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Museums as sites of Indigenous revitalisation

Dialogues between national museums, Indigenous artisans and Indigenous communities in Taiwan

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Introduction

This chapter discusses museums as sites of Indigenous revitalisation in contemporary Taiwan. Its broader aim is to leverage an analysis of the relationship between museums and Indigenous populations in Taiwan to cast light on the politics of Taiwanese Indigeneity, its entanglement with Taiwanese nationalism and the role of museums in shaping discourses and policies around these strands of politics. What is the political significance of museums for Indigenous peoples in contemporary Taiwan? What is their relevance for the growing movement for Indigenous cultural revitalisation? And what role have museums played historically, notably in relation to Taiwan's colonial past and Taiwanese nationalism?

In spite of its relatively small size, Taiwan occupies a critical geopolitical position between four major political and cultural areas: China, Japan, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Due to its position, and as a result of colonisation, Taiwan has become a microcosm of cultural, political and ethnic complexity. Originally inhabited by various Austronesian-speaking groups

(Blundell 2009), starting in the seventeenth century Taiwan has been in part or fully colonised by European powers (Dutch and Spanish), China’s Qing Dynasty (until 1895) and Japan (1895–1950) and subsequently subjected to the dictatorial regime of the Nationalist Party of China (Kuomintang or KMT, 1949–1987). Today, Taiwan is arguably a model for Indigenous activism in Asia, even though much still needs to be done to improve the situation and rights of its Indigenous populations.

Museums have played crucial roles at different times in the historical trajectory of relations between Indigenous Austronesians and colonisers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. During Chinese and Japanese colonisation, museum collections grew as the material culture of the Austronesians was looted, confiscated or bought for a pittance and often justified as a way of ‘saving’ authentic culture from the effects of modernisation (Hu 2005, 2007). Conversely today, museums (notably at a national level) provide a showcase for Indigenous cultures, and they commission and promote the works of contemporary Indigenous artists and artisans, initiate outreach projects and experiment with collaborative projects with Indigenous source communities and artists (e.g. Harrell and Lin 2006; Lin 2009; McIntyre 2010; Varutti 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Shannon 2014). In this sense, national museums can be said to provide a platform for enhancing the visibility of Indigenous groups. In parallel, at a local level, Indigenous communities have become increasingly active in retrieving, collecting, re-enacting and reinventing Indigenous cultural heritage (Gowlland 2021). Indigenous arts and crafts are also reaching well beyond the local scale, gradually gaining visibility within national and international arenas (Varutti 2015). One of the consequences of this visibility is some overlap between the concerns of museums and of artists and the latter’s participation in various ways in museum projects.

This chapter investigates museums as platforms for Indigenous revitalisation in contemporary Taiwan. It does so through a discussion of the political significance of Indigenous peoples’ visibility in today’s Taiwanese museums and the interrelations between the following two processes: the renewal of interest for the representation of Indigenous cultures in national museums, on the one hand, and the revitalisation of culture among Indigenous communities on the other.

This unique combination of historical developments and cultural features has led to the formation of a society characterised by a spectacular degree of cultural diversity, where a democratic government, despite some shortcomings, is involved in ongoing efforts to forge a politics of promotion of Indigenous rights and to promote Indigenous cultural expressions. In this sense, the case of Taiwan may be considered a positive example for other Asian countries, such as Indonesia, with burgeoning Indigenous rights movements but an unclear political positioning vis-a-vis Indigeneity (e.g. Muur et al. 2019) and mainland China which rejects the applicability of the concept to its territory (Hathaway 2016).

Worldwide, Indigenous populations are committed to the revitalisation of their cultures (Maaka and Andersen 2006; Cadena and Starn 2007; Clifford 2013). In these practices, material culture emerges as a privileged expression of culture, notably as items that can be collected and exhibited in museums. There, material culture is variously interpreted, revealing the museum's power to classify and differentiate, to be a witness of the past or project images of the future, and in juxtaposition with past and contemporary material culture, to highlight cultural continuity or ruptures. All these practices substantiate the authority and legitimacy of museums and their key role in the politics of representation but also the active role they can play in the promotion (or silencing) of Indigenous rights claims (see Stanley 1998; Hendry 2005; Varutti 2013b). At the same time, Indigenous artists worldwide are increasingly involved in the re-activation and regeneration of knowledge, skills and stories embedded in museum objects and in returning such knowledge to the communities of origin.

