resources.

**Discussions and Possible Approaches**

Turner (1988:196) has pointed out many incorrect assumptions regarding postcolonial societies, for example, some researches assuming that the indigenous people of South America did not have a sense of history before their contacts with the colonizers. First, the contacts with the colonizers should never be considered as a unique experience as to make such turning point. Secondly, it is methodologically mistaken to assume that there is such a thing as a collective and unified social consciousness. Third, it is too naïve to assume that a society without prior written tradition is “simple” and wrongly assume it can be analyzed with a single genre, one version of myth or historical narrative.

I have tried not to neglect these insights on research traps. In fact, the two different genres of *milimilingan* and *taucikel* derive from the local contexts. They might have
different definitions on the sense of history but they are not lacking a sense of history at all. Strictly speaking, the Paiwan people have never been entirely isolated from outside contacts and this has been evidenced by their trade objects with outsiders through different time periods. What I have tried to describe in this paper is only a small part of the limited written texts or oral narratives by the local Paiwan people. They are, however, pointing towards a common concern of origin and relocation, although often in conflicting views and much too complicated to reveal their agencies sometimes.

This research is a very preliminary investigation into what I have encountered in the initial fieldwork. To place my observations within and beyond the framework of past anthropological issues, how the contemporary Paiwan villagers look at their traditional values, such as the various forms of texts, is certainly a topic worth of pursuing in order to examine the disjuncture and continuity of a society in transition.
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