There is a double meaning to the term 'representation': it may refer to the acts of display and interpretation (as in museums for instance) as well as to the act of standing in place of someone else. Here we address both of these meanings: the material culture, images, histories and stories of Indigenous peoples are represented (displayed and interpreted) in museums; at the same time, increasingly, Indigenous communities have members (often Indigenous artists) who represent (stand for) the community in negotiations with museums. In addressing this dual meaning of representation, the chapter locates museums and museum representations of Indigenous cultures in Taiwan at the core of webs of power relations that unfold at both national and local levels and between the two.

Drawing on insights and examples from field research (both on museums and on the revitalisation of cultural practices among Indigenous communities), the chapter develops a series of interconnected analytical foci. Firstly, the chapter provides a brief analysis of the historical relations between Indigenous communities and political authorities (colonisers first and subsequently Taiwanese government). We then examine the historical-political conjuncture in which Taiwanese nationalism emerged in the 1990s; we discuss its discourse based on multiculturalism and show how this has shaped the position of Indigenous peoples in Taiwanese society and specifically the representations of Indigenous peoples in museums. These first two sections will set the stage for our discussion on the practices of Indigenous cultural revitalisation and their connections with museums. We examine the ways in which Indigenous individuals mediate relations between the museum world and their communities and how they 'represent' their people in museums, whether as curators of local state-initiated museums or as Indigenous artists and artisans who are at the forefront of a process of Indigenous cultural revitalisation. The latter, mostly operating outside museum institutions, hold significant yet still under-researched roles in creating a dialogue between national museums and Indigenous communities. In the conclusion, we reflect on the articulation of cultural-political conditions and actors that contribute to defining the contemporary politics of Indigenous cultural representation in Taiwan.

Methodologically, this chapter is based on interviews with curators in Taiwanese national and local museums and with Indigenous artists, artisans and communities, in urban centres (such as Taipei, Tainan, Taichung, Hualien, Kaohsiung and Taitung) as well as in Indigenous settlements near Hualien on the eastern coast and in the mountains of Pingtung County in southern Taiwan. Interviews took place at different times during extended periods of field research since 2010. A significant part of our research was conducted in the North Paiwan settlements of Sandimen and Rinari.

Historical background

The Austronesians represent around 2.4 per cent of Taiwan's total population. Ethnic Han Chinese populations make up most of the remaining 97.6 per cent; these are divided into three groups: the Holo (majority population), Hakka and 'Foreign Born' (around two million

nationalists who fled the communist forces of Mao Zedong in mainland China and found refuge in Taiwan in 1949). Today, 16 distinct Austronesian-speaking Indigenous groups have been officially recognised by the Taiwanese government.

To understand the politics of Indigenous representation in Taiwan and the recent revitalisation of Indigenous cultures, it is important to consider the historical relations between colonial powers and the Austronesian-speaking Indigenous peoples. In this section we sketch a short history of these relations, as we seek to contextualise our discussion within the current political situation as well as museum practices and politics in Taiwan. We will see how colonial projects of control and assimilation led to the demise of Indigenous cultures and how the removal of material culture from the Indigenous communities (either to be destroyed or to be collected by museums) played a significant part in these projects.

The island of Formosa (the main island of what is now Taiwan) was first colonised by settlements of Austronesian populations some 5,000 years ago. According to linguistic and archaeological research (Bellwood et al. 2006; Blundell 2009), Taiwan was likely the point of departure for Austronesian-speaking populations who explored and settled in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. Today, places as far reaching as Madagascar in the west and Hawaii in the east have Austronesian-speaking populations. From the seventeenth century, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch as well as Chinese pirates and merchants started to establish settlements and ports along the western shores of Taiwan. They entered into trade relations with the ethnic Chinese (who had started settling in earnest on the island in the seventeenth century) as well as the local Austronesian populations. Between the end of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, Taiwan was a colony of the Chinese Qing dynasty. The Qing government had little interest in the rugged mountainous terrains of Taiwan’s interior or in administering its mountain populations, which they considered to be ‘savages’. Conversely, the Austronesian populations of the plains were gradually assimilated into the ethnic Chinese population. Qing colonial officers imposed boundaries keeping the populations of the plains and the mountains separate. Only later would the Japanese occupiers take control over the entire territory and design policies to assimilate the mountain dwellers into the mainstream society (Chang 2008).

In 1895, following the Shimonoseki Treaty, Taiwan became a Japanese colony. The Japanese colonisers ventured into the central mountains, brutally subjugating the mountain populations. The Japanese were driven by economic interests, in particular the valuable hardwoods of the interior forests; and in their eyes, engagement of the mountain populations was a necessary measure to develop the logging industry (Ching 2001). The Japanese further enforced a distinction introduced by the Qing government between 'raw' and 'cooked' 'savages', to distinguish between the populations of the plains, who had assimilated and adopted the culture of ethnic Chinese populations ('cooked') and the 'raw savages' comprising those Austronesians who had largely lived outside of the influence of the Qing court and confined to the mountains (Faure 2001; Hsieh 2017). This distinction forms the basis of contemporary Indigenous claims: those groups recognised as Indigenous today are those previously identified as 'raw savages' by the Japanese, while those previously classified as 'cooked' populations (now collectively known as Pingpu) who until recently identified as Chinese are starting to claim official recognition from the Taiwanese government as Indigenous. The Japanese imposed cultural assimilation policies aimed at producing model Japanese citizens out of the Austronesians (Ching 2001; Hu 2007). The display of Indigenous cultures in Taiwanese museums dates back to the Japanese colonial era. Influenced by contemporary Western ethnographic practice, Japanese anthropologists as well as natural scientists such as botanists explored the mountainous interiors to study the Austronesian peoples and collect natural specimens and cultural artefacts (Hu 2007). While parts of these collections were sent directly to museums in Japan (such as anthropologist Inō Kanori's private 'Taiwan Museum'), the bulk of them remained in Taiwan, laying the foundations for the collections of the Taiwan Governor Museum (established in 1908, today the National Taiwan Museum) and the Institute of Ethnology of the Taihoku Imperial University (today the National Taiwan University) among others (Hu 2007).

After the war, in 1945, Taiwan was ceded to the KMT. Four years later, in 1949, the KMT government, retreating from fighting the communists led by Mao Zedong, took refuge in Taiwan with around two million people (mainly government officials, soldiers and their families); that same year, the KMT declared martial law in Taiwan. Under martial law, the KMT government pursued an aggressive campaign for the sinicisation of the ethnic Han Chinese

(Holo and Hakka) and Austronesian populations, imposing a nationalist identity based on mainland Chinese culture (Chun 1994; Chen 2008). Mandarin Chinese – a foreign language to all of Taiwan's native ethnic groups – was imposed as the national language. In schools, children were punished for speaking any other language besides Mandarin Chinese and were taught the history and geography of mainland China, as opposed to that of Taiwan. Taiwan, in the eyes of the nationalist KMT government, was merely one of the many provinces of China (Simon 2005: 34–36). New museums, such as the Palace Museum and the National History Museum (formerly the National Museum of Historical Artifacts and Fine Arts) were established to exhibit the treasures of imperial China and extol the millenarian history and culture of (mainland) Chinese civilisation.

The sinicisation policies affected most of the Taiwanese population, especially the Austronesian populations. The KMT government imposed special provisions for Austronesian populations, then referred to as 'mountain compatriots' which replaced the notion of 'raw savages' (Yang 2001: 50–52; Chi 2016: 268–269). Such provisions included measures to transform the material environment, as well as 'civilise' and 'modernise' these populations. These translated for instance into imposed notions of hygiene, ideas about proper housing, the suppression of 'superstitions' and the promoting of Mandarin Chinese as a spoken language. Individuals were given Chinese names. Certain material culture practices were banned, and objects interpreted as 'superstitious' or emblems of Indigenous power were confiscated. For instance, the KMT government continued to enforce a ban started by the Japanese colonial government on Atayal weaving (Yoshimura and Wall 2010), and local government representatives destroyed the wood and slate carvings of the Paiwan communities (Chiang 1993: 157; Gowlland 2020). These policies produced an interruption for at least one, and sometimes two generations, in the transmission of Indigenous languages, knowledge, culture and traditions. Starting from the 1950s, the destabilising effects for Indigenous communities of the KMT dictatorship were amplified by missionaries (representing a range of churches that are still active in contemporary Taiwan, notably Presbyterian, Catholic and Seventh-Day Adventists) reaching even the most remote settlements in southern and eastern Taiwan (though in later years, the Presbyterian church would play an instrumental role in the Indigenous rights

movements). A saying among Indigenous communities summarises the colonial experience: the Japanese broke the stem of the flower of Austronesian culture and the KMT uprooted it.

The economic boom starting in the 1960s rapidly industrialised Taiwan's society (Chow 2002). This intensified the migration of the Indigenous populations living in Taiwan's mountainous regions to the cities, where they accepted the hardest, most dangerous and lowest-paid jobs (Chu 2000). Urban migration precipitated the acculturation of Indigenous communities into the mainstream Taiwanese society dominated by the ethnic Chinese populations. The lifting of martial law in 1987 triggered a process of normalisation and eventually of democratisation, sanctioned by the first democratic elections in 1996. This shift to democratisation was accompanied by an intense nation-building effort, which included the development of a multi-party political system (notably including the Democratic Progressive Party [DPP], the main opposition party to the KMT) and the emergence of Indigenous rights movements (Simon 2008, 2010; Simon and Awi 2013; Sullivan and Lee 2018).

In the second half of the 1990s, a number of cultural and political bodies were created to address Indigenous issues. The Council of Aboriginal Affairs (later renamed the Council of Indigenous Peoples) was established in 1996, with constitutional revisions made in 1997 enshrining the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the constitution and the approval of the Indigenous Peoples Basic Law in 2005 (Allio 1998; Stainton 1999a; Ku 2005). In August 2016, President Tsai provided the Taiwanese government's official apology to Indigenous peoples for their past injustices and discriminatory policies. Tsai, the first woman to hold the position, is also the first president of mixed-Indigenous descent.

Taiwan's politics of multiculturalism and museums

In this and the following section, we look at the relations between museums and Indigenous communities and the ways in which Indigenous voices have found their place (or failed to do so) in Taiwanese museums. We begin by looking at the transformation of Indigenous representations in museums starting from the 1990s, following the end of martial law. In the subsequent section, we will examine the local revitalisation of Indigenous cultures and the emergence of (state-initiated) Indigenous museums.

In the first democratic elections in 1996, the KMT put forward a message that promoted Taiwanese localism in efforts to put an end to, and distance itself from, the sinicisation agenda it pursued under martial law. In the following elections in 2000, the DPP came to power with a clear multiculturalist agenda: Taiwan was to re-discover and celebrate its cultural diversity (including its Indigenous roots) as part of a broader strategy to distance Taiwan from mainland China both politically and culturally (Stainton 1999b; Rudolph 2004). The expression of Indigeneity held a significant role within these political agendas promoting localism and multiculturalism. Indigenous cultures were (and still are) showcased as evidence of Taiwan's thriving cultural diversity.

Highlighting the cultural diversity of Taiwan served the needs of both major political parties, the DPP and KMT, in post-martial law Taiwan (Friedman 2018): for the KMT, the emphasis on local cultures contributed to diffusing and circumventing the thorny question of whether Taiwan is a province of China or a nation in its own right, while for the DPP, the multicultural agenda was clearly a way of taking distance from the influence of China. Thus, promotion of the local and multicultural certainly led to advances in the rights of Indigenous peoples, but as Friedman argues (2018), this was largely subsumed under the broader ambitions of both parties.

The nationalist discourse, with its corollaries of multiculturalism and localism, gradually enabled the expression of Indigenous identities and the burgeoning of Indigenous rights movements in Taiwan. In turn, these processes also impacted upon the museum landscape leading to the transformation of museum narratives and the creation of new museums in order to inscribe Indigenous peoples in the wider frame of the Taiwanese nation.

The emergence of Taiwan's Indigeneity in the 1990s led to the creation of new museums and the refurbishment of existing museums to display Indigenous cultures. This engendered a process of 'rediscovery' and reinterpretation of Indigenous collections. Several new museums devoted to Indigenous cultures were established. For instance, in Taipei the process was spearheaded by the opening, in 1994, of the privately owned Shung Ye Museum of Formosa Aborigines; in 2002, the Ketagalan Culture Centre was established by the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Taipei City Government; the National Prehistory Museum (mainly an

archaeological museum with important Indigenous ethnographic collections and displays) opened its doors in the southeastern city of Taitung. Several museums saw considerable expansion and refurbishment of their Indigenous galleries and collections. For instance, the Museum of Anthropology of the National Taiwan University was completely re-organised when it reopened to the public in 2010; the National Museum of Natural Science in Taichung opened its Austronesian gallery in 2008; and at the end of 2017, the National Taiwan Museum inaugurated its new permanent gallery ('Discovering Taiwan – Revisiting the Age of Natural History and Naturalists of Taiwan') where ethnographic materials and natural science specimens were set into dialogue to unveil the origins of the museum's collections.

One of the most emblematic illustrations of the impact of political events on museums is the overdue and much delayed establishment of a national museum of history. Only in the twentieth-first century was a museum of Taiwanese (as opposed to Chinese) history finally established: the National Museum of Taiwan History (NMTH) opened its doors in the southern former capital, Tainan, in 2011. The outlook of the museum is both local – it is concerned with Taiwanese history – and multicultural, since it highlights the diversity of the ethnic groups on the island, whether ethnic Chinese or Austronesian, as well as the diversity of traditions and life experiences. The history told in the NMTH stretches from prehistory – and therefore tells the story of the original Austronesian inhabitants – to the history of colonialism, up to current issues such as environmentalism. Indigenous peoples make telling appearances in the displays. A striking image is a diorama of wax figures, including Indigenous peoples, in a street protest.

These new, post-martial law-era museums and displays of Indigenous communities achieve several goals: firstly, they acknowledge Indigenous groups as a component of the Taiwanese national identity; and secondly, they officially recognise and celebrate the cultural diversity within the Austronesian populations. This revival of interest in Indigenous cultures in major national-level museums produced cascade effects as it led to the creation of local Indigenous museums, and, in parallel, it bolstered the sense of legitimacy and cultural pride of Indigenous communities. In the course of the 1990s, Indigenous artists, artisans, local associations and cooperatives started to organise themselves locally to initiate small-scale,

independently managed cultural heritage projects. We take a closer look at these dynamics in the next section.

Cultural revitalisation, Indigenous museums and the role of Indigenous artists

In the previous section, we have talked about representation that is understood as the display of material culture, stories and discourses related to Indigenous communities in museums. In this section, we focus on a slightly different meaning of representation, understood as having a representative, a spokesperson who ‘stands for’ Indigenous communities in museum projects, and, by extension, in the politics of representation. We briefly examine three phenomena: first, state-initiated Indigenous museums; second, the participation of Indigenous artists and artisans in the museum world; and third, the emergence of grassroots alternatives to museums as loci of Indigenous representation.

The museums discussed in the previous section are not managed by Indigenous peoples and employ only a limited number of Indigenous curators (Chen 2017). In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the Taiwanese government set up 28 Indigenous museums, mostly located in Indigenous areas, to give greater visibility to Indigenous communities and provide opportunities for income generation from tourism (Varutti 2013a). These institutions soon experienced a range of difficulties, including insufficient budgets, limited collections, shortage of staff and visitors, poor display and conservation conditions (due to lack of budget), as well as a more generalised perceived lack of relevance for local communities. Indigenous museums were a top-down initiative of the central government. They had been planned with little involvement of local communities, and, as a result, communities mostly failed to relate with these institutions. One initiative that attempted to address the shortcomings of Indigenous museums was a governmental programme ‘Big Museums Lead Small Museums’ (大馆带小馆) whereby national museums provided curation and conservation advice and loaned collections to Indigenous museums (Varutti 2013a). Through the more successful of these projects, some of these Indigenous museums were transformed, at least temporarily, into institutions that attracted tourists and became meaningful for the local communities. For instance, in 2009 the National

Taiwan Museum loaned 47 artefacts from their collections to the Chimei Amis Indigenous Museum. This generated strong interest among the Amis people who had never had the opportunity to see these objects that had been kept in the national museum's storage since they had been acquired by Japanese anthropologists in the 1930s. But it was also the initiatives of the local curators that transformed the Amis Museum into a space relevant for the community, for instance building an Indigenous house on the museum's grounds and organising activities such as exhibitions (with historical photos and artefacts loaned or donated by community members) and Indigenous craft demonstrations (Varutti 2013a). The government-initiated Indigenous museums were not all equally successful in attracting tourists or in triggering local regeneration and revealed the crucial role that local curators had in initiating activities that could attract audiences, in particular among the local communities.

Another set of actors in the politics of Indigenous representation at the local level are Indigenous artists and artisans. Artists and artisans are not only called upon to provide artworks, but they are often mediators between their community and the non-Indigenous public and institutions. To appreciate the significant role of artists and artisans, we need to take a brief look at the revitalisation of Indigenous material culture and the individuals who initiated such projects.

Indigenous artisans in Taiwan are key actors in the revitalisation and construction of Indigenous cultural heritage. Who are they? In parallel to our research on museums (mainly conducted by Varutti), we explored the revitalisation of material culture practices in Indigenous villages. This casts light on a process of local cultural revival that develops in parallel to the one taking place in national museums; the two processes, local and national, intersect at key moments, which reveal the crucial mediating role of Indigenous artists and artisans.

Since the 1990s, many Indigenous villages in the eastern and southern areas of Taiwan have launched initiatives aimed at retrieving and reviving aspects of Indigenous cultural heritage (Huang and Liu 2016). These initiatives are projects to create what Clifford calls 'newly made heritage objects' (Clifford 2004), artefacts that are made not so much for their Indigenous application and uses, as for their value as items of cultural heritage. Pottery, weaving and glass beads are among the artefacts that are part of these projects (Varutti 2015; Gowlland 2021).

Such initiatives might be individual (for instance an artisan setting up a workshop of ‘traditional’ Indigenous crafts) or collective (such as a women’s cooperative in Hualien aiming to revive the production and weaving of banana fibre of the Kavalan people or the establishment of a cooperative of Indigenous artisans in the city of Taitung). These projects have intensified over the last decade, becoming better organised, funded and in some instances institutionalised. They bear witness to a grassroots willingness to reappropriate and revitalise Indigenous cultures in ways that make visible Indigenous (rather than governmental) agencies and needs.

Museums have approached artists and artisans as particular kinds of interlocutors. For instance, for two decades now the National Taiwan Museum has been collecting the work of Indigenous artists and artisans such as Remereman Taruzaljung (Paiwan) and Yuma Taru (Atayal) (Varutti 2018). The rationale is to complement the historical collections of the museum, adding both reproductions of historical artefacts and contemporary (re-)interpretations of objects and techniques. The two women are both artists and artisans because they use crafting skills and techniques to create artefacts that look as close as possible to their historical equivalent (the artefacts are then ‘heritage objects’ because they deploy heritage techniques, materials, forms and symbolism), but they also make objects that are innovative and take bold new forms though grounded in Indigenous techniques or designs for display in contemporary art installations.

Curators in national museums have also been engaging Indigenous artisans and artists in their exhibitions, sometimes as invited artists (as in the case of Yuma Taru at the National Taiwan Museum) and other times as cultural consultants (as in the case of Sakuliu Pavavaljung [Paiwan] at the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Taichung among others). In these instances, the displays do not simply feature images of Indigenous peoples, but they also include community representatives who can inform and influence, at least to some degree, the exhibition narratives and displays.

While museums have approached artists and artisans as interlocutors, artists have also been interested in museums as a model for disseminating both their artistic outputs and their cultural knowledge. Remereman Taruzaljung is one of the artists who is instrumental in reviving the production of Paiwan glass beads and documenting their associated stories. The museum

collaboration inspired her to set up her own small museum in her craft workshop in Sandimen, Pingtung County. The workshop, named Dragonfly Beads Art Studio, employs local women to make glass beads for sale to both tourists and locals. The museum consists of a single room with displays of Indigenous clothing and body ornaments that showcase the history and culture of the Paiwan, with a 'hands-on' space where one can handle objects. Her own work is also on display in the museum as compositions of beads that are framed and hung on the wall to indicate that these are works of art, although this is not the museum's main attraction. The museum re-contextualises her work: while tourists can purchase the handiwork of women working on the ground floor, on the first floor they learn about the Indigenous communities from whom these beads originate. Tourists already had access to stories about individual beads, which were printed on cards included with their purchase and displayed on the walls of the workshop. In the small museum, they learn about Paiwan culture on the whole and admire items of Paiwan material culture, including costumes, daily life items and ceremonial artefacts. The intended audiences are mainly tourists, and the displays complement the commercial goals of the workshop by providing a cultural context to the visitors and reinforcing the claims of authenticity of the artefacts being made by the women in the workshop.

Another initiative of Remereman, in collaboration with Sakuliu Pavavaljung, is the longest-suspended bridge in Taiwan. This soon became the main attraction of the area, more so than any museum, including the Indigenous Park that is a stone's throw away. The bridge itself is a gallery of sorts, which has on display reproductions of Indigenous designs of glass beads and associated stories. On either end of the bridge, Sakuliu's sculptures of sweet potato and taro recall the daily lives of the Paiwan and the foods that sustain them (in contrast to the ceremonial glass beads). This initiative is an attempt at representing Indigenous cultures that have become more successful than nearby state-funded museums, as it expresses the unmediated voices of local Indigenous communities.

Within Indigenous communities, the initiatives of individual artists and artisans may be variously received. Artist and artisan studios importantly generate income for the communities. For instance, the Dragonfly Studio employs women who would otherwise need to move out of the village to find work or stay home to look after their children. But we are also aware of

certain tensions within the communities relating to the rights to reproduce and sell certain symbols. Because Indigenous crafts derive at least some of their value through their association with Indigenous cultures by reproducing patterns, themes or functional objects that are promoted as ‘traditional’, the lines between community and commercial use of the shared culture are blurred. For instance, one Paiwan artist told us the delicate position he and others are in: they reproduce designs and motifs regulated by ‘palisi’ – a set of customary laws, in this case regulating which Paiwan families have the right to use certain designs – to make items for sale. The issue for him and others was not so much the ethical issues related to selling cultural items on the market, but rather that selling such objects had unintended repercussions for ownership and rights of use of designs. Artists and artisans at times find it difficult to manage their different responsibilities of promoting their culture to those outside their communities and to local youth, respecting customs and earning a living for themselves and others. This leads to difficult choices and at times accusations by others of selling out their cultures for monetary rewards.

Artists’ studios also function as museums of sorts, displaying Indigenous culture, and, in many instances, they have become more relevant to the local communities than the county museum. For instance, in Paiwan artist Cemelesai Takivalit’s studio (situated in his home and for some years in a state-funded studio in his community of Rinari), artworks made by him and his students are on display, though not all pieces are for sale. These objects provide springboards for Cemelesai’s stories; Cemelesai is a master storyteller and well-known culture holder, and his studio is visited not only by tourists but also by locals. It is there, for instance, that he receives students from the local elementary school, where he teaches children to make model Paiwan houses, among other projects, and where he provides vocational courses in carving for local youth. Cemelesai’s studio does not display the ‘authentic’ Paiwan objects that one can see in museums (those were confiscated by the Japanese and the KMT) but rather displays installations of contemporary art, and, at the same time, it is also a place where Indigenous stories – old and new – continue to be told. Earlier we mentioned that Indigenous material culture was destroyed or confiscated with the pressures of assimilation. Recovering artefacts, and the techniques and knowledge that are used to produce them, is inherently political in Taiwan (as for many Indigenous peoples around the world): it is a way of reclaiming

the right to be Indigenous in a country where the majority population is non-Indigenous. Given this political significance, Indigenous artisans and artists are often activists and play important roles in mediating their community needs and demands vis-a-vis authorities, public institutions and the majority population. Not by chance are Indigenous artists often major figures in their communities, for instance in promoting Indigenous education (Yuma Taru successfully built the first Indigenous-run elementary school in Taiwan) or being spokespersons in mediations with the local government (for instance, Sakuliu, who was a strong critic of the government's response to a major typhoon in 2009 that disproportionately affected Indigenous peoples).

Museums can be key to the promotion of Indigenous rights and specifically to the rights of cultural expression and continuity. Exhibitions and collaborations can be opportunities to change established preconceptions, discourses and aesthetics. Contemporary Indigenous art is often politically involved (McIntyre 2010), bringing the discourse of Indigenous activism into the museum, thus turning artists and artisans into mediators between Indigenous communities and museums. The voices of Indigenous artists and artisans are transforming the museum landscape, while the visibility provided by the museum reinforces their status in their local communities, making their roles as cultural leaders and activists visible. Indigenous artists and artisans are therefore both cultural producers and mediators, enabling and informing the dialogues between local Indigenous communities and Taiwanese cultural authorities at the national level. Artists' studios, in taking on the roles that museums might strive for, point to how local museums (and perhaps also national ones) might become relevant for Indigenous communities and how they might involve more of those Indigenous peoples who are experimenting with ways of representing their cultures and to provide a more genuine Indigenous voice in the museum.

Through the previous examples, we have shown how an analytical focus on local agents of revitalisation, such as Indigenous artists and artisans, reveals that museums are not the sole, nor possibly the main actors in the politics of representation and promotion of Indigenous cultures. Museums play a role together with other actors in what one could identify as the 'art world' of Indigenous arts and crafts revivals. These actors often operate in synergy: museums showcase the results of Indigenous revitalisation projects, while Indigenous artists and artisans

find legitimacy and visibility in their efforts when museums collect, commission or display their work.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the politically consequential practices of representation and participation of Indigenous peoples in museums in Taiwan. These practices are politically consequential for several reasons: first, for redressing and reparation of past colonial discriminations; second, Indigenous representations in museums reflect and inflect the changing political relations Taiwan entertains with mainland China, as well as the changing rhetoric of Taiwanese nationalism; and third, the most important to our discussion, museums are loci for the expression of Indigenous cultural revitalisation, as well as sites for political negotiations (including the right to cultural representation) between local Indigenous communities and Taiwanese authorities.

We then need to understand the representation and participation of Indigenous peoples in museums as part of interconnected and complex colonial pasts, ongoing negotiations of Taiwanese national identity and Indigenous cultural revitalisation projects. Taiwanese local history is often intrinsically political, as telling local stories and expressing multiculturalism challenge certain nationalist ideas that conceive of Taiwan as a part of China. We have argued in this chapter that the representation of Indigenous peoples in Taiwanese museums should be understood from the perspective of the interplay between the revitalisation of Indigenous cultures and the politics of multiculturalism and localism. Museums are sites where these connections between Indigenous status and Taiwanese nativism play out, and Indigenous representations are instrumental to, and part of the discourses about, the definition of what it means to be Taiwanese today.

At the same time, the display of Indigeneity went hand-in-hand with the development of Indigenous rights and has served to increase awareness of the Indigenous groups of Taiwan, making their cultures visible and upholding their claims of being ‘Indigenous’, that is, the original and longstanding inhabitants of Taiwan. This role of the museum remains limited and has had some mixed manifestations, since state-established Indigenous museums do not

always appear relevant for local communities, though recent efforts by the Indigenous Peoples Cultural Development Center of the Council of Indigenous Peoples to promote closer involvement of the 28 local Indigenous museums with local communities might be bearing fruit. At the same time, spaces are being created for the expression of Indigenous identities and voices – often on the initiative of local Indigenous artists and artisans or local associations. In this perspective, one can consider museums to be part of a wider complex of relations, what one might call the 'Indigenous art world' that includes the art market, Indigenous activism, art galleries and international Indigenous fairs among others. When museums include Indigenous voices and contemporary material culture, they become part of a larger complex network of Indigenous activism and revitalisation practices, as they provide an outlet for the expression of Indigeneity.

Nevertheless, there are notable shortcomings in representations and collaborations between Indigenous communities and museums in Taiwan. Firstly, because the multicultural governmental discourse promoted in museums posits the majority population as also being victims of sinicisation (which indeed they were), it appears that museums seldom critically address the history of Indigenous relations and, in particular, the impact of sinicisation policies on Indigenous peoples that resulted in far more profound and permanent effect compared to the Holo and Hakka Chinese ethnic groups. It is rare to see in museum representations of Indigenous peoples a full recognition of past wrongs or of issues facing them today. Exhibitions of Indigenous artists with their political take on these issues are rare and mostly take place in art museums and galleries (McIntyre 2017). There appears to be a disconnect then between the continued struggles of Indigenous peoples and the representation of their cultures in museums.

Secondly, it appears that national museums in Taiwan are not currently particularly relevant to Indigenous communities. National museums address primarily the Taiwanese public in general, who learn about the history and culture of Taiwan as a whole. The occasional success of local Indigenous museums points to how they might be used by local communities as outlets for local artists or as community centres, but local museums are more often than not geared to tourists. On the other hand, the workshops of artists act as cultural centres, for instance providing instruction to locals on crafts, or as activity centres for school children in

Indigenous settlements. In that respect, they point to ways in which museums, in particular local museums, might benefit from establishing even stronger relationships with local artists and artisans. Acting as cultural mediators between cultures, generations and institutional settings, Indigenous artists and artisans might be able to make museums more relevant for local communities as sites of cultural revitalisation practices and therefore to inject new life into the very concept of the museum, as a centre of learning, a place where stories are told and a place of exchanges across generations and cultures.

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